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10X THE TALENT = 1/3 OF THE CREDIT
HOW FEMALE MUSICIANS ARE
TREATED DIFFERENTLY IN MUSIC

by

MEGGAN M. JORDAN
B.A. University of Central Florida, 2004

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of Sociology
in the College of Sciences
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ABSTRACT

This is an exploratory, qualitative study of female musicians and their experiences with discrimination in the music industry. Using semi-structured interviews, I analyze the experiences of nine women, ages 21 to 56, who are working as professional musicians, or who have worked professionally in the past. I ask them how they are treated differently based on their gender. Three forms of subtle discrimination are inferred from their narrative histories. First, female musicians are mistaken for non-musicians. They are encapsulated into inferior roles, like “the gimmick,” “good for a girl,” and “invisible accessory.” Second, band mates and band managers control women’s space, success, and artistic freedom. Third, their femininity, sexuality, and age are highly scrutinized. The analysis implies that female musicians are tokenized, devalued, and considered inappropriate for their jobs. Particular attention is paid to the similarities between female musicians and women in male dominated work places. I conclude by discussing the larger implications for gender, music, and social change in a sexist, unregulated industry.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project would not be possible without the ten gifted women who were so candid with their private lives and gracious with their time.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Though music itself is neither masculine nor feminine, those who create music are of predominately one sex. Never waning in their presence throughout rock history, men are more likely than women to become musicians, producers, composers, or record label owners (Martin, 1995; Frith, 1978 and 1981; Weinstein 1993). In this world, sound engineers at concerts are “sound guys,” talent scouts are “A&R men,” guitar virtuosos are “guitar gods,” and Elvis is the “King” of rock ‘n roll without a queen. Male musicians not only permeate *rock* music (alternative, indie, hardcore, or punk), but all genres of music--from hip-hop to country, electronic to jazz (Martin, 1995). Women, meanwhile, are present in popular music but take on a different role. Simon Frith (1981), rock critic and sociologist, speaks of a sexual division of labor in music making:

The maleness of the world of rock is reflected in its lyrics, with their assertions of male supremacy, narcissism, and self-pity; but, for musicians, what is most significant is women’s exclusion from the heart of their lives: exclusion from their friendships and work together as comrade craftsmen in the studio, on the road, in performance. Women’s job in rock is still to service their creative men” (p. 85).

Gender maps out, with supreme detail, the spaces that women and men occupy in music. In its most traditional form, male musicians interact with both female fans and other male musicians. But if masculinity implies musicianship, another story begs for attention: What about creative women? Does femininity disrupt the traditional gendered order of music? For this reason, female musicians are a fascinating group to study. With their fewer chart successes (Katovich and Makowski, 1999, Dowd et al., 2005), fickle star power (Wells, 2001), and differential treatment (Bayton, 1998; Green 1997; and Clawson, 1993), women experience music-making much differently. Lacking equal face time in music history, and underrated by critics, audiences, and

fellow musicians, the female musician appears to be singing into a dead microphone. In this paper, I hand her a new microphone, lending her a louder voice.

My primary aim in this exploratory study is to answer a basic question: are female musicians treated differently based on their sex? In other words, are these women subjected to discrimination on both a personal and an institutional level? I try to answer this question by unearthing the experiences that female musicians share in common. I interview 9 women who have made, or are attempting to make, “musician” a full-time occupation. Therefore, I approach musicians as *workers*, not only as culture generators. Because the female musician undoubtedly exists in a non-traditional occupation, I relate female musicians’ experiences to those of women who are not in sex-typical occupations. Specifically, I use the research on discrimination to bolster this study’s findings. Thus, from the broader literature on occupations, we are able to see how music culture’s *structure* constrains female musicians’ choices and chances. In sum, throughout this paper I examine the relationship between gender, work, and music. I ask “What inequalities exist in this relationship?” In the end, I show how subtle sex discrimination plays a substantial part in the lives of working female musicians.

Gender, Musicians, and Difference

Music and gender are both about performance. Gender, then, is performed *through* music. More specifically, as an arena that allows men to express sentiments that are discouraged in other public settings, music is important for the performance of masculinity (Coates, 1997). Thus, music is a source of status and prestige, involving instruments, images, and poses, that symbolize male sexuality and power. At the same time, however, music’s imagined version of reality places

limitations on women. Although musicians themselves lack coherent shared beliefs, the “rock star” (meaning the career of the rock musician) is an ideological construct. The “ideology of rock” maintains that rock stars begin by working hard under threat of starvation and destitution, “make it” with a hit song, and thereafter live a life of luxury and excess (Frith, 1978). Under this utopian scenario, men use music as a badge of success and accomplishment, while women reaffirm this success by idolizing and adoring them. There is little room in this ideology for women to maneuver. In fact, according to rock ideology, women do not become rock stars--they are only the “reward” for the male rock star’s success. *Table 1* illustrates the typical choices available to women in music. In this paper, I explore the question of “What happens to women who jump to the ‘male side’ of the gender distribution?” Indeed, by themselves *woman* and *musician* look quite tepid compared to the complexities of meaning behind *female musician*. *Musician* itself implies masculine essence; men are presumed to have a “natural” musical talent. Ideal types like “musical prodigy,” “singer-songwriter,” “king of rock,” and “metal god” evoke images of masculinity. When a woman embraces these ideal types, she not only reflexively contradicts her femininity, she becomes a lesser copy—not simply a “musician,” but a “jazz front woman,” “indie rock chanteuse,” “pop diva,” or “sexy siren.” Female musicians experience a “problem of fit” that puts their bodies at odds with their potential. This irony is primarily an issue of embodiment, where women’s body “incorrectly” plays an instrument, even though she may follow “all the rules of authenticity--lack of artifice, standard, stripped-down instrumentation, and frank, sexually explicit lyrics.” (Coates, 1997). Women, in other words, throw music in flux by transgressing and threatening gender boundaries. The next question, then, is what kind of treatment do female musicians receive on account of their deviancy? How are they shown that

they are considered less credible and less competent than men? Before I attempt to answer these questions, I summarize what other studies reveal about female musicians and difference.

Table 1: Typical gender distribution of social roles in the popular music world

Female	Male
Singer	Instrumentalist
Backing vocalist	Manager of band
Fan	Live sound engineer
Groupie	Technician (guitar tech, drum tech, ect.)
Girlfriend	Roadie
Wife	Lighting engineer
Mother	Driver
Dancer	Rigger
	Road manager
	Music press photographer
	Buyer for retail chain
	Sales rep
	Promoter
	Pluggger
	Club DJ
	Music press journalist
	Radio DJ

from *Frock Rock: Women Performing Popular Music* (Bayton, 1998, p. 26).

Standpoint Feminism and Research Motivations

Because I am a feminist, musician, and a female, feminist standpoint theory theoretically and methodologically grounds this research. Harding (1983) says that feminist standpoint theorists heighten female experiences as true and real, in order to improve the conditions of women’s lives. Standpoint feminism has three objectives: to prove that women are oppressed, to expose this system of oppression, and to subsequently liberate women from it. Women, say the standpoint theorists, possess a different type of knowledge than men, and by amplifying the “concrete realities of their lives,” women’s “standpoints” pierce through male-centered epistemology that silences female voices (Hekman, 1997). Standpoint feminism, then, is a tool

that I will use to describe a material reality for women who face discrimination and sexism. Through out this paper, then, I use the narratives of female musicians who are situated in experiences that are, to them, very real and reflective of the nature of the music industry. Because their accounts are *real to them*, female musicians in this study have valid standpoints that lend a voice to women in similar disadvantaged positions.

Moreover, as Dorothy Smith (1987) enjoins the abstract knowledge of the female sociologist to her material reality as a woman, I must position myself accordingly. My motivation for pursuing discrimination against female musicians grows out of my fascination with the separate worlds of music and feminism. I play an instrument (guitar) --sometimes on my own, sometimes in bands with others; I work at an independent record store and recommend new artists to the customers there; I am an active member in the Orlando underground music scene. Never without an album or song as background music for every activity, I also consider myself a music consumer. However, from my lived experience in each of these spheres (band member, audience member, solo musician, store clerk), I casually noticed that I was being treated differently because of my gender. Whether because of a change in music taste or a change in feminist views, I distanced myself from the masculine playground of mainstream rock. I did so for three reasons. First, female vocalists and musicians spoke of issues that were important in my life. Second, the hyper- masculinity infused in any music of “consequence” repelled my taste for feminine energy. Third, listening to, promoting, and jamming with female artists is my own way of directly challenging the masculinity I see all around me. More and more these days, I consciously seek out artists who are female, both to make music with and to listen to for enjoyment. But frustrated when my search for a female band

mates came up empty, and angry when the female artists I listened to received little recognition, I developed a plan for action: research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on female musicians—and the wider literature on social analysis of music—covers everything from biographical sketches of women who “made it,” to lyrical analysis of “Manic Monday” by the Bangles. Despite the diverse and electrifying writing on this subject, a comprehensive assessment of the literature on female musicians has seldom been undertaken (in Bayton, 1998; Schippers, 1997). Therefore, I have organized this section to reflect the trends--and lack of trends--in the literature. First, I survey the literature on female chart success, and I provide an estimate for the proportion of females within music. Second, I dive into the literature on women in bands and their issues with instrumentation and social networking. Third, I uncover the literature on female solo artists who maneuver through masculine hegemony by way of subverting their lyrics, messages, labels, and images. Fourth, I bring in the literature on sex discrimination in the workplace to better frame my research question. I close with a suggestion for improvements to studying this segment of musical sociology.

Numbers: Herstory Vs. History on the Charts

Before we glimpse into the experiences of female artists, it is appropriate to provide a few facts about female charts, numbers, and roles in the music industry. Although no study provides a widespread count of female musicians, a few have provided numbers that estimate their presence. One study by Bayton (1998) took a tally of the local music scene in Oxford, England in 1995. Of the 800-1000 musicians she counted, only 26 were female, and only 19 of those played an instrument. These numbers had remained relatively stable since 1985. She

estimates that that women now make up 15% of the instrumentalists in rock music. “Greatest artist” lists also serve as an indicator of female presence and success. Out of the Top 100 artists in a special issue of *Rolling Stone*, and 6.6% were women from 61 bands (in Clawson, 1999a). *Rolling Stone* also selected fifty “immortal” artists for its April 2004 issue (in Glen, 2005). Out of the 50 artists, only 4 were women (Aretha Franklin, Madonna, Janis Joplin, and Patti Smith). The Billboard charts also give us clues about the ratio of women to men in the music industry. Chapple (1977) reports that in the top 50 albums from 1961-1974, the number of female albums only reached a high of 21%. Moreover, Katovich and Makowski (1999) found that out of five rock periods from 1956-1996, female chart success has been declining. In the 1956-63 era, women made up 3% of all number one albums compared to men’s 42.4%. The top albums for women peaked at 17.5% in the 1978-84 period, but declined to 18% from 1985-96. Meanwhile, number one albums by men have remained steady at around 70%. Wells (2001) confirms this decline, and concludes that females have recently scored higher *on* the charts, but lower in overall presence. He infers that “female success is not very deep; indeed it may be as precarious as the next big hit” (p. 229). More optimistically, the latest study of album chart success found women outnumbering men in 1997 by a 5 to 3 ratio. Dowd et al. (2005) attribute the sporadic chart success of women to wartime shortages (positive), industry recession (negative), the impact of MTV (positive), and the women’s movement (both). Their empirical analysis of singles charts from 1940 to 1990 found that women in mainstream markets were constrained by a glass ceiling. The active number of female musicians on the charts never rose over 25%. Moreover, whenever females flooded the market during peak years, their chart successes dropped. Dowd et al. speculate that competition for scarce industry resources may be the cause. Unfortunately, chart success is the only data source available for social researchers, and I am aware of its limitations

when drawing conclusions about the lack of women in music as a whole. However, chart success is a decent indicator of the “star power” and upward mobility of female musicians compared to men. In the following section, I will synthesize the literature on women artists to explain why their chances for success are lower than men’s.

