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7 Embracing difference in feminist music worlds

A Ladyfest case study

Susan O'Shea

Many authors argue that historically women have been alienated or marginalised from the means of musical production and public performance within the 'alternative' and 'indie' genres and assigned very specific roles within the music industry in general (Reynolds and Press 1995; Schilt 2003a, 2003b; Leonard 2007). Recent UK figures support those claims and show that fewer than 14 per cent of over 95,000 registered members in the music Performing Right Society (PRS, 2012) are women, highlighting that this exclusion, or omission, is not limited to alternative music genres alone. These figures include songwriters, publishers and performing musicians from classical music to jazz and everything in between. This low figure would suggest that, as well as being invisible in many areas of music creation, a large number of women are losing out economically by not tapping into various royalty streams and potential earnings from music. The numbers claiming royalties are likely to be much lower than the numbers of women actually taking part in music.

Two music movements which challenge the state of affairs, Riot Grrrl and Ladyfest, are discussed in this chapter within the context of what I call feminist music worlds. The idea of music worlds draws on the art worlds concept attributable to Becker (1974, 1982) and adapted in work by Crossley (2009), Bottero and Crossley (2011), and Crossley and Bottero (forthcoming). Little has been written on Ladyfest and Riot Grrrl, although more on the latter. While it is common to refer qualitatively to the networks of musicians, feminist activists, and organisers in much of this work and to discuss the importance of accepting differences, feminist cultural activists, music lovers and producers can sometimes appear elusive and cliquey. This chapter aims to bring a mixed-methods approach to bear on our hitherto qualitative understanding of the networks of Riot Grrrl and Ladyfest and to investigate the role of homophily in understanding why birds of a feather might flock together in feminist music worlds.

Riot Grrrl was born out of a desire to counter male dominance in the alternative and indie music scenes, in particular, the punk music scene. According to some it helped a new generation of young girls become feminists, find their voices, and fight for their rights (Rosenberg *et al.* 1998; Coulombe 1999). It originated in the United States in the early 1990s as a pre-internet underground feminist cultural revolution by and for girls. Bands like Bikini Kill spearheaded

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1 the movement from Olympia, Washington, and on the other side of the Atlantic,
2 British band Huggy Bear paved the way.

3 The movement had a strong manifesto, it dealt with difficult issues such as
4 abortion, rape and sexual harassment by providing a support structure (for those
5 that could find out about it) through letter writing, sharing mix-tapes and 'zine'
6 publications. Zines were small-scale self-produced low-quality prints, frequently
7 in the style of a music fanzine, but with additional content. Riot Grrrl lay
8 dormant for the best part of 20 years, although not extinct like some of its critics
9 would suggest. It is currently experiencing renewed academic interest (Triggs
10 2004; Moore and Roberts 2009; Meltzer 2010; Downes 2012; Dunn and Farnsworth
11 2012; Pavlidis 2012; Payne 2012; Starr 2013) and non-academic interest
12 with films (Anderson 2013), biographies (Marcus 2010) and retrospectives
13 (Darms 2013) of the movement, while with its imagery and ideology are being
14 used by contemporary feminist groups such as the Russian protest art group
15 Pussy Riot (see True 2012; Neu and Finch 2013).

16 Some argue that Riot Grrrl laid the foundations of the Ladyfest movement
17 which was to follow (Schilt and Zobl 2008), while more recently others have
18 argued against drawing direct connections (Dougher and Keenan 2012). Evidence
19 presented in this chapter sides with the former opinion. Ladyfest originated
20 in Olympia in 2000, one of the Riot Grrrl city strongholds. The moniker 'Lady-
21 fest' acts as an umbrella term for a not-for-profit woman-centred music festival
22 and a signifier for an expanding translocal, music and cultural feminist social
23 movement. Primarily motivated by music, both the movement, as a process, and
24 the festival, as one of the tangible outcomes, aim to create a safe space for
25 women to take ownership of, and participate in, music, creative activities, political
26 debate and gender-based activism. Between 2000 and 2010, there have been
27 263 Ladyfests forming a loosely bound translocal network in 34 countries world-
28 wide with 32 separate events taking place in the UK alone during this period
29 (Zobl 2013).¹ But who are the organisers and participants of these feminist music
30 worlds and what impact do their relationships have on network structures? Do
31 they really embrace difference or are activists more similar to each other than
32 they think?

33 McPherson describes homophily as 'the principle that a contact between
34 similar people occurs at a higher rate than among dissimilar people' (2001, 416).
35 In sociology the concept of homophily has been in development since the early
36 twentieth century (Simmel and Levine 1971). In social network terms, homophily
37 helps us predict the likelihood of a relationship existing or occurring between
38 two people (also referred to as actors or nodes) based on a particular attribute.
39 Homophily is closely related to social influence and social selection network theories.
40 Social influence theory tends to look at how people influence each other's
41 behaviour or attitudes, whereas social selection network theory looks at how particular
42 pairs of actors may be drawn to one another based on specific characteristics
43 or attributes. Attributes can include a wide variety of variables such as
44 attitudes towards feminism, music preference, gender, social class, education,
45 occupation, ethnicity, age or sexuality.

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Using participatory research methods, network and ethnographic data were gathered over time on the musicians and activists associated with three Ladyfest case study sites in Manchester, Oxford and London between 2009 and 2012. Ladyfest is often perceived by non-participants to be dominated by lesbians and closed to male participation. While it is evident that many Ladyfest participants aspire towards embracing diversity and difference and challenging heteronormative cultural practices, there has been no empirical evidence to date to support or refute those perceptions. For this reason, special attention is placed on relationship measures based on sexual preference to see if there is a stronger case for homophily or heterophily (preference for dissimilar others) within and between networks on this sometimes contentious attribute.

I begin by highlighting some empirical evidence that shows how women occupy disadvantaged positions in the music professions and the creative industries. This is followed by a brief biographical note that aims to help the reader understand how the personal and the political are interwoven in feminist music worlds. The following section discusses Riot Grrrl as a precursor to Ladyfest and the musical influence it has had on it. Riot Grrrl band networks are introduced to show how links between the movements are forged and how feminist music worlds are translocal in nature, tying cities and countries together. Focus then turns to exploring Ladyfest group homogeneity by examining demographic measures, in particular gender, age, ethnicity and sexuality measures. This is supplemented by qualitative data. Finally, the London Ladyfest case study is used to explore in detail the role of homophily in network structures and in particular whether sexuality has an influence on how organisers develop friendships over time.