Opportunity: Banned from the Band?

No symbol in music is more identifiable than the “rock band.” The four-part ensemble, like the Beatles or the Rolling Stones, is a prototype for what Weinstein (1993) labels as a “unit of creativity” that is fraught with “disproportionate power” from within. In a band, a balance of power between members hinges on several variables: skill level, touring experience, songwriting, success, instrument choice, or even practice space. Gender, however, is a power issue few band mates confront, because most are men anyway. When a female beats the odds and joins or forms a band, it brings an interesting power dynamic to the group. As will be shown in this section, most writings on female musicians report that women are underrepresented in bands—particularly as instrumentalists. Sociologically, it’s necessary to ask why this is so.

As observed earlier in the paper, the ideology of rock prevents the “female rock star” from existing equally alongside the male rock star. While music’s ideology is built by men, for men, this is merely a symbolic explanation. Masculine values of aggressiveness, cockiness, and virtuosity do not fully account for the exclusion of women in music. Consequently, it is necessary to examine the concrete obstacles to joining a band in the first place. Therefore, structural opportunity—in areas of instrumentation, band formation, and authority—is the theme for the next discussion.

Instrumentation, Band Formation, and Authority

“So you want to be a rock ‘n’ roll star? / Then listen now to what I say / Just get an electric guitar / Then take some time and learn how to play” sang the Byrds in 1967. But is it really that easy? Instrumentation is necessary to forming a rock band; the Byrds’ advice clearly acknowledges this fact. But without pouring over chord charts, saving up for expensive equipment, or practicing until exhaustion, creating music would be less daunting for those who have access to the necessary resources. These resources usually consist of money, time, confidence, and determination. Musicians, as a whole, experience similar obstacles when successfully entering and maintaining a band; certain constraints, however, are unique to women.

Instrument Assumptions

The player and the instrument embody a highly personal bond in rock music. But this relationship is not without social assumptions of who-should-play-what, or even how-they-should-play it. Depending on the gender of the player, musicians are expected to play certain instruments. For example, in a sample of orchestral members from 1940-1980, 3% of women on average played the tuba, while 86% played the harp (Macleod, 1993; see also Meyers and Etaugh, 2001). School-aged children, especially, make stereotyped judgments about the gendered-quality of instruments, as if instruments were dichotomized into “boys” and “girls” toys (Harrison & O’Neill, 2003). Sometimes instruments are valued over others. As is often the case in rock music, “male”-typical instruments are valued over the “female” (Clawson, 1999a; Gourse, 1995). But instruments by themselves do not emit qualities appealing to men or women.

Somewhere down the line, the guitar and drums became men's instruments, and the violin and piano women's.

Green (1997) argues that instruments became gendered only with respect to women. Men, she says, are able to play any instrument conceivable, without questioning its normality: "We do not have to listen to a man playing the drums; we can listen to the music *played on* the drums" (p. 80). Women, on the other hand, are labeled "female instrumentalists," and not just "instrument players." Green theorizes that for women, manipulating an instrument is unacceptable, because they cannot maintain their femininity while simultaneously producing "cerebral, autonomous works of genius" (p. 113). As evidence, her study of musical classrooms in elementary school found that teachers view girls' abilities as limitless--as long as girls worked hard. Boys, however, were seen as creative geniuses when they put forth little effort and disobeyed conventions. Girls in her study rejected music theory out of frustration, responded emotionally with music they could not control, and avoided labeling themselves as composers. Boys, in contrast, viewed their composition positively, acted confident and care-free in the classroom, rejected music rules from the teacher, and seemed more likely to possess a "natural" talent. Thus, a woman who plays a "woman's" instrument is merely reaffirming her femininity. If she plays a "man's" instrument, she must prove, through composition and skill, that she has the authority to play it. Similar experiences are found in Gourse (1995), who documents the uphill battles among female jazz musicians to assert masculine technique while retaining a feminine persona. For a beginning female, therefore, playing a masculine instrument like a brass horn or the drums undermines her femininity. She must work harder at her instrument because of masculine lack, much like women must work harder for less credit in other non-traditional occupations.

The sex-typing of instruments parallels the sex-typing of occupations in other ways. Valentine (1985) interviewed females who play masculine instruments at a college music conservatory. She found that sex-typing of instruments confines career aspirations for women. The feminine-typed instruments and positions are not the most valuable in the art world in terms of prestige and financial reward. Moreover, an “old boys’ network” existed between male teachers and male students in the conservatory. This environment was one in which female instrumentalists were prone to sexual harassment. Finally, a “myth of talent” justified failure and success. This belief says that women who rise to the top possess an innate, exceptional gift for music. The “myth of talent” works like the myth of American individualism in larger society:

It reduces complex social processes to individual behavior, rationalizing success and failure in terms of inborn talent, ambition, hard work, thus concealing the structural barriers to success which stand in the way of women (p. 8).

Valentine claims that women’s success and failure at the music conservatory was seen as natural, not structural. The few female trumpet players, for instance, blamed themselves for failing to reach the top of their male-dominated class. In sum, instrument assumptions transmit binary beliefs on gender that entail personal consequences for female musicians. As I will explore later, these consequences correspond to the discrimination women face in sex segregated workplaces.

Barriers to Women’s Success.

Women face other structural setbacks when participating in music life. Bayton’s study (1998) of female musicians in the UK found that the primary reason why women forgo joining a band is the combination of constraints on equipment, space, and training. First, women’s deflated pay compared to men’s affords little extra money to save up for expensive equipment. Buying

the right equipment can be a highly technical endeavor. Steward and Garratt (1984) confirm this in their description of a music store:

“The standard music equipment shop is a typically intimidating boys’ club atmosphere. Men use these shops to show off their bedroom-practiced solos along with their knowledge of technicalities and gadgets. Supercilious attendants will snigger audibly if a woman asks to test an instrument. They tend to assume you’re just there to buy your boyfriend’s [guitar pick]” (Steward & Garratt, 1984, p. 108).

Men gain equipment knowledge, furthermore, by “talking music”--a value in boyhood culture, almost like “talking sports” (Johnson, 1994; McGuffey and Rich, 1999). For men, social power is granted among male friend networks through conversations on desired equipment, actual accumulation of equipment, and skillful use of the equipment in creative ways (Weinstein, 1991). Bayton notes that boys are possessive of this information, rarely sharing their unwritten “owners manual” for how to play instruments and use equipment. Women have an almost nonexistent dialog about equipment, and this affects song composition. Boys are trained to break down a song in order to duplicate it. Thus, “unscrambling” noises in songs and deciphering how it was made is an untaught art that many male musicians unconsciously practice (Steward & Garratt, 1984). Second, Bayton notes that music scenes are nourished in public spaces. In order to join a band, frequenting these public spaces is necessary. The requirements for participating in a scene involve the ability to stay out late at night in the more dangerous parts of cities--usually in bars or clubs. These bars are usually male-controlled. Thus, threats of violence and victimization under these conditions are a major deterrence for women who want to involve themselves with local music. Third, even if a woman was determined enough to risk her safety to socialize with musicians, she is often restricted by parental curfews or other male musicians. Bayton’s interviews found that men systematically exclude women from practice sessions.

Women standing ready with a guitar are told outright: “you can’t play with us” (p. 38).

Girlfriends and wives are also seen as threats to male unity, and are kept out of rehearsal space and gigs.

Like Bayton, Clawson (1993, 1999a, 1999b) also extensively researched females at the band-level to determine why more do not pick up the guitar. She reaches several explanations. First, women lack social capital. In her study (1999a) of 96 bands, all of whom participated in an early 90’s underground rock festival in Boston, Clawson interviewed 43 instrumentalists, both male and female. Focusing on their divergent adolescent histories in acquiring instrument skill, Clawson found that boys formed their first bands at age 15, often with no prior instrument knowledge. Girls, meanwhile, “fooled around with” instruments in their late teens, and joined bands in their early twenties. Only 26% of women interviewed had played in bands prior to high school. This might confirm that the earlier a rock instrument is played, the greater the chances for band formation later in life. But instrument-playing is not the primary issue. Clawson (1999a) concludes that the problem for girls is *not* learning how to play an instrument; it is the “cultural authority to initiate band formation” (p. 111). In other words, boys drew from their masculine networks of brotherhood and heroism to form bands with confidence and direction. But because they lacked the friendships or job-training necessary to create music collectively, girls either waited until they were asked to join a band, or didn’t join at all. Secondly, Clawson (1993) notes that if women are in bands, they are likely to be singers rather than instrumentalists (also in Carson et al., 2004; Dickerson, 1998). In this case, singers are the showpiece, but rarely taken seriously. Since a female singer’s musicianship is frequently challenged by male band mates, Clawson concludes that women lack “artistic authority” in addition to cultural authority (1993, p. 251). Thirdly, Clawson finds that women who *are* in bands and who *do* play instruments are

most likely to be bass players (1999b). Band members from her study remark that the bass is what failed guitar players play because it is notoriously easy to learn. Moreover, bass is currently identified as “the woman’s instrument” in a rock band (p. 201). This curious occurrence is “the product of men’s ability to monopolize the most prized positions” within a band—usually guitarist or drummer (p. 207). These assessments imply that if men have not already barred women from joining in their boyhood networks, they will *allow* women to play the bass or sing (also in Groce & Cooper, 1990). “Allowance,” nevertheless, means men call the shots. In the end, women are disempowered at all levels of instrumentation and band formation: so much so that in order for women to have roughly the same opportunities as men, a female would need to have played her first instrument by age 13, joined her first band at 15, and *started* another band at 25, preferably as the primary guitar player and songwriter. All that, not to mention doing it on the *male terms* of success--accompanied by adulation, fame, and a record deal! Clawson’s data suggest that such a woman would have beat incredible odds.

But even if such a super-musician was common, would she shatter the stereotypes surrounding her—to the extent that men would see a potential “equal”? If so, wouldn’t an all-female rock band prove that women can spread their talent to all areas of instrumentation, uniting in a concerted effort to daringly match men’s “collective creativity?” Sadly, this is not the case. “If you’re a guy and you have a band,” said an interviewee from Clawson (1999a), “it’s rock and roll. If it’s a band of women, it’s a girl group” (p. 112). The all female band is an anomaly in music, one that must constantly prove itself as a “band,” and not just “girls playing music together.” One quote from a female musician explains why all-female bands are so uncommon: “I wouldn’t go out of my way to start an all-girl band, because one of the irritating things about

media is the way they judge you” (McDonnell & Powers, 1995). Indeed, how women meet these judgments head-on is the topic for the next section.