The evidence

There are a growing number of blogs and websites that monitor gender progress in the creative and cultural industries, especially music (see for example, *Don't Dancer Her Down Boys*, *The Girls Are* and *Drunken Werewolf*; all three are run by former Ladyfest organisers). These blogs are frequently run by volunteers, sometimes individuals, sometimes groups. They not only bring gender inequalities in the areas of cultural production to public attention, but also show how necessary it is to engage with this issue from a public perspective. Despite this, there is a paucity of quantitative data to back up many anecdotal claims about the inequalities women experience in the music and art worlds. While gender equality data are lacking for popular and alternative music participation and production across the spectrum of roles, some attempts have been made to conduct gender equality audits in other genres. For example, figures compiled by *Intermezzo2* reveal that there has been a small increase in the numbers of women performing at the BBC Proms in 2013. The figures show female composers numbered six out of 129 (4.6 per cent); conductors numbered four out of 74 (5.4 per cent) but with a proviso that two of those composers were gospel conductors appearing at the same Prom, not orchestral conductors, and a third was conducting a matinee concert. Marin Alsop took the title as the first woman to

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1 conduct the Last Night of the Proms, and the only other woman to lead an
2 orchestra in 2013 at the Royal Albert Hall was Xian Zhang. The number of
3 living composers who were female and had a work performed was four out of 26
4 (15.3 per cent), down significantly on 2012 figures but in keeping with previous
5 years. Finally, on a slightly more positive note, female instrumental soloists
6 represented 17 out of 52 (32.6 per cent) solo performers. However, this number
7 is still far from ideal.

8 Inequalities persist not only in the performance field of music but also in the
9 professional support and occupation arenas too. According to the most recent
10 official UK statistics³ generated by Creative Blueprint (2013) women are under-
11 represented across a broad range of professions within the cultural and creative
12 industries despite making up 41 per cent of the workforce numbered at 794,170.
13 They are particularly under-represented in managerial and senior official posi-
14 tions, professional occupations and skilled trades, while vastly out-numbering
15 their male counterparts in administration and secretarial roles, taking up 81 per
16 cent of those occupations. In the music sector the representation of women is
17 slightly lower when compared to the cultural industry total with women occu-
18 pying 39 per cent of jobs within the area. However, there is even greater dis-
19 parity across roles within the music sector. In the category covering the
20 composition of musical works and music publishing only 28 per cent are women,
21 with musical education being the only area where women outnumber men by 81
22 per cent to 19 per cent. There are some warnings attached to these figures due to
23 the unreliability of the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes for the cre-
24 ative sector on which they are based and should be treated as best available
25 estimates. These limited statistics paint a picture of inequality in access to the
26 means of cultural production and participation, especially in the music fields. At
27 the heart of Riot Grrrl and Ladyfest ideologies are attempts to address these
28 challenges by means of a revolutionary call to action; to encourage women and
29 girls to take ownership of their own cultural and creative practices by participat-
30 ing in ways that make sense to them in their own locale while connecting them
31 to wider international movements.

From the personal to the political

35 I first heard about Ladyfest in early 2005 through friends. I was surprised that I
36 had never heard about it before, particularly when I learned about its deep-rooted
37 connection with Riot Grrrl. My interests in music and feminism have been inter-
38 linked long before I even knew what Riot Grrrl was all about. I subsequently
39 heard that I am one of the lucky ones as I managed to see Huggy Bear in 1993 at
40 The Village in Cork, part of the famed Sir Henry's club. I was intrigued by
41 Huggy Bear, both their music and their distinctive approach to live performance.
42 However, I was completely unaware at the time that they were an integral part of
43 a feminist music movement.

44 My first direct experience of Ladyfest was as one of the organisers of Lady-
45 fest Manchester 2008. I had moved from Ireland 18 months previously and was

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Proof

126 S. O'Shea

keen to get involved in the vibrant music scene in Manchester but without a network of like-minded people I was finding it a little difficult. My friends had just started planning Ladyfest Cork that year and they suggested I should try and organise one in Manchester. I was a little apprehensive at the thought of initiating a planning meeting on my own but as serendipity would have it a few weeks later I saw a poster on a lamppost asking people to come to a meeting and Ladyfest Manchester 2008 was born. The highlight for many of the festival organisers (including myself), and attendees, was having The Slits play their only UK gig as a reformed group with the original line-up intact (the other gig took place in Spain). A special mention should be given to Zoë Street Howe for her gentle words of encouragement while she was interviewing the band for her book *Typical Girls? The Story of The Slits* (2009). Ari-Up's support for Ladyfest was tangible with her boundless energy around the festival site. It was wonderful to see Viv Albertine back on stage after a very long hiatus. Albertine too has become a repeated supporter of Ladyfest, having played at numerous festivals and spoken about her experiences of gender-based discrimination, not only in music but in other art worlds, and how she learned to openly call herself an artist with pride and defiance at the age of 50. The main discussion panel explored feminism and the counter-culture, examining the role of gender in the creative and cultural industries. It was inspiring to hear, then Doctor, now Professor, Amelia Fletcher⁴ speak on this topic, not only as a successful female musician who has been in many popular bands since the mid-1980s (Talulah Gosh, Heavenly, Marine Research, The Wedding Present, Hefner) and a working mother, but also as a prominent economist, now with an OBE (awarded 2014) for services to Competition and Consumer Economics. Fletcher's current band, Tender Trap, was just starting out around this time too, taking its first steps onto the gig circuit while solidifying the line-up. The other panellists of note included Sheila Rowbotham, Marion Leonard and Katherine M. Graham.

My first experience as a Ladyfest organiser (there have been many subsequently) was instrumental to the development of my friendship, feminist and music networks in the city. This led me to question if there are commonalities across different Ladyfest organising groups or if the impact Ladyfest has had on my personal networks was somehow unique.

Riot Grrrl networks at the root of Ladyfest

At the heart of social movements lie social relationships, and these relationships are often built over time, developing a kind of organisational memory and expectation that persist even when members come and go. Staggenborg suggests that as social movements rarely have clear beginnings and end points, as a result the 'notion of a social movement community allows us to conceive of movements as consisting of cultural groups and interactions as well as political movement organizations' (1998, 181). This is a useful point to consider when examining feminist music worlds. It is important to pay attention to the historical lineages, though arguably not a linear history, of feminist cultural activism and its

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1 attempts to challenge gender inequalities. These historical narratives are less
2 about discrete chronological stages and more about blurry overlaps.