Agency: Women Fight Back

Most literature on female singer-songwriters and solo artists—especially the biographical portraits—combine women into a rock “sheology” of history, or female stars standing united in womanhood. Lilith Fair and Vh1’s *Divas Live* concerts add weight to this imagery (Lister, 2001). But the truth is that most female solo artists are disconnected from one another. Hispanic and black music have developed, but a “women’s culture” in music does not exist (Chapple, 1977). However, if you casually looked at the books on “the women of rock,” you might conclude that there is indeed a “women’s music” (Dickerson, 1998; Gaar, 1992; O’Brien, 2002; O’Dair, 1997; Pavletich, 1980). These books accumulate as many female stars as possible under an umbrella of a women’s rock history. However, they bear little relevance in telling us what women confront in the masculine rock world. Clawson notes that these “sheologies” may hurt females more than help them: “such studies do not sufficiently problematise the ‘normality’ of masculine musicianship, and thus fail to understand rock as a gendered activity” (1999a, p. 99). While these encyclopedic books were useful when referencing the personal stories of high-profile female stars, pulling together trends in these stories to draw larger conclusions about women’s universal experiences would become an entire thesis unto itself.¹ However, from these works into the lives of individual solo artists, there is one overarching theme: a reaction to an expectation of performance. This section, therefore, will focus on those studies of female musicians that deal with female agency.

While “agency” studies do not label themselves as such, there is a trend in women “challenging” “disrupting,” or “contesting” a dominant idea in music culture. This act may come from a desire for musicians, and solo artists especially, to defy labels and branding, to define themselves as indefinable. The literature makes this clear with titles like *Disruptive Divas* (Burns & Lafrance, 2002), *Girls Rock!* (Carson et al., 2004), *Just a Girl?* (Wald, 1998), and *I’ll Never Be Your Woman* (Brabazon & Evans, 1998). Here, stories are told of women navigating male terrain, engaged in a process of unending performance. Goffman (1959) maintains that a performance is not for the benefit of others but for the performer herself. Thus, women who challenge the messages of exclusion and devaluation are not only protecting their careers, but proving to their own consciences that they *belong* in the dominant male culture. In a way, reactionary performance is a coping mechanism for female artists. These mechanisms take the form of subverting the labels, judgments, and images imposed on them.

Women have notoriously little room to maneuver in rock music, as illustrated by music editor Patricia Kennealy-Morrison’s comment,

“There appear to be only two roles for women rock artists to play. . . Filling the—needless to say—male-specified roles of (a) Ice Princess or (b) Down-Home Ball. So here we have Grace [Slick], gelid, brittle, goddess incarnate at the one extreme, and Tina [Turner], or Janis Joplin at the other, as the earth-mother, scratch-your-back, tiger-lady stone soul fuck. Not much in between, not much choice” (McDonnell and Powers, 1995, p.362).

Choice, in this instance, refers to how much agency a woman has to control her image as an artist. Thaxton and Jaret’s (1985) study of the reactions to photographs of female musicians found that female image is highly dependent on genre: country singers were viewed traditionally, rock singers as aloof and low on sex appeal. Moreover, pop stars, like Mariah Carey and Whitney Houston, are often categorized as powerful vocalists lacking substantial artistic merit

(Lister, 2001). What, exactly, controls women's behavior and image? More than any other factor, marketing determines how an artist will be received. Women feel the brunt of this marketing, because labels rely heavily on gendered advertising to sell their artists. And while signing to a label is seen as a "promotion" by some musicians, the same act signals an artist's loss of control over their image.

How do women reconcile their limited spheres of artistry? Several explanations are offered. First, Haugen's (2003) lyrical analysis of female gangsta rappers illustrates the ways in which women recast femininity to assert their presence. For instance, by overtly rejecting "ladylike" lyrics and embracing the label of the "un-lady," rapper Mia X claims social power over male expectations. Because competition for lyrical prowess is a valued element in rap music, gangsta rap is a well-suited medium for "the ability to accept or reject labels for oneself, as well as projecting them onto others" (p. 435). Skeggs (1993) finds even more overt challenges to masculinity in rap. Black female rappers have moved from fashioning their own labels to *exposing* men as frauds. "Yous a two-minute brother," says Bytches with Problems, proving that these rappers are aware of two things: first, that male misogyny in rap is a display of power, and second, that fear of women fuels this display (see also Celious, 2002; Berry, 1994).

Similar label altercations occur in country music. Grown out of the bluegrass, gospel, and blues of the south, female country music stars have reached huge successes in a bastion of static traditionalism. Before riot grrrl fused feminism with an all-girl music scene, country stars like Loretta Lynn, Kitty Wells, and Patsy Cline actively resisted traditional women's roles. Bufwack (1984) claims these women projected a loud "feminist sensibility" after WWII, before a feminist movement hit. Even more perplexing, their feminist tendencies were popular with mass audiences at the time. Bufwack explains:

Their ability to articulate audience concerns was heightened by the fact that they shared with their audience a cultural code which was based on a similarity of experiences. Women's dissatisfaction could find an outlet in country music, because rather than representing the ideal life, country writers and performers continually strived to depict the unglamorous lives lived by the members of their audience (p. 143).

Female country singers carve out a space for women to comment on the historical changes—or lack thereof—in women's roles. Oftentimes, female solo artists work with each other, forming their own “super-groups.” Dolly Parton, Loretta Lynn, and Tammy Wynette's collaborative album, *Honky Tonk Angels* shows that women in country are “questing for community,” trying to compensate for what is lost when men dominate the genre (Halberstam, 2005). Despite these gains, the female country singer's forthrightness and candor is still maintained by men. In fact, a country star's image is usually cultivated by a male mentor—Dolly Parton and Porter Wagoner, or Tammy Wynette and George Jones, for instance. Moreover, Daniel (2003) and Dickerson (1998) document that sexism and marginality run rampant in country music, because men still hold the positions of prestige within the industry.

Contradictions are another way women deal with their status in music. Female artists forcefully prevent others from labeling them with only one version of femininity. Many are likely to confuse their audience in order to maintain their autonomy. Today, female musicians still pose as powerful symbols for young girls, offering “sanctuaries” in their music for the problems that attack girlhood. Wald (1998) observes that singers like Gwen Stefani, in the song “I'm Just a Girl,” and bands like Shonen Knife and Cibo Matto, uncover the contradictions that riddle girlhood culture. For instance, Riot Grrl bands strategically use images of 1950s dystopic gender roles to counter the rage and disenchantment with male rock music (see also Wald and Gottlieb, 1993). Moreover, Stefani's lyrics in “I'm Just a Girl” dare girls to “play” at being

feminine while mocking the version of “girl” that patriarchy demands (Wald, 1998, p. 589).

These inherent contradictions are further proof that females are turning the weapons around and pointing them back at masculine hegemony.

But why the resistance in the first place? While this “resistance” takes many forms—confused messages, louder voices, exaggerated prowess—could it be that female artists keep their images in check for one reason: the fear of being cast aside as a joke, a gimmick, an untalented “pretty face”? This scenario is, to be sure, what every musician fears. Thus, a follow up question must be asked: is women’s resistance evidence of discrimination? Because my main goal for this paper is finding an answer for this question, I took the notion of resistance into consideration when I conducted my interviews.

Structure: Musicians at Work

So far, I have reviewed studies that explain the how numbers, opportunity, and agency affect the work of female musicians. But these studies do not raise a fundamental question: Is music a workplace? Much of the literature I cite in this section applies to traditional workplaces populated by white-collar workers. Yet, I argue that “musician” fits the definition of worker or employee because musicians perform tasks in exchange for wages. Sometimes they are self-employed and manage their careers themselves. Other times, musicians hand over management and marketing to large corporations. Musicians work for clients in restaurants, weddings, and bar mitzvahs, or under large organizations like record companies. Regardless of for whom they work or what their job entails, musicians are workers in an artistic, performance-based economy. Half of the musicians I interview in this paper consider “musician” a full time occupation and their

primary source of income. Therefore, what can the research on occupations contribute to our understanding of music as a workplace? Insights on minority women workers light the way for those musicians who struggle with the discomfort of being the only female in the band, at a concert, or in a music store. Consequently, I show how female musicians are susceptible to three types of workplace discrimination—blatant, subtle, and covert.

Blatant Discrimination

In this study, I focus on an occupation that is considered inappropriate for women. We can assume, then, that women who pursue music professionally encounter blatant discrimination in some form. Blatant discrimination in the work place encompasses sex segregation, equal pay for equal work, and sexual harassment. This type of discrimination is obvious and highly visible (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995). The concentration of women and men in separate fields, or occupational sex segregation, involves not just the physical separation of the sexes. Such divisions rupture egalitarian treatment between men and women, subjecting groups to different rewards and restrictions (Reskin, 1993). Typically these “rewards” amount to greater pay and respect for men, and lesser pay and devaluation for women. The driving force for occupational sex segregation involves the “sex-role spillover” (Kelly, 1991). The domestic roles of women as home makers and men as decision makers are replicated in paid-work positions. These assumptions spill over into music as well. As we have seen, women’s roles and instrument choices are clearly defined by a gendered dichotomy (refer back to Table 1). And according to Clawson, women also occupy the least valued positions in a band. Sexual harassment, too, hinges on gender divisions. It creates a hostile environment through sexual jokes and materials,

comments, grabbing, and touching (US EEOC, 1980). These practices are institutionalized so that they seem part of everyday behavior (Williams, 1997). Furthermore, sexual harassment and sex segregation are tightly linked (Gutek & Morach, 1982). Women in non-traditional occupations experience more sexual harassment than those in traditional fields (Gutek, 1985). This is because women intrude on male domains of privilege. Thus, sexual harassment is a strategic attempt to isolate women at their jobs (Reskin & Padavic, 1994). We know that women in classical music play in a hostile, sexually charged environment (Valentine, 1985). Here, I examine if women in country, rock, punk, metal, and hip-hop are sexually harassed.

Subtle Discrimination

For sociologists, “subtle” sex discrimination appears as blatant as sexual harassment, but for most workers, it goes under the radar. This is because subtle discrimination is communicated through ideologies and values, both verbally and behaviorally. Subtle discrimination falls on individuals, and may not persist through organizations. Moreover, it is likely to be cumulative across individual’s lifetime, inside and outside of work. Benokraitis and Feagin (1995) summarize four forms of subtle discrimination. First, men discriminate through chivalry. Politeness and affection in terms like “little lady,” “honey,” and “sweetie” undercut women’s authority by suggesting they need paternal protection. Second, “friendly harassment” involves seemingly harmless, playful behavior that flatters or psychologically intimidates. Discomfort and embarrassment result from sexual innuendos, hostile humor, persuasion through flattery, and emotional preying. Third, women are isolated, ignored, or excluded in a number of situations: in decision making, in serious discussions, at office events, and in using expertise. Finally, and

most relevant to female musicianship, women's property is not recognized as their own. For instance, Russ (1983) argues that women struggle to retain their credit for their artistic contributions. Their authorship is frequently cut down; as an example, the title of Russ' book is:

She didn't write it. She wrote it but she shouldn't have. She wrote it but look what she wrote about... She wrote it but she isn't really an artist, and it isn't really art. She wrote it but she had help. She wrote it but she's an anomaly. She wrote it BUT...