3 Movements 'can draw on the loose networks maintained by cultural groups
4 and on resources provided by institutionalized elements of the community to
5 generate visible collective action from time to time' (Staggenborg 1998, 200).
6 Ladyfest as a movement emerges from its own particular history carrying
7 forward previous social ties while at the same time developing new ones. As a
8 translocal movement community, Ladyfest, and its predecessor and co-
9 conspirator Riot Grrrl, continue to erupt into collective action that is frequently
10 tied to other protest cycles or movements. Greiner and Sakdapolrak view trans-
11 locality as having many interpretations 'revolving around notions of mobility,
12 connectedness, networks, place, locality and locales, flows, travel, transfer and
13 circulatory knowledge' (2013, 375). These distinct movements rooted in specific
14 time periods can be seen within a broader context of networked feminist music
15 worlds. This is important because fitting contemporary feminist cultural activism
16 into neat time-specific periods perpetuates a popular discourse that all too
17 quickly relegates feminist acts of cultural resistance during periods of seeming
18 inactivity to, at best, the history books, and at worst something to be appropri-
19 ated by capitalist structures and sold back in bite-sized watered-down versions to
20 the very girls and women whom these Do-It-Yourself (DIY) activities are meant
21 to empower (O'Shea 2012). However, this grand ideal of collective action and
22 impetus to create new music and art worlds which counter mainstream conven-
23 tions is not without its problems and critics.

24 Moore and Roberts (2009) point out in their article on DIY mobilisation,
25 which includes a discussion on Riot Grrrl, that the junction between social
26 movements and music is ripe for research. The Riot Grrrl movement material-
27 ised at a time when, according to Leonard (2007), women musicians such as
28 Kim Gordon of Sonic Youth, Kim Deal of The Breeders and The Pixies and
29 bands such as L7 and Babes in Toyland were becoming increasingly visible in
30 the music media. But also it was a time when women's hard-earned rights to
31 bodily autonomy and access to safe and timely abortions were under threat in
32 America, with high-profile court cases being fought by world-weary feminists
33 worn down by a media-fuelled feminist backlash. Riot Grrrl stepped up to chal-
34 lenge it. In many ways it filled a gap left by the second-wave women's move-
35 ment of the 1960s and 1970s. It brought the personal back to the political
36 because it was a movement created by young angry women with stories to share
37 and a desire to change the cultural landscape.

38 In various art- and music-based movements the initial motivation for engag-
39 ing in activism is women's lack of visibility in the art world and, where women
40 are visible, a disagreement with the narrow roles they are frequently assigned,
41 along with a desire to make all avenues of artistic production and participation
42 available and accessible to all women. Exposing network connections between
43 different feminist cultural movements in different time periods allows for a con-
44 tinuity of experiences and a chance for subsequent generations to learn from one
45 another through dialogue, rather than perpetuating the perceived generational

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riffs so often referred to in literature on feminist waves and by those who purport that feminism has failed. In a way what Riot Grrrl managed to achieve, through the use of cultural signifiers such as zines, clothing styles, music as genre and writing on the body, was to develop what Becker calls 'a coherent and defensible aesthetic' (2008, 134). This aesthetic became the basis on which Riot Grrrl, and subsequently Ladyfest movement members, were, and still are, able to 'evaluate things in a reliable and dependable way' and to make 'regular patterns of cooperation possible' (Becker 2008, 134).

Musically, Riot Grrrls took their inspiration from women of the 1970s and 1980s punk scene. For example, Poly Styrene of X-Ray Spex, The Raincoats, Joan Jett, Patti Smith, Fifth Column and The Slits, many of whom have until recently been written out of rock history and are still neglected in contemporary music magazines. Perhaps surprisingly, Viv Albertine, despite her role as guitarist with The Slits, struggled with issues of self-esteem and the confidence to openly call herself an artist in the intervening time between the first incarnation of The Slits and their reunion in 2008. Albertine contributed to the discussion panel at the launch event for Ladyfest Ten (London) by saying:

My name is Viv Albertine and I'm an artist. I'm 50 and I haven't ever dared say that before ... if you want to be an artist it's a fight to the death basically and you have to decide what side you're on as a female artist. That's what we did in The Slits but there were four of us then and I'm on my own doing it and it's exactly the same fucking fight and I cannot believe it's the same fight 30 years later.

(Viv Albertine, panel discussion, 2010)

The networks associated with Riot Grrrl have lasted well beyond the short period of initial activity in the early 1990s. The actors in the original Riot Grrrl network have played, and continue to play, important roles in Rock Camp and Ladyfest activities. For example, bands such as Bikini Kill, Bratmobile, Heavens to Betsy and Huggy Bear, often described as quintessential Riot Grrrl bands, have had a substantial influence on other Riot Grrrl associated bands.

Figure 7.1 shows a bipartite graph of an affiliation network consisting of bands and their relationships with cities. This two-mode matrix is made up of 118 bands (rows) and 43 cities (columns). We get a clearer picture of what is happening in the Riot Grrrl music scene when we break it down by location and the sociogram gives us a feel for the translocal nature of feminist music worlds. The dark squares represent cities and the small circles are bands associated with those cities. The larger squares represent the key cities most often associated with the development of Riot Grrrl, Ladyfest and Rock Camp activities. The triangles represent the four bands most often associated with Riot Grrrl: Bratmobile, Heavens to Betsy and Bikini Kill from the USA and Huggy Bear from the UK (Marcus 2010). Finally, the diamond shapes represent three additional bands, Pagan Holiday, Cadallaca and Partyline. These bands have been highlighted as the primary members of each band have participated in this research.

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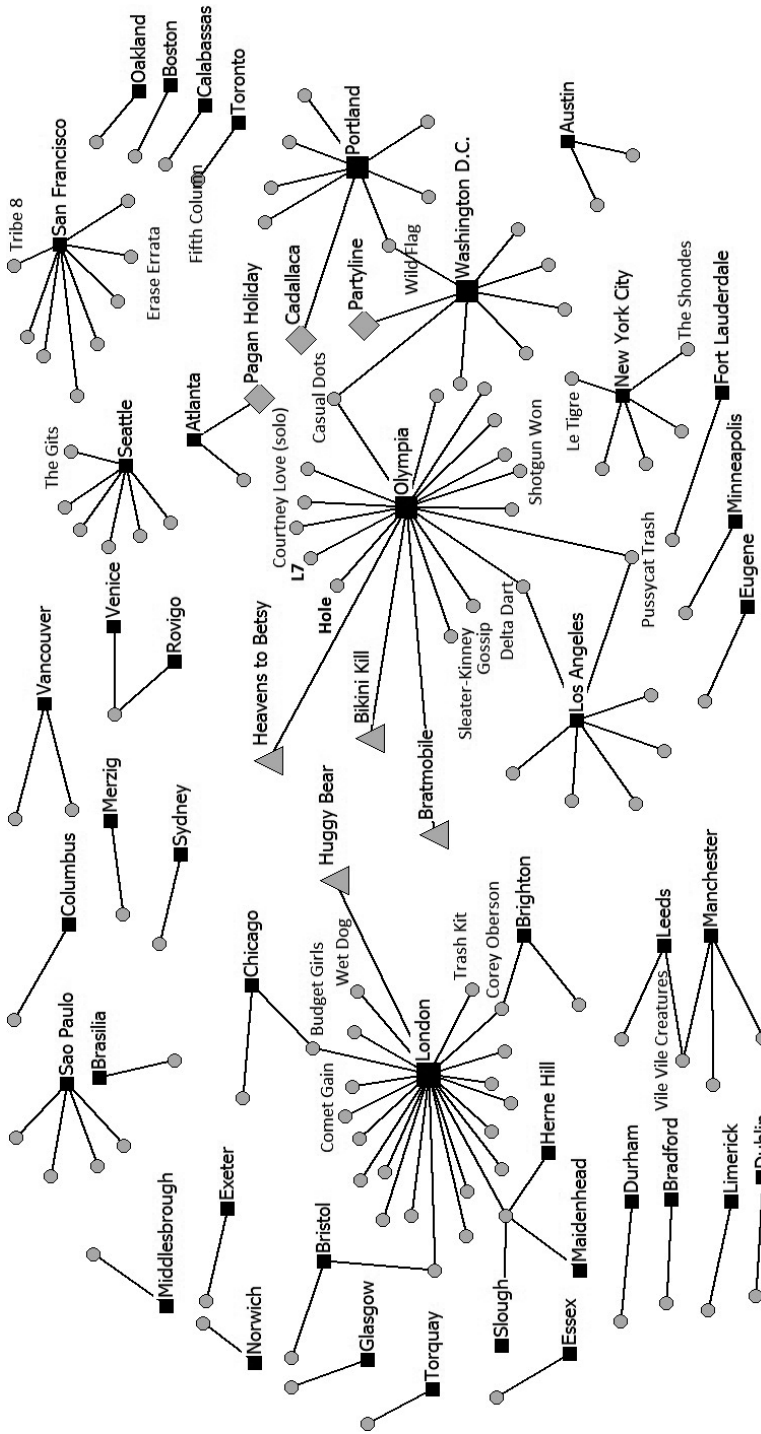


Figure 7.1 Connections between Riot Grrrl associated bands and cities.



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130 S. O'Shea

Pagan Holiday's Stella Zine has engaged in extended personal email communication with me for other aspects of this research and she discussed her gender activism, involvement with Riot Grrrl, Rock Camp for Girls and Ladyfest. Both Cadallaca's Sarah Dougher and Partyline's Allison Wolfe participated by means of a video interview which they prepared for the launch of the Ladyfest Ten festival in London in 2010.

Some of the individuals connected with the bands mentioned in Figure 7.1 have influenced the development of Riot Grrrl chapters and music scenes in particular cities and countries predominantly in the UK and the USA, although this geographical profile is changing. For example, Allison Wolfe and her friend Molly Neuman, both members of the band Bratmobile, were associated with the beginnings of the Riot Grrrl movement. Wolfe then helped establish the first Ladyfest in Olympia, Washington, in 2000 and has since been involved with coaching and tutoring at Rock Camp for Girls. She currently lives in Los Angeles and is documenting an oral history of Riot Grrrl. This is a high-profile example, but one that is mirrored on many levels in relation to feminist music worlds. For example, Lisa Darms, one of the original Ladyfest Olympia 2000 organisers, has continued the Riot Grrrl spirit through her archival work at Fales Library and Special Collections at New York University, editing *The Riot Grrrl Collection* (2013) book. There are many more examples of creative collaborations that have come about from the ability of individuals to draw on the activism and support networks of feminist music worlds inspired by a punk DIY ethos. The cities highlighted in Figure 7.1 share links between all three movements and the cities represented by the largest light-shaded squares have been and continue to be some of the most active sites for counter-cultural creative activism.

Examining the two-mode network of Riot Grrrl associated bands in Figure 7.1 helps to understand not only how bands are connected in music worlds but how individuals inspire and connect across different time periods and cities. The importance of particular cities for the cultivation of feminist art and collaboration opportunities highlights the connection between cities, Rock Camp for Girls and Ladyfest even further. This point is applicable when looking at the importance not only of cities such as London and New York in terms of the diversity of opportunities and their economic position, but also cities such as Olympia (in Washington State), and Portland (in Oregon), despite the small population size of both these cities. Both Olympia and Portland are associated with wider punk music and artistic movements as well as being the site for the first Ladyfest festival and the first Rock Camp for Girls respectively. Washington, DC, another important hub tying both Olympia and Portland together, has a well-documented punk music scene dating back to the late 1970s.

Leonard's (2007) work on the discourses and representations of gender within popular music and the conceptualisation of Riot Grrrl as a network suggests that the importance of the Riot Grrrl network could be 'measured by the effect it has had on individuals' and that it 'opened debate concerning the participation of girls and women in creating and performing music' (p. 151). Leonard (2007)

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1 develops her networks thesis to discuss Ladyfest in similar ways drawing on
2 notions of both Ladyfest and Riot Grrrl as facilitators for access to resources, a
3 similar idea to that of Staggenborg (1998), mentioned earlier. The 'spatial
4 dynamics of Ladyfest' can help 'explore emerging patterns of organisation and
5 mediation within indie music-related networks' (Leonard 2007, 161). Moore and
6 Roberts (2009) examine Riot Grrrl feminism as one of three social movements
7 in the 1990s to spark their interest (including Rock against Racism in Britain in
8 the late 1970s and the US hardcore scene of the 1980s). They claim that music
9 and associated subcultural processes have functioned as mediums through which
10 to organise, protest and agitate for social change. Claiming that these particular
11 music examples are more important than being taste-makers or identity-formers,
12 they suggest that a DIY ethic was central to transcending mere identity politics.
13 They conclude by suggesting that the structures that grew from these collective
14 movements 'were organized for action in a broader political context when the
15 Right had gone on the offensive against the achievements of the movements for
16 racial justice, peace, and sexual equality' and in doing so 'changed the cultural
17 dynamics of the pre-existing anti-racist, peace, and feminist movements'
18 (2009, 289).