Russ' conclusions about female writers can logically be extended to female artists, who are thought to "just sing" over music written by male music producers. In particular, I have noticed that this error is usually made whenever music is computerized. In electronic music, women often sing on tracks; they are not "behind the scenes" making the clicks and beeps that drive the entire song. Women may not be considered "technologically savvy" enough to do both. For instance, while working at the record store one day, we listened to a new album by a female solo artist who uses textured, electronic sound arrangements produced by a computer. In a conversation between an employee and a customer, I overheard: "I love it...the guys who do her electronic stuff are amazing" Later, I did some research and found out she is a one-person act. This statement epitomizes a double standard of competence (Foschi, 2000), whereby the lower status person infers a lower level of ability, but the higher status target gets more credit. Taken on the whole, these four methods of subtle discrimination are also called "microinequalities," because they have a miniscule effect by themselves. But when they occur again and again, especially if they are not noticed or understood, they create what Sandler and Hall (1982) call a "chilly climate" for women in all professions.

Covert Discrimination

Covert discrimination is harmful treatment that is “hidden, clandestine, and maliciously motivated” (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995, p. 122). Tokenism is one type of covert discrimination that looks fair but feels injurious. Kanter investigates tokenism in her 1977 case study, *Men and Women of the Corporation*. In this landmark work, she studies the highly sex segregated environment at a white-collar company called Indesco. Kanter adopts the idea of tokenism to exemplify women’s peripheral status at the company’s upper levels. Tokens are “treated as representatives of their category, as symbols rather than individuals” (p. 208). They are easily stereotyped, increasingly scrutinized, and highly visible. The female tokens in Kanter’s research faced three special situations: visibility, contrast, and assimilation. Visibility explains why tokens get more attention: they stand out because they are few. Visibility has the effect of creating performance pressures on female tokens. For instance, Kanter says that “the token does not have to work hard to have her presence noticed, but she does have to work hard to have her achievements noticed” (p. 216). In music, visibility is linked to instrument assumptions, where women are penalized with higher expectations for playing a masculine instrument. Contrast, meanwhile, socially isolates tokens from the dominant group. Kanter saw how one female member threatened the commonality of men at Indesco, and men reacted by excluding them from meetings, telling “inside jokes” or “war stories,” and demanding “loyalty tests” to keep women from rebelling. Contrast, furthermore, hinders female opportunity in music, separating women from masculine social groups. Finally, assimilation distorts a token’s individuality to fit a generalization. Female tokens were stereotyped to play “caricatured roles.” Other times they were mistaken for wives or secretaries. Kanter also proposed that assimilation forced Indesco’s

women to live in the roles like “mother,” “seductress,” or “pet.” Similarly, female musicians are expected to “fit a mould” in the music industry to make marketing easier. As shown in the section on female agency, artists resist assimilation of their identity by rejecting labels and complicating their identity. Overall, these three special situations--visibility, contrast, and assimilation--place contradictory demands on tokens, restricting their promotion opportunities, work satisfaction, and threatening their psychic and social well-being.

Research on tokenism exploded after Kanter, partially because women continued to enter male-dominated fields as minorities. The existence of token status has been confirmed by many gender and work researchers (for example, see Reskin & McBrier, 2000; Rosenberg et al., 1993; Sargent, 2001). Spangler et al (1978) found that in law schools with skewed sex ratios, female students felt greater performance pressures because they were tokens. For instance, they underachieved in competitive tasks, and overachieved in social tasks. Moreover, the first class of women at West Point (Yoder et al., 1983), women in golf (McGinnis et al, 2005), and black female firefighters (Yoder and Aniakudo, 1997) characterized visibility, contrast, and assimilation. Swerdlow (1989) confirmed that tokenism also surfaces in blue-collar work, where female transit workers encountered direct resistance and hostility. Men that questioned women’s competence, sexualized their work relationships, exaggerated their errors, and depicted their routine performance as exceptional. Gender inappropriateness of a job is also linked to tokenism; Laws (1975) labeled tokens in academia as deviants because they aspire to succeed in careers inappropriate for their gender. Further, Epstein (1981) argues that female lawyers are deviants for their profession. In addition to tokenism, Epstein found evidence of widespread ambivalence toward women in law. Ambivalence explains how women received conflicting messages on how to act; for instance, they were damned for both appearing too aggressive or not aggressive

enough. MacCorquodale and Jensen (1993) also show how female lawyers experience patronization, sexist jokes, and lessened credibility. They are less likely to be identified as lawyers, even in the courtroom.

Some researchers challenge Kanter's argument that tokenism results from skewed sex ratios. Yoder (1991) claims tokenism is a consequence of sexism, not gender ratios. A large influx of lower-status workers has the combined effect of decreasing tokenism but increasing other forms of discrimination like blocked mobility and lower wages. Thus, data show that tokenism afflicts women even when men do not surround them. Additionally, tokenism can follow women into businesses of their own creation. For instance, female business owners defer to their token status by selling female-typed products, resulting in depressed earnings in comparison to male businesses (Loscocco & Robinson, 1991). This consequence spills over into female music as well. An all female band and Lilith Fair rockers, for instance, might suffer from this form of tokenism, even though no males are present. Because they are selling a product that appeals to women, their music may be ignored or even ridiculed because of their deflated status due to tokenism.

Research on musicians has been tentatively linked to tokenism. In *Not Just the Girl Singer*, and *When Women Play the Bass*, Clawson implies that female bassists and singers are tokens for their gender. She documents how bassists and vocalists are marginalized and ignored; their musicianship ranks lowest on the levels of importance to functioning of the band. And just as tokenism helps in landing a job where a token is needed to "show off," tokenism hurts when women fail to measure up to male standards. For example, it is not uncommon for male musicians to advertise expressly for female musicians; indeed one advertisement for a vocalist reads:

Band Seeking Female Vocalist: Must be fearless on stage and fun. Her appearance should be attractive, (hot would be best), slim, fit...after all you will be our front woman. We need that final "Babe" ingredient with a voice that commands respect to compliment our band. Fresh out of college or a mom that still has it works for us as long as you have the total package, talent, looks and drive (<http://orlando.craigslist.org/muc/136724599.html>).

While the band claims they will take “whatever works for us,” they still desire a token female that must fit their narrow vision of the “hot” female vocalist who “still has it.” Moreover, the fact that this band had to seek out this specific type of vocalist on a national internet site implies a shortage of women vocalists that fit this mold.

This study investigates what form of discrimination, if any, impedes the careers of female musicians. Studies on sex discrimination in the work place compliment the gendered order of the rock world, because music *is* a sex segregated occupation. What we know about occupational sex segregation explains why so few women play drums or guitar, if a female act sells more records or tickets than men, and where the Madonna’s and Courtney Love’s come from. Thus, this study will show how discrimination links female musicians to women in male-dominated fields like engineering, law, or computer science.

Unanswered Questions

I have presented a coherent narrative of opportunity, struggle, and confrontation by female musicians. For the most part, much of the literature is quite depressing for the future of women in music. Dreams of stardom rarely come to fruition, if women are allowed to “dream” at all. When they do reach their goals, women must be vigilant for threats to their credibility and femininity. However, I believe there are many untold stories shared in common by the population of women artists. What else, then, can be explored?

First of all, what makes studies of female musicians so frustrating is their lack of scientific rigor. Only 14 of the approximately 50 citations I used for this review were empirically-based. Even fewer were quantitative studies. The majority were descriptive histories or theoretical musings. The most insightful works—Bayton (1998) and Clawson (1992, 1999a, 1999b)—recognized the importance of statistical data and in-depth interviews. No doubt their study design led them to conclusions that I have found more applicable for this paper. More studies, therefore, should seek a marriage between quantitative and qualitative methods if they want to add weight their findings. If anything, doing so would make numerical conjectures about the female population in music today less murky. Moreover, Clawson and Bayton’s results were focused on structural factors that prevented women’s entrance into music. This is key to answering sociological questions of “what forces...” and “what explanations...” contribute to women’s secondary status. Then again, it is *not* impossible to draw inferences about all female musicians from personal biographies (for sure, there are enough!). But in the very least, those books that attempt to school readers on “women’s music history” should link each story together, drawing a picture of trends and likelihoods. Most books simply let the biographies to speak for themselves. Moreover, if more occupational avenues were explored in this area, we might find answers to questions I find particularly important: “Are female musicians tokens?”, “Are they victims of sexual harassment?” and “Why are there only a handful of all-female rock bands in the world?”

I have gleaned enough from Clawson and Bayton’s studies to begin charting new territory in the field of women and music. My purpose, then, is to examine the structural pressures on women in music. Do women experience subtle, blatant, or covert discrimination? Within music in particular, discrimination may look wholly unlike what we previously thought;

nevertheless, its effects are still the same. When a musician is denied a record deal because her sex, we can easily cry foul. But as sociologists know well, discrimination operates on a more subtle plane.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Method.

This study relied on in-depth, semi-structured interviews with female musicians. Interviews were conducted face-to-face and over the telephone. My “springboard” questions can be viewed in Appendix A. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because of the inductive nature of the study and the paucity of research on musicians, gender, and discrimination. Additionally, qualitative interviews are best suited to obtain the feelings, thought processes, and histories of this population. My goal was to obtain a “conversation” that would highlight each unique story, so that larger themes across all interviews were nuanced and textured. I had two qualifications for what I define as a “female musician”: 1) have an album for sale in a record store, presently or in the past, or 2) have performed for a live audience. All of the participants met at least one of these requirements. Ten interviews were collected, nine were analyzed (one woman declined her participation after the interview was conducted).² Contacts were more abundant than I had anticipated; however, I stopped the interviews after ten because I began to reach a saturation point in the respondent’s answers. I was also compelled to stop interviewing after ten respondents due to time constraints.

Data Collection

This study received approval from the University of Central Florida's Institutional Review Board in December 2005. Data collection began in January 2006. The social network of local record stores, small-venue concerts, and bars were used to locate three participants. In this environment, I used the snowball method for finding other willing participants. Three women were contacted using the online community Myspace.com. Myspace allows anyone to search for bands and musicians according to popularity and zip code. It also gives the researcher the power to contact an individual without invading a participant's email box. Other women were located with help from the researcher's family connections. I have an aunt who was a member of an all-female band in the 70's and 80's. She gave me the contact information for all the band members, and I spoke to three of them over the telephone. I recorded our conversation after I received their consent. Some interviews took place in the musician's homes, while others took place in bars or in coffee shops. The shortest interview lasted 45 minutes and the longest was 2 ½ hours. Most questions I asked were not scripted, but I did ask every musician the question "Do you feel you are treated differently than male musicians?" Other questions asked included "Do you think there are fewer women in music? Why?", "Has anyone questioned your musical abilities?", and "What was your first experience with music as a child?"

All subjects were ensured of their voluntary participation, their confidentiality, and their rights as a participant before the interview began. Pseudonyms were used in the write-up to further ensure confidentiality. Participants were also notified that the researcher, as a record store employee who may sell their music, would neither promote their merchandise nor give out free store merchandise in exchange for their participation.