19 On one level, Ladyfest remains the same from country to country, in that it is
20 a women-focused arts and music festival with a feminist ethos which aims to
21 highlight the inequality experienced by women at all levels in the creative indus-
22 tries, and more broadly through its affiliations with particular charities. Yet on
23 another level, exactly how this is put together and how the programme runs will
24 have a very local feel. Likewise, different cities and different countries face
25 diverse social challenges crossing the boundaries of class, culture, economics,
26 disability, race and sexuality, all of which intersect with and are compounded by
27 gender. This can influence the theme of a festival and how organisers might
28 choose to deal with real-life issues in workshop sessions or panel discussions. In
29 countries such as Ireland, Spain and Italy, where abortion is highly restricted, it
30 is not unusual to find Ladyfest discussions focusing on the 'right to choose',
31 improved freedom of information about reproductive rights, and in some cases
32 providing a forum to help educate young women about sexual health. Similar
33 themes have emerged in South American festivals too. While some Ladyfests
34 take a strong overtly political stance, others may try to deal with issues more
35 subtly by focusing on a celebration of the achievements of women or, as in many
36 cases, a combination of the two.

37 Ladyfest is constantly evolving and changing yet still pays attention to its
38 roots. It is very much a translocal festival network. Translocality as a concept
39 fits well with Riot Grrrl and Ladyfest networks that are neither truly trans-
40 national or international, nor parochial. They have a very real local feel and work
41 within local contexts, yet draw and trade on cross-national and cross-city spaces
42 and resources. Having looked at the historical roots of the Ladyfest movement,
43 the question I examine next asks who participates in Ladyfest, who do we see,
44 and what do we/they look like?
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Through the looking glass – sounding reflections of ourselves

The greater the number of ties to other highly central actors (ego to alter) in a network, the greater the likelihood of increased network centrality for that individual. If, as Ibarra (1992) hypothesises, in interaction networks in organisational settings men tend to have more high-status ties characterised by homophily, could the same be said of queer-identified women in gender homophilous feminist music networks? Before looking at the question more closely we need to assess the data and some descriptive statistics that tell us more about the network participants and hint at the tendency for homophily in the networks.

The data

Surveys were administered to the three case-study sites by two modes, email or online, using Survey Gizmo: Ladyfest Oxford 2010 (email); Ladyfest Manchester (online), and Ladyfest Ten (online). Each survey contained demographic questions, the majority of which were asked across all three surveys. Oxford and Manchester information was sought for one time period only. Statistics are reported rounded to the nearest percentage. The survey response rates were as follows: Ladyfest Ten organisers, 60 per cent (once inactive mailing list members were discounted); Ladyfest Manchester, 40 per cent return generated from a ticket sales list (the festival sold out in advance); and Ladyfest Oxford returned six out of a possible eight surveys from the organising group. Respondents were encouraged to self-identify in a number of key areas. The open-ended categories included 'gender', 'sexuality', 'age' and the place they 'grew up'. Next I will briefly cover 'gender' 'age' and 'ethnicity' then focus more closely on 'sexuality'.

Gender

While men do participate in Ladyfest as both festival goers and organisers, there is a tendency towards gender homophily biased in favour of women. Gender homophily is unsurprisingly strongest for organisers, given the remit of the festival, with Ladyfest Ten being completely homophilous on gender. This is true for the most active core network and the peripheral network. Approximately 84 per cent of respondents across the three case-study sites identified as female and 14 per cent as male, only one study participant declined to nominate a gender and another chose to answer 'other' despite having the opportunity to self-identify in a free text box.

Age

The demographic data generated from the surveys let us build a picture of who participates in Ladyfest activities in the UK and give an indication of how

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homogenous a group Ladyfest participants might be and how this might affect homophily measures when examining the networks. Sixty per cent of respondents, a sizeable majority, were aged between 25 and 34. The results from this study indicate that the age bands and gender of participants attending and organising Ladyfest festivals reflect participation levels in other associated modes of participation such as on Facebook. For example, the age profile for ‘fans’ of the Ladyfest Ten Facebook page (www.facebook.com/pages/Ladyfest-Ten/298592715550) sees the highest number of participants in the 25 to 34 years age group with the 35 to 44 years group making up a sizeable proportion.

Ethnicity

Based on the UK Census ethnicity categories, the majority of respondents, 86 per cent in total, described themselves as belonging to one of three white categories (White British, White Irish and White Other). This figure is in keeping with the most recent UK Census data from 2011. According to a census briefing report by the Centre on Dynamics of Ethnicity (CoDE), while the number of people defining themselves ethnically as non-White has more than doubled in size from three million in 1991 to seven million in 2011, this non-White group remains a minority of the total population at 14 per cent (Jivraj 2012). Undoubtedly, there are problems within predominantly White feminist movements and real issues about equality of access to these movements for women from Black and Minority Ethnic groups (BME). However, it would appear from these case studies that women are participating in Ladyfest at rates that reflect the BME population in the UK. This goes some way to refute claims that Ladyfest is colour-blind, at least in a UK context. These figures may not represent the experience in the USA. However, it is important not to over-simplify this finding as, while some minorities may appear to be adequately represented in the Ladyfest movement, some voices and faces tend to represent feminist movements more than others and it is these often unintentional hierarchical roles that need addressing.

Sexuality

The question that had the greatest variation in discrete response categories was that of sexuality. There were 16 different free text responses, showing the variety along the sexuality spectrum and the importance of self-definition for those engaged in counter-cultural creative feminist activism. Additionally one respondent said they thought the question was not important and another replied ‘other’ despite having the opportunity to answer the question in their own words. The full list of responses is listed below:

- 1 Queer | Queer – Pan-sexual | Queer-Bisexual | Queer Lezzer
- 2 Lesbian | Gay Woman | Gay
- 3 Bisexual Gay | Bisexual (strong preference for women) | Bisexual

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Proof

134 S. O'Shea

- 4 Mostly straight | Open minded-heterosexual | Heterosexual | Straight
5 Homosexual
6 Undecided | Not important | Other

The question was recoded, first into five broad categories that reflect the variety of responses and are closely linked to the first five groups above and displayed in Table 7.1. This was further collapsed into a binary variable 'non-heterosexual' and 'heterosexual'.