Analytic Strategy

Strauss and Corbin's (1998) grounded theory methods were used in the analysis of interviews. I used open coding methods, a procedure which involved five steps: 1) Reading over each interview without coding to familiarize myself with the data, 2) Generating "working" themes by analyzing blocks of text from each interview and assigning loose categories. I then pulled out ten themes potentially common to all participants, 3) Compiling the interviews into a single document, then coding blocks of text more rigidly according to the ten themes chosen. Sub themes, like "role models" and "participation" under the theme of "social change," were also used, 4.) Counting how many themes occurred across all the interviews (width), and how many occurred within each interview (depth), 5.) Compiling the blocks of text under each theme and developing theories for how, why, and what phenomena were taking place. Table 2 describes the frequency of main themes and/or sub themes that I used in coding the interviews.

Table 2: Frequency of Themes & Sub-Themes

Theme	# of Instances
Control	67
Jealousy	15
Territory/Space	13
Paternalism	3
Instrument knowledge/education	10
Marketing	10
Roles/Tasks	53
Tokenism	10
Mothering	5
Ignored	8
Infantilization	8
Good for a girl	6
Accessories	8
Gimmick	8
Misidentification	46
Anomaly/Incompatibility	13
Performance Expectations/Gendered Assumptions	21
Questioning Abilities	4
Social Change	42
Female Involvement	24
Role Models	6
All female bands	3
Sex & Beauty	27
Masculinization	6
Sexuality	4
Sex Objects	6
Personal attacks/Mistreatment/Discrimination	6
Sexual Harassment	3
Slut Bashing	3
Working Harder/Proving Yourself	19
Age	19
Regrets	12
Respect	11

Description of Participants

Six of the participants I interviewed in person were local musicians in the Orlando, FL music scene. These women were either signed to local labels, or not signed at all. Most of them had been in bands prior to their current band. All of these musicians considered themselves successful in terms of building a devoted following and establishing their presence in the music scene. Some were playing shows within Florida, and a few had toured the country. A record store customer tipped me off to Heather, introducing her as “the girl who sings like a man.” At 21, Heather had already worked as the vocalist for three bands, the first of which she started at age 17. She participates in music scenes called “hard core punk” and “death metal.” Next, I sought out Natalie as a fan of her music. A 26 year old African American, she sings and raps in a hip-hop group with her husband and another married couple. Although she sang at open mics previously, this was her first major band. They recently signed to a nationally known independent record label. I met Shannon at a concert called VAGINA fest that featured all-female acts performing to benefit victims of domestic violence. Shannon had organized the event. She is 26 year old female front woman who sings and plays guitar in “her” band, the third band in which she has participated. She frequently tours the country and manages her career herself. Kate, a 26 year old Asian American, worked with me at the record store and also played the VAGINA fest. Kate’s music is self-described as progressive, experimental metal-punk. Her instruments are keyboards and flute, but she has previously been a vocalist for two other bands. Natalie recommended that I speak to Carmen, a 26 year old Hispanic from Puerto Rico. Carmen is the front woman in a Latin rock band that shares her name. While her band has toured the country, it has not been fruitful enough to earn her living exclusively through music. This was

her second band; she formed an all-female band back in Puerto Rico at age 15. My final face-to-face interview was a vocalist named Roberta, age 42. She became interested in playing music at age nine, when she had an epiphany: “I wanted to marry Mick Jagger...then I realized I *can be* Mick Jagger!” Roberta frequented the New York punk scene in the early eighties, blazing the way for female-fronted punk rock. Currently, painting, not music, is her primary income, but she still plays in a band for enjoyment.

Family connections gave me the advantage of contacting three women who formed “one of the first” all-female bands back in the 70’s and 80’s. The band, called Sahara, was formed in Nashville, TN, by a female musician named Barbara. She was searching exclusively for female musicians to start a “new concept” in a tepid industry. Sahara had many members and name changes over its seventeen year history, but I interviewed three musicians who stayed with Sahara the longest. Kim, 52, is a bassist whose occupation has been “musician” her entire working life. Though she comes from a famous family of Nashville stars, she earned her own success. Since her first tour at age 17, she has been in scores of bands over the years, until she “retired” from music after the death of her husband and band mate. Next is Maureen, Sahara’s lead guitarist. Like Kim, she joined the road at a young age and played professionally for seventeen years. She currently plays music as a hobby, but hopes to ignite a new project with Kim. Maggie, 52, was told by her high school band director that “girls can’t play drums.” She proved him wrong, however, and played drums in a U.S.O. tour at 18 years old. Maggie quickly became known as one of only a handful of female drummers in Nashville. Music was a full-time job for her and she considered herself a “professional musician” until she quit at age 34. She promised her mother that she would “get a real job” by that age if Sahara did not make it big. Unfortunately, the band never did. Lacking a hit song, it did not sign a recording contract--

though they caught the eyes of many people in power. They were featured on the T.V. program *Hee Haw*, met huge success in Europe, and paved the way for the all-female acts of today. Sahara eventually disbanded after Maureen made the decision to leave because of the band's drug and alcohol abuse.

Table 3: Description of Participants

Participant Name	Music Genre	Primary Role/Instrument	Race/Ethnicity	Age	Age at first band	Total Number of Bands over lifetime
Heather	Hardcore Punk	Singer	White	21	17	3
Natalie	Hip-Hop	Singer	African American	26	18	2
Shannon	Heavy Metal/Punk	Singer/Guitarist	White	26	18	3
Maggie	Rock/Country	Drummer	White	52	18	3
Kate	Indie	Keyboardist/Backing Vocalist	Asian American	26	19	4
Roberta	Punk	Singer	White	42	18	3
Carmen	Rock/Punk	Singer/Guitarist	Hispanic	26	15	2
Kim	Rock/Country	Singer/Bass	White	56	17	5
Maureen	Rock/Country	Lead Guitarist	White	52	17	2

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS

This paper centers on *difference*. So, in conducting the analysis, I focus on stories that illustrate how women are treated differently in music. The diverse group of women I spoke with collectively experienced three forms of differential treatment. First, female musicians were expected to fulfill certain roles that reinforce their secondary status. Second, women's personal and artistic space was monitored by fellow band members. Third, women's femininity, sexuality, and age were jeopardized by demands placed on their appearance.

Roles

One warning flag for different treatment came in the form of the segregated tasks or roles shouldered by female musicians. When I conducted each interview, individual stories would come up that, at first, seemed discrete. For instance, one woman would complain of how much more work she does compared to her band mates, while another felt that she was hired solely because of her gender. But the larger pattern that emerged, as was expected, is that women perform different roles than men; in addition, they are treated differently according to these roles. For female musicians specifically, the burden of *decreasing seriousness* or *lessened credibility* resulted from *all* gender role expectations that thrive under these circumstances. Because of the particularity of each woman's situation, I have created five categories for different treatment: the "good for a girl" musician, the hard(er) worker, the child/mother, the invisible accessory, and finally, the gimmick. For clarification, I conceptualize these roles loosely. I included "roles" as any techniques for marginalization that indicated an expectation of performance, in addition to classic roles like "mother," "secretary," and "pet" featured in Kanter (1977).

Five Sex-Typical Roles for Female Musicians

Good for a Girl

Four women spoke of how they were credited with superior musical abilities--*for their gender*. According to them, compliments from the audience rang bittersweet, because no matter how much talent they possessed, their gender would always obscure their musicianship. In this scenario, their work was discredited because they were “good for girls,” not simply “good at what they do.” Carmen, Kim, Maggie, and Shannon received this phrase with dread, knowing that their gender trumped their musical ability. Ironically, the phrase was never told with a malcontented sneer, but a sincere smile of respect:

They would say that when you went on the U.S.O. tour. You would hear it, but you’d see the look on their faces, they were so excited, cheering for you, after each song, standing up screaming, clapping, “Oh you’re just great for girls!” They meant it nice. They really thought they were just giving you the best compliment in the world (Kim).

The older women, especially, heard “good for a girl” so frequently from male audience members that they either resisted: “Finally I just started throwing it back, ‘you aren’t too bad for a guy yourself’” or brushed it off: “after a while we got used to it and we’d just say thank you, because it wasn’t worth it.” Gender representation also amplifies the phrase, as Kim says, because she had never heard “you’re good for a girl” until she was in an all girl band, after which she heard it a lot. Just as women in sports hear “good for a girl,” the endurance of the phrase could come from an environment that thrives off of competition and showmanship. The “for a ...” rigs the obstacle course, ensuring that women will perform in a separate category where they compete only with other women, not as equals with men.

Hard(er) Worker.

Ultimately, for women in music to be “*better* than a girl,” they must somehow rise above a seemingly inescapable situation. Thus, the women felt the need to “work harder” than men or “prove one’s self” to hide their gender. The pressure to work harder, then, is another consequence of the rigid roles female musicians must carry. In particular, working harder is a strategy for gender compensation; some of the women hoped it would make their gender irrelevant. Shannon told me that, as a burgeoning guitar player, she quickly learned how to avoid her gender by ensuring that she was never vulnerable to questioning:

You have to know your shit. You have to know more shit than the guys do. And you have to prove it a lot. And you have to not be afraid to prove it a lot . . . guys have a higher standard. If you’re a girl you have to be *so much* more talented to get partial credit . . . not all guys who get as far as we do have as much talent.

Two other women were aware of this double standard. Maggie relayed an incident when the band leader (“it was his band”) “partied” all night instead of learning his guitar parts. Maggie, meanwhile, took her job seriously; eventually, it strained her relationship with the band:

Here I am working six days a week, ten hours a day. And I go to practice, and I got mad because he didn’t learn his stuff. And I took the time to learn it, even though I was working and all he was doing was laying around on his lazy butt.

Maggie played her role to perfection, because she knew that male eyes were on her. Similarly, Maureen frequently got stage fright because she caught herself trying to impress the male guitarists in the audience. “I’d get nervous before a performance, because there was a lot of male musicians out there, because I really felt that I had to prove myself.” Sometimes, women failed to reap the benefits of working harder. Twenty-six year old Kate, a vocalist herself, agrees when her male band mate says that female singers are “annoying.” Because they work so hard compensating for gender, she says, they end up being discounted: “It sounds like she’s trying too

hard, or she does quirky things with her voice. It just sounds like she's trying to be different or trying to stand out." Working harder, but not *too* hard, becomes a game these women learn to play. If they fail, their credibility as a musician is questioned. To bring this point into perspective, *working harder for less* is a problem for all women, regardless of their occupation. It takes place in Hoschild's second shift (2003), in politics with women candidates (Kahn and Goldenberg, 1991), and in the classroom for female achievement (Graham, 1997).

The Child/Mother

Even though none of the women I talked to was a mother, I found evidence that female musicians were either infantilized or became the "mother of the band." Both concepts relate to the gender-neutral language movement that claims calling women "girls" insinuates female childishness and inexperience. Calling women "mothers," moreover, names them in relation to men. While consistent problems with sexist language did not surface in the interviews, male band mates did infantilize females over the issue of carrying equipment. In response to my question about her experiences with different treatment as a female, Kate remarks that when its time to set up or break down equipment,

I feel like I do get babied a little bit, if I don't want to do something or if I'm tired, they're like, Kate, do you want to sit down? Do you want this? I'm like, I can handle it!

Kim encountered a similar situation as the only female in the band: "I didn't have to lift a finger. I couldn't lift nothing . . . they really spoiled me." Both women received this treatment differently; Kate was annoyed by her band mates doting on her, while Kim saw it as a luxury to have others carry equipment for her. Carrying equipment for women, while thoughtful, is an

example of how an act of politeness can become an act of discrimination. Lifting equipment, furthermore, invites a dangerous paternalism that could spill over into infantilizing women who *use* equipment (for example, “Would you like me to carry that. . . and then show you how to use it?”). More significantly, this infantilized role did not surface as a problem for the all-female band. The lack of male presence forced Sahara to lift their own equipment. “When you’re in an all girl band,” says Kim, “you’ve gotta do everything yourself. I think we kind of liked that. We liked our independence.” The pride in their “independence” suggests that women feel better about themselves when their work is not hijacked by paternalism.

Less frequently, women felt that their role in the band was that of a mother-figure, one who tackles the emotional and organizational work of the band. Shannon felt that this role was unfairly thrust upon her:

Like I had to take care of them. . . when I have a boyfriend, I’m taking care of him, and taking care of my band stuff, and taking care of me. Guys just don’t care . . . their load is a lot lighter than ours. Like, I have a lot on me.

Shannon’s “mothering” of her band mates and boyfriend is something she feels obligated to do, because she feels selfish if she devotes all of her time to one task. Heather, meanwhile, accepted the mother role as meaningful, allowing her to play another part other than “just the singer,”

It is a lot of work. I was mainly the one who booked all the shows, had everything put together. I did like all the outside stuff. Got us shows, all organizational things. I was basically like the mommy. I kept them organized . . . it gave me a lot of experience.

That Shannon and Heather were also the oldest members and the front women for their bands could explain why they became “the mommies.” Therefore, the social distance between members is also something to consider when analyzing this category. Take Natalie, for example: as a

twenty-six year old hip hop singer, her band members consisted of her husband and another married couple. In her group, tasks are not segregated by sex:

Normally you'd think the woman would do the schedules, all the organizing . . . so we all you know, if you can't do his job, then I'll do it. And he'll do mine. We just do everything . . . we treat ourselves as if we're equal.

This admittedly rare egalitarianism (not even found among the participants from the all-female band) could be explained by marriage—where communication and trust lead women to perform tasks they normally would not. Thus, in Natalie's case, the conflation of a group of married members shields her from the role of "mother." I also noticed that Natalie seemed immune to feminine pressures and cultivated a strong, organic sensibility. She infused her music with empowerment, she was comfortable in her body, and she was unfazed by hip-hop's sexism. In this regard, she is similar to African American women who feel more positively about themselves and their bodies than white women (see Shorter-Gooden and Washington, 1996; Rucker and Cash, 1992). In a way, this inner strength serves as a second explanation for why she avoided the stereotype of a child or a mother.

The Invisible Accessory.

A fourth category of different treatment comes in the form of female musicians feeling ignored or accessorized—hence they become "invisible accessories." How can one be ignored and seen at the same time? When women become "just a singer," or "just a dancer," the *just* confirms that their roles *are* present, but these roles are devalued to the point where they are merely decoration. An accessory, whose sole purpose is to be seen, simultaneously becomes ignored when valid or meaningful participation is required. Women explained how they were

ignored in two ways: first, as vocalists in their reduced capacity in songwriting, and second, in music stores buying equipment.

Four women underscored the invisibility of women in music. Heather felt that her part in the songwriting process was inconsequential. When the band assembles to write songs, Heather will “go do [her] thing and then go away,” adding that “whenever they need to write, I’m not around.” Because Heather admitted knowing next to nothing about instruments or creating riffs, she performed the part of singer/vocalist only after the music was composed. Her “face time” in the songwriting process was severely reduced. This also came up in my conversation with Kate. When I broached the topic of how she learned how to write songs, she agreed that she lacked songwriting training because of her invisible roles in the writing process. “I was just the singer,” she says, the “just” meaning she was an accessory to the band. Like Heather, Kate says “I just came in and I listened to them, and I wrote the lyrics.” Gender segregation by task applies to both women, where their jobs reflected the devaluation of their status in the band. Even though both are visible to the audience as singers, they become invisible inside the band when the audience is no longer present.

Similarly, three women conveyed how they were ignored on the basis of their gender, particularly in music stores. On shopping for equipment or selling music at the record store where she works, Kate says:

I feel like when [customers] are in the record store, they’ll ask a guy about music before they ask me. And when I go to get something at the music store, it’s kind of like I wait around. I’m like ‘I need help!’

Maureen says that “in the music store, you’re pretty much the last to get waited on . . . because you’re a girl.” Carmen tells of how when she was a salesperson at a music store, “Nobody, nobody ever asked for my help. Of course, since I was a girl. Then they moved me to cashier

because I wasn't selling anything." For Maureen, Carmen, and Kate, shopping for musical equipment was a lot like shopping for cars or power tools—they were in a masculine playground that thrives on competition to create hierarchies. The invisibility of women in these situations occurs because men fight among themselves to become *as visible as possible* (see Bird, 1996). Previously, Steward and Garratt (1984) described how music stores function as arenas for showing off equipment knowledge and skill. The competition here is so prevalent that a friend of mine, who is a male drummer, said of music stores: "All these musicians are out to show how much better they are than you. . . I hate going there." Thus, female musicians in this study were ignored while shopping for equipment because they have no role to play in this "masculinity contest."

Further, female fans take on the role of an invisible accessory. If women *are* visible or present in music, then they become accessories in the band or showpieces for male audience members. Heather says "girls are often viewed as a coat rack" in hardcore, because they don't "put themselves out there." If they are not accessorized, they are ignored. She sees how women in the audience "just go unnoticed. They just stand in the corner," and they do not participate by "dancing at shows or singing along." Natalie also explains how accessorization occurs at her shows, where female audience members

aren't there because they want to hear the music, they're there because their boyfriends do. It's the craziest thing in the world, like women are just there on the side. They're like, "I just came here because I love you."

Female performers, meanwhile, are "usually on stage dancing, or just singing [back up]."

Heather and Natalie claim that women are welcomed in hard core and hip-hop respectively, but they "don't step up" and take on significant roles. Perhaps female audience members do not

become musicians themselves because they see what little latitude female musicians actually have.

The Gimmick.

Those participants who had worked in all-female bands were quick to point out that their band was not considered a serious musical endeavor. While all of the musicians took on one role or another, the all-female band felt these roles amplified, to the extent that the *entire band* was discredited. Maggie was the first to introduce me to the idea of the all female band as a “joke.” When I asked if her band, Sahara, ever got offers for record deals, she replied:

Well, no. It’s pretty much a gimmick. You know an all girl band is a gimmick . . . because anytime you see something different, it’s just a new concept.

As the first all female band that many audience members had ever seen, this “new concept” was a novelty instead. Upon hearing the word “gimmick,” I first thought of the all female pop group the Spice Girls. Could Sahara, a group of serious and talented female instrumentalists who wrote their own songs and lifted their own equipment, compare to the Spice Girls, known for their sugary “girl power!” message and hokey stage names? Kim and Maureen told me how when they first formed Sahara in 1973, their leader, Barbara, attempted to dress them up in hot pants and cowboy boots, “to make it more into a show band.” But Kim and Maureen were repulsed by the stage skits and outfits, and demanded that the band go in a more “authentic” direction. As the band gained experience over the years, however, Maggie, Kim, and Maureen admit that no matter how hard they worked, Sahara could not shake the gimmick role. Maggie explains how, at a gig in Little Rock, Arkansas,

We played a place where we played an hour and this girl stripped an hour. Can you imagine what it's like to get up on stage after this girl strips after all these men? It just made you feel like meat. Raw meat when you went up on stage. They just thought it would be a good concept. A gimmick, okay. You have a female stripper and you have a female band.

The gimmick role sticks when these two images converge: the stripper, whose exaggerated, erotic theater acts out male fantasy, and the all-female band, in which "rock musician" is merely another costume to attract male attention. The stripper/musician connotation propels the "joke" further, giving audience members only two reactions to an all-female band's performance: laughter or sexual gratification.

Mistaken Identities

Female musicians are commonly mistaken for something they are not. Six females in this study gave me concrete examples of how their mistaken identity, or misidentification, disrupted their daily lives as workers. Misidentification involves incorrectly identifying a person as one who fills an expected role, but who in reality plays a different role altogether. Ideally, the roles must be opposed for misidentification to occur: rich person/janitor, KKK member/black person, CEO/housewife. In this case, female/musician is a subtle yet incompatible dichotomy, so that a female is viewed as an anomaly or peculiarity if she is also a musician. As Heather, Maureen, and Natalie illustrate, their first impressions were never what they seemed, and those who misidentified them felt shocked or surprised, as if the musicians pulled some slight-of-hand. As a vocalist in a genre that calls itself "death metal," Heather feels her voice lives up to the name. Her band, self-described in three words, "passion, intensity, brutality," erases all feminine energy that she might possibly emit, mainly because her vocals sound like a man's. Heather claims that

people are amazed when they hear her voice: “people are like, ‘that’s a girl?’” Likewise, Maureen conveys how her soulful blues guitar playing shocked her male audience:

Meggan: Did anybody ever question your musical abilities?

Maureen: Definitely. Before they heard me, you know. It pretty much blew people away, because I could play like a man. I’d always have guys come up to me saying “Damn, you really burnt that thing . . . I’m really surprised.” They were more surprised than anything.

Surprise came from Maureen’s ability to “play like a man.” What does this phrase mean? Playing “like a man” is implied and indicates admiration; playing “like a woman” (“throwing like a girl”) would be the opposite. It is also a technique that Maureen mastered. She taught herself guitar listening to Roy Clark and Chet Atkins. Of course, it would be preposterous to tell these guitar masters they “play like men.” But the surprise comes from a gendered incompatibility--that Maureen could meet the male standard of performance, despite her gender.

Natalie, comfortably dressed and make-up free, sits quietly selling her hand-made jewelry before she performs. She also encounters surprise whenever she hits the stage:

A lot of things have to do with the fact that I don’t look like I’m going to do some hip-hop at any minute. I’m sure I don’t look like I’m about to get up on stage . . . A lot of times, people will look at me like “you’re about to . . . go up on stage?” And then after the show, they’re like “Oh!”

Again, this surprise or shock signifies that the “image” of woman and musician fail to match up. To compensate, misidentifiers brand female musicians with more appropriate titles. Heather states that she has been mistaken for a “merchgirl”--females who sell band merchandise. Women populate merchant tables by the dozens at festivals, and “merchant” and “girl” are synonymous to the point where “merchgirl” rolls off the tongue as fast as “soundguy.” Shannon, Carmen, and Kate shared similar experiences. All had been mistaken for the girlfriends of the “real” musicians, not the musicians themselves. At one point, Carmen was escorted out of the back

stage area, because club owners thought she was a groupie. Shannon illustrates how misidentification twists its way into every situation. If she carried a guitar to identify herself as a musician, audience members still assumed she was there because she was dating someone in her band. Then, when she is on stage performing with men, “people automatically assume that men wrote the songs for me.” Further, some women realized how misidentification made them act differently. Kate explains how she modifies her behavior back stage, so that misidentification fails at the outset:

You’ll show up and they’ll be like “Oh sweetie, you’ve got to wait outside,” I’m like “I’m in the band.” I think female musicians carry themselves a lot differently . . . like they belong there. I want them to know “I am a musician.”