The results for 'sexuality' were examined across each case-study site. The differences in responses between Manchester, London and Oxford were statistically non-significant at the .05 level, suggesting that perhaps there is an element of homophily at work. It would appear that similar types of people tend to be attracted to Ladyfest festivals and associated feminist music worlds. The city in which the festival takes place does not appear to influence the degree of participation from sexual minority groups, although Manchester has a slightly higher percentage of respondents identifying as queer. Queer is not only used as a term for assuming a non-heterosexual sexual identity or a straight-queer rejection of heteronormativity, but also as a potent political identifier. Manchester has a long tradition of queer cultural activism and queer music which frequently sets itself in opposition to mainstream male gay culture in the city's Village area. The Village as a space is frequently sound-tracked by loud bubble-gum techno, hen-party chatter and festival tourism, see Hughes (2006) for more on this theme. Many Manchester-based queer activists perceive the area to have lost sight of its original remit associated with Pride, to be dominated by body-conscious consumerism, hostile to alternative lifestyles and pink-pound rejectionists, where aging bodies go unnoticed (Simpson 2013), while perpetuating the invisibility of lesbian lives and female-identified queers. One only needs to listen to any of the powerful punk-pop-feminist tracks of Ste McCabes (former Manchester resident, Ladyfest organiser and performer) to understand how charged these issues are.⁵

Ladyfest tends to attract participants and musicians who predominantly identify as non-heterosexual. Around 75 per cent of respondents fall into this

Table 7.1 Sexuality

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid per cent	Cumulative per cent
<i>Valid</i>				
Queer	20	26.0	26.0	26.0
Heterosexual	19	24.7	24.7	50.6
Bisexual	13	16.9	16.9	67.5
Lesbian/Gay	21	27.3	27.3	94.8
Undecided	1	1.3	1.3	96.1
Other	2	2.6	2.6	98.7
Missing	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
Total	77	100.0	100.0	

Source: Ladyfest survey data, Manchester, Oxford and London.

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category. This was a surprising finding despite the association of Ladyfest with queer politics and its frequent alignment with the LGBTQ⁶ movement for particular campaigns. However, it is a finding that may support popular public perceptions that feminism is for lesbian women only, although on closer examination we see that this is not an accurate assumption.

Ladyfest organising groups tend to discuss whether to even use the term feminism in case it conjures up these images and alienates people from joining the organising group or attending the festival, particularly as we are used to hearing the phrase ‘I’m not a feminist, but...’. However, generally the feminist label remains attached to the movement and a central part of the festival’s identity and as a way of reclaiming the term. As noted by one respondent ‘as long as it stays feminist and stays artistic, I like that the model can be used however anyone wants it!’ (Ladyfest Ten, survey respondent 2011).

London calling, behind the scenes

London, as the UK capital, is an ethnically diverse and cosmopolitan city. However, its size and high cost of living coupled with poor provision for disability access in venues and on public transport can make participation in cultural and music events difficult for many. It is a well-respected international music and artistic destination in the UK and internationally. There have been at least eight documented Ladyfest festivals in the city. Festivals took place in 2002, 2007, two in 2008, 2009 and two in 2010. The November 2010 festival was Ladyfest Ten and one of the case studies for this project, Ladyfest East, London, took place in April 2012. The Ladyfest Ten case study yielded the most fruitful network data, due in part to its size, the ability to engage in participatory research with the organisation right from the beginning and the mixed media that was used to plan, organise and promote the festival. Ladyfest Ten was designed to celebrate ten years of Ladyfest activism around the world and the organisers took a celebratory theme and an international slant to the festival, putting together a rich, and vibrant cross-platform music and arts festival.

The festival took place in the Highbury and Islington area of North London, chosen as it is well networked to various transport links with disability access. A number of community and music venues, including the local library, were used in this area along a straight stretch of road to house a variety of Ladyfest activities. Again, each of these venues had events on the ground floor for ease of access. However, the weekend the festival took place the London Underground network for this area was not working and the city experienced one of the worst weekends of heavy rainfall. This made the festival difficult for people to access, particularly those with mobility issues, and it greatly reduced the possibility of people coming along to the festival at the last minute. The main music venue was The Garage, a popular mid-sized venue, although large for a Ladyfest. It caters for well-known international touring bands. It was an ambitious sized venue to fill. Some of the organisers felt that, despite numbers being lower than anticipated, the feedback from the musicians who played in a well-equipped

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venue more than made up for the smaller than hoped for audience. The costs associated with this ambitious festival were high, particularly as there were a number of high profile international acts such as M.E.N (with former Le Tigre members JD Samson and Johanna Fateman) and Nicky Click. Poorer than expected advance ticket sales and the negative impact of the local transport and weather conditions meant the festival suffered financial difficulty. It required several post-festival fundraising activities in order to recoup some outstanding costs.

Network data

Ladyfest Ten had a defined network boundary and all the actors in the network were known before data collection began. A name roster, derived from a dedicated organiser's mailing list and online planning tool called NING, was used to generate network data. This was gathered at the same time as the main survey. Respondents were asked questions on how they perceived their relationships and activities with other organisers at the time of taking the survey (approximately six months after the festival) and at two other retrospective time points. These included the weekend the festival took place and the period before individuals became involved with the group. Demographic data was provided by 32 respondents who also represented most of the core actors within the network. The analysis was conducted in UCINET 6 (Borgatti *et al.* 2002). My knowledge of participants, their relationships and group activities, such as planning meetings and sub-group activities like fundraising, craft fairs, film nights, art exhibitions and club nights, provided a means of corroborating the nominations made by survey respondents. I am confident that the nominated relationship ties within the network to seemingly peripheral actors, are likely to be reciprocated by the non-respondents. However, most of the analysis is carried out on undirected ties avoiding issues pertaining to analyses of reciprocity. About six months into planning the festival, in order to streamline activities, those on the original Ladyfest email list were asked to join the NING social networking site to help with organising activities. Participants self-selected into this group and a few new members joined. There were 79 members of the NING group at its peak and this number represents active network members. The following analysis is conducted on the 79 nodes.

Network change over time

Longitudinal social networks have a tendency to follow one of four dynamic states: they can exhibit stability, shock or mutation or they evolve. In the case of Ladyfest Ten the networks underwent a period of evolution represented over three peak periods of activity. The first is at the point of network formation where network participants knew many other participants by name but did not rate a significant relationship with them. The second is around the weekend of the festival where the most intense activities and relationships are mapped.

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The third is a period about six months after the festival, representing a stage of settling and allows us to assess the lasting impact of involvement in organising a Ladyfest on the relationships of participants.

In order to conduct an analysis of attribute-based network homophily that reflects a more meaningful relationship each time-point was dichotomised using the valued relation greater than or equal to 'acquaintance'. Analysis was then carried out on the stronger relationship ties, requiring actors to have some kind of contact with alters that is considered more consequential than just knowing someone to see or by name. There was a small downward adjustment in tie nominations between time two and time three. The latter period represents the enduring relationships between organisers approximately six months after their mutual reason for forming those ties is no longer a motive for them to stay in touch.