For Natalie, misidentification became a technical problem for her ability to perform. Her vocals suffered because the soundperson would mic her as though she were a background singer, “so no one can hear me . . . they’ll make it quieter than everyone else.” And because Carmen openly identifies as a lesbian and plays an acoustic guitar, audiences “say right away ‘Ani DiFranco!’ . . . They think I’m going to sing ‘I hate you, men,’ stuff like that.”

What is going on here? How can these mistakes be made so consistently and so blatantly? First, it is important to clarify that misidentification usually occurs among an audience and rarely among fellow musicians. “Male musicians knew better,” says Kim, perhaps because they were more likely than the audience members to interact with female musicians. Admittedly, however, I can see how these women were misidentified—I even made the same mistakes! I heard Heather’s vocals and I immediately thought I was listening to the wrong band; I interviewed Natalie before I saw her in concert, and I was surprised how inconsistently her vocal performance matched her off-stage persona. Of the audience, “Who can blame them?” asks Natalie; she refuses to fight these stereotypes *because* they are made so easily. And

misidentification also works in reverse: when I saw that Kate set up her keyboard at the center of the stage with a microphone, I gleefully thought she was the front woman for her band. Instead, her boyfriend sang and played guitar, and the audience's eyes focused on him. I gave Kate the benefit of the doubt, but I was wrong about her starring role. Even in my own mistakes, it is important to note that all of the women's abilities were suspect *before* they performed, and then reassessed *after* they proved themselves. What do these assumptions mean for discrimination? I can envision a few scenarios: firstly, that women are subjected to "status leveling." This is a phrase used by Kanter to explain how mistaken identity fails to be recognized as "mistaken," and instead, the true status is downgraded to meet the misidentifier's expectations. This occurred when Shannon's status was downgraded to "girlfriend" even when carrying an instrument. Moreover, it is safe to say that not all of the women in this study encountered, like Heather or Maureen, a "pleasant surprise" when true identities were revealed. Audiences may judge the music on a higher standard once they misidentify a female, or the capacity for artistic control could suffer.

In sum, when female musicians occupy a masculine space, they are expected to act a certain way. Women in music are not free to take on any role they choose without consequence. As I mentioned in the literature review, the important tasks in music are performed by men, who are assisted by women. The low-status roles like "accessory", "gimmick," and "child," confirm that music's structure sidelines female performance. In addition, the continual misidentification of women who do not fit these roles reminds women of their deviancy.

Control

All nine female musicians struggled with the issue of control in some form. I define the term “control” loosely, because this theme danced around both the *social control* of gender and the *freedom from control* for the autonomous female artist. These women spoke in terms of social control imposed by men, who restrained women’s success by acting out their jealousy, or by claiming their territory as a “female free zone.” Less frequently, the women spoke of control in terms of the amount of artistic license they were allotted when external control (from record companies and management) threatened their autonomy.

Social Control & the Regulation of Space

Gender erects fences between male and female musicians. But what keeps the fences from falling? Social control involves a variety of strategies to enforce gendered behavior. We see the social control of gender at work in all levels of social organization: individually, through name calling, harassment, abuse and rape, or institutionally, through government laws, corporate standards, and religious and marital conduct. Female musicians encounter social control at the individual level, in the form of territorial power struggles over space and success. These struggles, born of the inability to control female success, squared females against their managers, their boyfriends, and their band mates. Four women recounted stories of how their victories attracted male animosity, sometimes with severe consequences.

Roberta, a forty-two year old punk singer and the first female to play the state prisons in New York, met resistance from her boyfriend/band mate, because she held crowds in the palm of her hand:

He didn't like that I was the star. He was afraid to be on stage, he would hide behind the amp. And he would hate me because I wasn't afraid. He would fucking try to push me out of the way just because he was kind of pissed that I was getting the limelight.

Her boyfriend, confronted with powerlessness in the face of Roberta's attention from label owners and audiences, refused to record an album with her. The band and the relationship broke up on the very day they were to sign a major recording contract.

Oftentimes, the fear of a front woman becoming a star who eclipses the band sits soberly in the back of many musicians' minds. In the 1990's, energetic pop/ska band No Doubt faced this fear with tongue in cheek. In the music video "Don't Speak," audiences and press fawn over a dazzling Gwen Stefani, while her male band mates languish in the back ground. Eventually, the video was self-fulfilling; Stefani left the band for a successful solo career. Moreover, certain Beatles fans are quick to reference the role Yoko Ono played in Beatles history. Because of her increasing involvement in their last album, she is blamed for breaking up the band. Stefani and Ono defied the spaces intended for them—a singer who is part of the whole, and a girlfriend of a band member. At what point, if any, does social control kick in to enforce Stefani and Ono's defiance?

Musicians, understandably, are wary of *any one member* who receives too much attention, regardless of their gender, because unequal success potentially breaks up a band. But this wariness and desire to socially control success boils down to an issue of space. For a front woman, confusing messages persist in how far "up front" she can get, without instigating male resentment. Tip-toeing around this space becomes difficult when women are *hired as* the front person whose job description mandates a higher star power. In hopes of standing out in a sea of male musicians, a Nashville blues band hired Kim as their front woman. She was later

sanctioned by the guitarist because she attracted the most attention from audiences who hailed her as the “next Bonnie Raitt:”

He couldn't take any body in his territory. He was quick to put, especially me down, to make sure his place was secure. I don't know why, because they all wanted me to be the lead singer. They hired me to do this. And then to be threatened by me like I was going to take over.

Kim's puzzlement over why she was “mistreated” (in one case, while on stage, she had her pay thrown at her by this guitarist) comes from the fact that she had no desire to “take over” the band, and was comfortable sharing the spotlight. Her job *required* occupying a highly visible space. Kim resented being punished for standing out, knowing that she had little control over the audience's reception of her. Heather's situation parallels Kim's. “Her vocals aren't that good,” said the male vocalist Heather replaced, but she attributes his personal attacks as a response to her gender. His space was invaded because, says Heather, she “sounds better than a lot of the guys.” Like Kim, audiences praised Heather *because* she was a female who could out-perform the men surrounding her.

The regulation of space sometimes creates even wider distances between women and men. While Kim and Roberta's spaces were controlled within their bands, Maggie was forced out of male bands altogether. Back in the 1970's, Maggie's name was dropped to play drums for a male solo artist. But once they discovered her gender, the artist and his managers refused to hire her. The reason, she was told, was because of the potential threat of infidelity:

They wouldn't hire me because of the fact that the other male musicians, their wives would be jealous. If I wanted to play professional on the road, I *had* to play with an all girl band.

Once again jealousy resurfaces, but this time from women. Fear of sexual tension between co-ed band members forced Maggie out of work. While this is an example of covert discrimination, it

is also an interesting one. Few women are told they cannot work in close association with men because their wives control male work space. Yet Maggie saw how infidelity became a problem on the road, for both male and female musicians. Sleeping in close quarters and traveling together raises eyebrows. Thus, the space between male and female musicians was carefully controlled. Moreover, Maggie was given two reasons for her rejection: the manifest “Our wives *won’t* let us hire you” and the latent “We *can’t* hire you because you are female.” The line between *cannot* and *will not* is not very small. Regardless of how much power the wives have in this situation, Maggie’s gender is still singled out as a reason for separating her from men. Maggie’s story is one example of how male-dominated environments divide women against themselves, while uniting men.

Overall, the lesson female musicians learn is that they should attract attention, but *not too much* attention. Stick to the background, just far enough away from the spotlight, while simultaneously using the spotlight to attract an audience. How is this possible? The inability to control female space within a band not only segregates female musicians, but *confuses* them as well. Additionally, Roberta, Kim, and Heather explained these incidents as “jealousy” from their male counterparts, but I interpret their stories structurally. Jealousy excuses their behavior; “they’re *just* jealous” renders the power struggle over space and success as an individual issue. Instead, men react this way because they fear the gendered order breaking down; this breakdown threatens male spaces that allow them to dominate positions of power. Jealousy, therefore, is a symptom of the need to socially control women to ensure gender’s resiliency.

Gender and Artistic Control

Gender not only assigns a pecking order within a band, but it will also conscript artistic freedom. Three women felt that gender compromised their ability to create music *their way*. Maggie, the drummer for Sahara, spoke of how her work was controlled in two ways: first, by having others determine the songs her band would play, and second, by controlling her equipment. After working hard at pulling together a set list for the night's show that would please every age group, managers and club owners told the band to throw out their songs and "just play real country." At some shows, she and her fellow female band mates were not allowed to use their own equipment. "I would have to use another drummer's stuff," she complains,

They would say you can't move anything, and you would have to play drums of a 6ft man. Being short, I would have to jump up to hit a cymbal crash and hope I landed back down on my seat.

Maggie's band was denied the freedom that is tantamount to every musician's code of artistic integrity: the right to play their *own songs* on their *own instruments*. Maggie was uncomfortable, both mentally and physically. Using borrowed equipment sends the message that Sahara does not "claim" the stage as a space of their own. Maggie remembers confronting one of the men at a show about this treatment. "Look, this is a game," he rebuked, "and if you don't play it, then you need to go home." This comment is what made her leave the road after fourteen years; she refused to "play his game" and quit the band.

The "game" she refused to play has existed between musician and management for years: how much control the musician needs vs. how much she wants. A recording contract is *the* variable for artistic control. Members of Sahara, for instance, frequently mention how their band, and other all-female bands they participated in, had artistic freedom to *some* extent. Under

Sahara, men did not control the songwriting, but men monitored and programmed how Sahara marketed their work. For example, while Maggie's band chose to mix elements of progressive rock, ballads, and country music, they also confused the Nashville marketing machine. "The record producers didn't know what to do with us," says Maggie, and neither she nor Kim or Maureen signed a recording contract, after touring professionally for an average of fifteen years. Additionally, Roberta comments that she was allowed to do what she wanted because she did not fit an image. "The record companies are looking for chicks that they can sell," she says, or a "pop star where the tracks are written for you." One of the first to hit the streets of New York with pink hair and a mohawk, Roberta proudly affirms she did not fit an image. Because they were unique for the late 70's and early 80's, Sahara and Roberta did not experience external control of their artistic freedom, perhaps because both did *not* get signed. On the other hand, independence and quirkiness could explain why labels turned a blind eye. Maureen says, "We always played our own stuff. We stuck to our guns and we got no where in Nashville."

In both Kate and Shannon's cases, artistic freedom suffered at the behest of their band mates. A twenty-six year old keyboardist, Kate was hired by a well-established band that included a female bassist. While Kate was excited about the prospect of writing songs with another female, she quickly learned that she was not hired to write songs with them:

At the time, Jenny [the bassist] didn't want to just be "the girl in the band" So they wanted another girl to balance it out. But it was never like that. Like, I was in the band and I was pushed to the back of the stage. It was annoying. I was like, I don't get to write anything, I don't get to *do* anything . . . I was a monkey.