Figures 7.2 and 7.3 not only visually show how networks change over time but how the density of ties has increased threefold between the beginning of the festival planning period and several months after the event has taken place. This is in spite of only three new actor nominations occurring at the third time point.

The majority of ties in Figure 7.2 are at the level of acquaintance, whereas by Time 3 the majority of relations are based on friendship or close friendship ties. We can hypothesise from this that Ladyfest networks experience an evolutionary growth in density over time but that they also provide significant opportunities

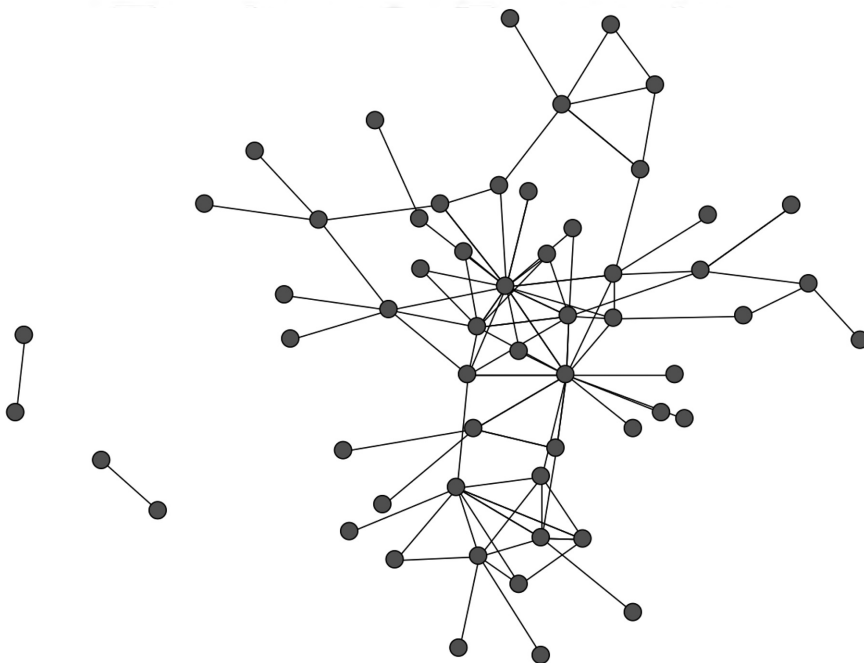


Figure 7.2 Time 1: strong relationships.

Note

Ladyfest Ten – 57 nominated nodes with 107 ties.

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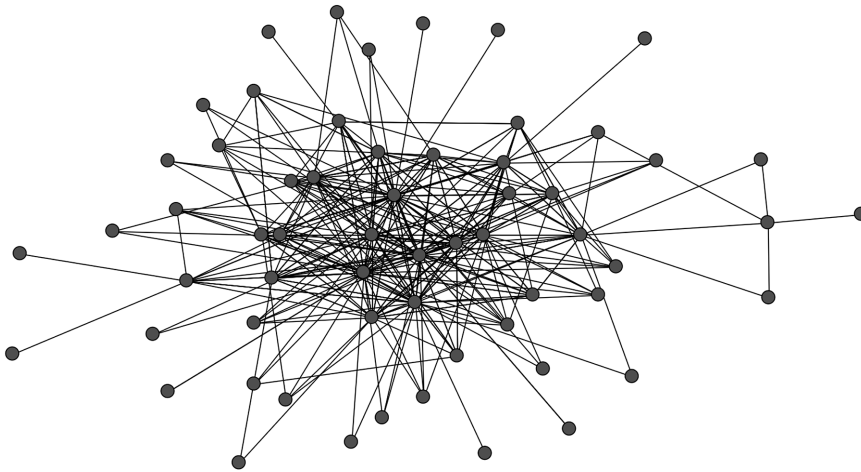


Figure 7.3 Time 3: strong relationships.

Note

Ladyfest Ten – 60 nominated nodes 374 ties.

for participants to form lasting friendship ties once the network dissolves. Next I briefly discuss average degree measures before coming back to homophily in greater detail by drawing on the idea of homophily based on sexual preference as mentioned earlier.

Average degree

Density measures are best represented in a comparative way, and help us understand how well connected a particular network is. In other words, 'density can be interpreted as the probability that a tie exists between any pair of randomly chosen nodes' (Borgatti *et al.* 2013, 150). While this is important to consider, we can see from Table 7.2 that although there has been an increase in density over the three time points, the increase is smaller than we might expect considering the evidence of enhanced network activity shown in Figure 7.3 and the relatively small size of the network. However, the average degree tells us a lot more as

Table 7.2 Average degree density

	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3
Density	0.034	0.108	0.106
No. of ties	107	422	374
Average degree	1.877	6.698	6.233

Source: Ladyfest Ten survey.

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it 'represents the average number of ties that each node has' (Borgatti *et al.* 2013, 152).

This shows that, by the end of the festival, Ladyfest Ten organisers had increased their friendship ties from on average fewer than two to just over six. The difference in this respect between Time 2 and Time 3 is negligible, again showing that involvement with Ladyfest serves to increase sustainable relationships. This is important in the context of homophily as the following examples will show.

All together the same but different

Homophily, as we have seen, is not only an important sociological concept but it plays a central role in the development of social networks. Table 7.3 highlights the changes in homophily measures between the beginning of the festival planning period and after the festival, using attribute data on the whole network.

The E-I index is a measure of the external and internal ties of individual members of a particular group, for example those who share the same ethnicity, to members outside that group. If the index is -1 then all ties are internal to the group and if the index is $+1$ then all ties are external. On the other hand Yule's Q is a standard measure of association capable of controlling for the relative size of a category and of assessing the rate at which similar or different ties connect with one another in a whole network context. A value of 0 indicates no homophily with -1 representing perfect heterophily and $+1$ perfect homophily.⁷

Examining Table 7.3, the following E-I index attribute measures are moving in a positive direction, that is towards $+1$ even if still in the negative range, and are suggestive of a move from internal ties (homophily) to external ties (heterophily) between Time 1 and Time 3. These include education, ethnicity

Table 7.3 Whole network homophily

Attributes	Time 1		Time 3	
	E-I ind	Yule's Q	E-I ind	Yule's Q
Age	0.2121	-0.1473	-0.1278	0.2896
Education	-0.9091	0.1766	-0.3850	0.4659
Ethnicity	0.1212	0.0527	0.2932	-0.0043
White ethnicities	-0.6859	-1.0000	-0.3985	0.0439
White British	-0.0890	1.0000	0.0301	-0.0191
Festival area (from)	0.3508	1.0000	0.4812	-0.0166
Doing now (all options)	0.5079	1.0000	0.2857	0.1840
Work	0.0157	1.0000	-0.0150	0.0591
Student	-0.7487	-1.0000	-0.6090	0.1219
Social class proxy	-0.3226	0.0000	-0.3409	0.0584
Sexuality (6 items)	0.4974	1.0000	0.5865	-0.0037
Non-hetero/heterosexual	-0.1518	1.0000	-0.3534	0.1861

Source: Ladyfest Ten Survey.



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(covering all ethnicity categories), White ethnicities, White British, festival area (where people feel they are from), student, and sexuality (broken down into the six categories highlighted in Table 7.1). For the same attributes the Yule's Q measure appears to suggest a similar pattern, in most cases moving from perfect homophily towards indicating heterophilous network relations. The social class proxy measure remains almost unchanged, while it appears people tend to form relationships more frequently with those of a similar age and education and if they identify as non-heterosexual.

These results may be tentatively interpreted as indicating that involvement with Ladyfest increases the opportunity of forming meaningful relationships with others from different geographical backgrounds and ethnicities, while sharing similar beliefs in things like feminism. Yet, involvement does not guarantee that some relationships are not hindered due to structural inequalities such as class. Caution is further advised about how these particular findings are interpreted with a proviso that they only pertain to an individual's network ties within this specific bounded feminist music world and not their networks in other areas of their lives.

Earlier in the chapter I posed the question whether queer-identified women in gender homophilous feminist music worlds might have similar homophily influenced high-status ties as men in interaction networks in organisational settings (Ibarra 1992). Table 7.4 highlights the density of tie strength based on sexuality. Queer has the highest density with almost 48 per cent of ties falling within the same group. The autocorrelation score is 0.445 explaining 45 per cent of the variance overall by ties based on sexuality.

When the dichotomous measure of sexuality is examined, 70 per cent of ties occur within the non-heterosexual category. From the evidence presented in this chapter it is clear that homophily is important in Ladyfest networks and, while there is support for the idea that strong ties are formed around sexual preferences, how meaningful that is and how important the conceptualisation of queer relationships are in this context is open to debate and in need of further investigation.

Embracing difference

Set against a wider background of gender inequality in music and the creative industries, I have attempted to show how two music movements, Riot Grrrl and Ladyfest, attempt to challenge these disparities. This chapter sought to move on

Table 7.4 Density of tie strength based on sexuality

	<i>Queer</i>	<i>Heterosexual</i>	<i>Bisexual</i>	<i>Lesbian/Gay</i>	<i>Undecided</i>	<i>Other</i>
Number	34	4	7	10	0	0
Density	0.472	0.056	0.350	0.238	0	0

Source: Ladyfest Ten Survey.

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1 from a purely qualitative consideration of the networks of these feminist music
2 worlds, by employing a mixed-methods social network approach to understand-
3 ing why birds of a feather flock together.

4 The discussion on the Riot Grrrl band networks helped to provide an under-
5 standing of how, within music worlds, individuals as well as bands inspire and
6 connect with other like-minded individuals across different spaces and places.
7 Even a simple measure like playing in a band together can quickly reveal the
8 complex and often dense networks behind seemingly unconnected feminist
9 activists.

10 Next, three UK-based Ladyfest sites were introduced which highlighted the
11 demographic characteristics of organisers and participants. Survey data revealed
12 that 84 per cent of participants in these examples identified as female, they were
13 mostly aged between 25 and 34, the majority were White, although the 14 per
14 cent non-White minority is in keeping with recent Census statistics (Jivraj 2012),
15 and almost 75 per cent identified as non-heterosexual.

16 Social network analysis techniques were used to discuss the organisational
17 structure and evolution of Ladyfest Ten, a London based case-study. A longitud-
18 inal overview of strong ties revealed not only that networks change over time
19 but that the density of ties increased significantly between the beginning of the
20 festival planning period and several months after the event had taken place. This
21 manifested as an increase in the average degree for participants' ego-alter ties,
22 by four to over six, six months after the festival, showing how sustainable rela-
23 tionships are created and maintained as a result of involvement with Ladyfest.
24 Whole network homophily measures suggested that involvement with Ladyfest
25 increases the opportunity of forming meaningful relationships with others from
26 different ethnic groups and places, and that there is a general tendency towards
27 heterophily based on attribute ties as the network evolves. However, age, educa-
28 tion, class and a non-heterosexual identity have a slight tendency to encourage
29 more homophilous ties. This requires further investigation.

30 To conclude, it would appear that feminist music worlds not only aspire to
31 embrace difference but do in fact embrace difference as revealed by the study of
32 Riot Grrrl and Ladyfest networks. Feminist activists may outwardly appear to be
33 a homogenous group with particular traits, but those traits are more complex and
34 subtle than they first appear. Both homophily and heterophily have their role to
35 play in network evolution, personal tie formation and friendship development
36 over time. However, in these feminist music worlds we can safely say that birds
37 of a feather rock together.

Notes

- 38
39
40
41 1 This is a reliable estimated figure. There is no formal record of Ladyfest activity and
42 due to the often transient nature of online communications, blogs and websites and the
43 difficulties and expense groups face with internet providers and server hosts, some
44 information on previous Ladyfest festivals may be lost as websites shut down or
45 perhaps festivals never took place, despite having an online presence. However, with
the advent of the *Grassroots Feminism* web archive (www.grassrootsfeminism.net),

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Proof

142 S. O'Shea

- some of this lost information may be retrieved and at the very least there is now an online repository for future Ladyfest archives and other feminist media. There have been many more Ladyfest festivals since 2010.
- 2 <http://intermezzo.typepad.com/intermezzo/2013/04/women-at-proms.html>.
- 3 Creative and Cultural Skills (2010/2011) – Statistics generated from the Creative and Cultural Skills data generator resource: www.data-generator.org.uk (accessed 10 December 2012).
- 4 Fletcher's speech is available here: www.wearsthe trousers.com/2008/11/ladyfest-manchester-the-saturday-debate/.
- 5 www.ste-mccabe.co.uk/.
- 6 LGBTQ is usually shorthand for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered and Queer. This is the most commonly used abbreviation of the longer, more inclusive but less memorable LGBTTTQIAA (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual, Two-spirited, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Ally).
- 7 However, in this case as the numbers are low in many of the attribute categories and a small number have missing data, the strength of Yule's Q cannot be attributed to an exact figure but rather interpreted as reasonably good indicator of homophilous or heterophilous tendencies in the network. An advantage of the mixed-methods approach is that ethnographic data assist with interpretation and support these findings.

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144 S. O'Shea

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