Although she did not name it, Kate knew she was subjected to tokenism. Her exclusion from the creative process and the reasons for her hiring underscores Kanter's three models for tokenism—visibility, contrast, and assimilation. Kate landed the job solely "to be visible" (visibility),

boundaries assured she stayed outside the songwriting process (contrast), and her individuality suffered at the expense of her gender (assimilation). But what makes this story interesting is that she became a victim of tokenism *by another token*. Jenny thought her own heightened visibility could be solved simply by hiring another female. Instead, tokenism resulted even when the representation of females was evenly distributed—the band had two females, two males.

In rare cases, social control and artistic freedom reinforced the each other: how much control a female musician has over her work varies by the extent to which gender is enforced. Shannon, a 26 year old singer/guitarist, describes how, on the road to a solo career, her boyfriend sabotaged their band because of the success *she* reaped from their collaborative songwriting:

The first band I played other people's songs, the second band . . . most of the songs were mine. Within ten shows, we were doing great. So then he immediately wanted to stop that, because he was angry at that . . . he had jealousy issues anyway. So he started cheating on me because I did so well. And I co-wrote songs with him that we couldn't release because he was mad at me. You know it was collaboration so I just had to throw those tracks away. And then, this band is all me. I write every single song, you know . . . because I can remain in control of my music, and I don't have to give it up.

Thus, social control of a successful female artist—the belief that female success cannot come without some form of male involvement—has a direct effect on how much freedom Shannon was allowed in her songwriting. She even admits that “men have always tried to be involved in what I do . . . where guys want to take you under you wing, so they can control your [music],” even when their help is unwanted or unasked for. The paternalism behind “male involvement” is a form of subtle discrimination that disconnects women from their work. Shannon must dodge male intervention that may be well-intentioned but in the end leaves her feeling co-opted. In the end, success and freedom always come with consequences for female musicians. These consequences are enforced when women assert their presence within the band and are praised for

their performance. When women are controlled least, they likely have do-it-yourself solo careers, without interference from record labels. Of course, in the push-and-pull between freedom and management, women who choose the former are less likely to encounter the latter—that is, get a record deal.

To conclude, control is so foundational to all aspects of gender relations that I am not surprised it is this study's most reoccurring theme. For female musicians, artistic and social control matter most because they can either grant or deny their jobs integrity and meaning. The desire freely control their work, to become invested, not alienated from their labor, coexists with the desire to be free *from* social control. Which treatment female musicians receive, consequently, must be left to the structure vs. agency debate.

Bodies

Gender, bodies, and musicians: what do these three concepts have in common? With mixed feelings of ambivalence, shame, anger, and regret, the nine women in this study answer: “*everything*.” As Beauvoir, Bordo, Butler, Foucault and others have theorized, the body is the central location for a woman's identity. Butler (1990), in particular, is interested in the ways in which bodies “come into being in and through the mark(s) of gender” (p. 8). For her, gender is not a stable identity that dictates the “bodily gestures, movements, and styles” of its person (p. 140). In other words, she does not see the body as a “passive medium” awaiting gendered decorations. Contrastingly, Beauvoir (1952) argues that a body “becomes” a woman, usually by looking like one. Beauvoir pictures gender as permanently *inscribed* on the body, while Butler

says that the body creates a temporal gender that changes depending on its different *stylizations* (p. 8). Here, I interpret Butler's "stylization of the body" as performing the expectations of beauty, sexuality, and age. Society views these constructs as "fundamental qualities in women" that are "readily available for public monitoring, comment, and sanction" (in Travis and White, 2000, p. 204). Indeed, beauty, sexuality, and age performances do not "make" women, says Butler, but they do, however, make gender:

We regularly punish those who fail to do their gender right. ...Because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all (Butler, 1990, p. 140).

The women in this study did not, as Beauvoir says, *become* women by wearing makeup, dating men, or looking youthful. Some conformed to beauty, sexuality, and age, and others did not—but what is important to remember is that their bodies were scrutinized *whether they performed gender properly or not*.

As a result of this scrutiny, bodies are important to female musicians because they feel that their appearance speaks before everything else. Consequently, female musicians' bodies existed as yardsticks that could either deliver or damn their success as workers. Thus, they could be described *by* their bodies, not simply by their music. The conflation of bodies and work is infused in phrases like "not only is she talented, she's beautiful," "she plays her instrument like a man," and "she's still got some touring years left." How do female musicians manage this embodiment? Here I will show how women's music careers hinged on specific gender scripts for managing sexuality, beauty, and age. But in some cases, these three pressures are blurred together, as sexuality, beauty, and age all force women to assess the link between body image and career success. From the interviews, then, I sensed a frustration that women felt *permanently* situated and within their bodies. This is distressing, considering Butler's assertion that gender is

“not a fact.” Indeed, from these interviews, it is difficult to envision the possibilities of gender transformation without dire social repercussions.

Sexuality & Beauty: You Can't Play Drums in a Dress

Sexuality and beauty reinforce each other. A woman's body shape, breast size, and hair color are features used to assess her worth as a sexual being (Travis and White, 2000). In addition, beauty implies femininity, and femininity carries a particular set of sexual scripts. But the female musicians I studied disrupted this formula because their appearance lacked the appropriate femininity for their gender. Maggie personified this disruption when she told me “you can't play drums in a dress!”--meaning it is physically impossible. Oftentimes, then, femininity and musicianship are like oil and water.

Consequently, three women chronicled how their sexuality was questioned because they did not conform to beauty standards. Heather's appearance and performance were questioned the most. Heather is a participant in an extremely masculine music scene (hardcore). She is also a singer whose voice is “so masculine and so deep” that appearance and sexuality caught her in their crosshairs. She began our interview by explaining how her body was publicly censured. Her appearance was audited on a national internet message board, where she eventually failed the beauty test:

Everybody started attacking me. Not the music, me. Somebody said that I had a nose job. Like, [putting up photos of her] and saying “her nose looks different in this picture than it does in this picture.” One fan said “She sounds like a man, and she looks like a man too.”

The assumption here is that Heather is a woman trying to pass as a man. But Heather is not “passing” in a traditional sense of the word. Only her voice passes—she is not trying to become a

man in totality. She is a woman acting out *one aspect* of the masculine tropes in music. Furthermore, like Maggie, who “plays guitar like a man,” Heather sings like a man. But in the former’s case, the phrase belied surprise about her talent: hers meant “You impressed me because I did not expect you to be *as good as* a man.” For Heather, however, the phrase “like a man” pivots on her appearance—“You play like a man, therefore you *look like* a man.” This syllogism insinuates the dangers of performing masculinity for the female musician: dare to play masculine but appear feminine.

Heather quickly found ways to do both. So worrisome were these attacks that, as an outlet for her situation, she chose to make a video documentary about “how hard it is for women in hardcore [music].” In it, she conveyed how every “girl in hardcore that looks more masculine [is] automatically called a dyke or a lesbian.” These pressures recently caused her to worry more about her appearance. As a rarity for her genre, and as the vocalist out front, she feels like fans *expect* to see a good looking girl on stage, and not a “tomboy” (how she describes herself before her sexuality was attacked). Heather’s interview contained an underlying fear that she could be targeted again, so she now dresses “to look hot.” She continues to sing like a man, because it gives her credit in a scene that shuns femininity. But she aims to attract male sexual attention with her body in order to deflect attacks on her sexuality. This is how she walks the precarious tightrope between sexuality and beauty.

Maureen’s story of “misidentified beauty” explains the difficulties in maintaining femininity when touring. Sahara, when arriving late from the road to play a show, would first set up their equipment as the audience watched. Only at that point, the audience failed to recognize them as the stars of the evening, thinking them roadies or club workers:

So here we come in with oily hair, axes on our back . . . and we'd go back on the bus, PTA bath, put powder on, do our hair, and we'd walk back in, and it would be completely different, like "Oh, there's the band!" I mean that's how different it was, because we looked like hags going in. It's like two sets of bands there.

In this situation, Sahara was not recognized at first because femininity was not flagrantly on display. Sahara, then, constantly monitored their appearance. When Kim first considered joining Sahara, she was hesitant: "everything I had heard about all girl bands was not good. 'Don't join them, Kim, they're lesbians!'" Kim eventually joined, but she and the other members were always wary of the "lesbian card." Their "front stage" and "back stage" persona reflects the desire to keep beauty out front to deflect attacks on their sexuality.

In its most gratuitous form, the strain of sexuality and beauty will terminate a job. In anticipation of a long story, Maureen sighs heavily when she tells me how her band suffered monetarily because of their appearance. The glitter, powder, and hairspray applied back stage did not eclipse a larger, more obvious symbol: a group of women working together, sans men. Thus, Maureen and her band mates never appeared feminine enough to escape the homosexual label:

I've always felt that our band, we pretty much looked the part of the gay thing. And that is what really hurt us. Even though we didn't walk around with chains on our hips or anything . . . but it was just the look. We were always defending ourselves.

I could describe Sahara's appearance, but *what* they look like circumvents the issue of why they were treated this way. Instead, let's examine why Sahara was constantly on the defensive. All-female bands are subjected to a unique set of assumptions: their bodies (and performance) are judged as a group, rather than individually; male bodies are excluded as women dominate the social space of the stage; and the collective act of asserting female bodily presence and power attracts more female power. Here, we have several consequences that put female sexuality in jeopardy: 1.) one unfeminine member could "betray" the rest of the group's femininity; 2.)

women performing without men is interpreted as a sexual rejection of men, and 3.) all-female bands attract a mostly female, mostly homosexual audience. The last consequence is why Sahara was frequently fired from weekly booked shows:

They didn't want the gay following in their clubs, like Holiday Inn . . . we've been pretty much fired two or three or four times, because of the gay audience.

Maureen did not welcome the “gay audience” either, because she knew what their presence entailed: pressure from club owners to play a hetero-normative show. Imagine the uncomfortable feelings that everyone shared over sexuality in this situation: from Sahara who wanted an audience--but not a gay audience; to club owners who expected to reel in audiences with the “gimmick” of beautiful women playing a man’s game; to lesbian audience members, who simply wanted to carve out an exclusive space for women’s music. Rather than awkwardly (yet daringly!) complicating sexuality and beauty, both the clubs *and* Sahara attempted to avoid the conflict. Sahara eventually felt relieved when a show cancelled.

Beauty Matters

The only participant who openly identified as homosexual was Carmen. Oddly enough, she possessed more anxiety over her beauty than her sexuality.³ When I asked her what her biggest challenge will be for the future, the injustice of beauty standards in the music industry poured out:

People expect absolute beauty from a female. Like right now, you have to be flawless, you know perfect face, perfect body, just to get signed . . . beauty matters. It's hard to see girls that aren't absolutely perfect getting signed. That's the most challenging thing for a woman right now, you really have to be careful. Because guys will get signed no matter how they look. You have to work so hard . . . the men only have to worry about the music, they don't have to worry about how [they] look. “We don't give a fuck if there's talent or not, as long as they've

got nice thighs.” They will say you’re fat . . . they’re harsh. It’s a man’s world out there.

While most women in this study mentioned that their biggest challenges were control issues (“keeping control of my music”, “staying relevant”), attractiveness was especially challenging for Carmen. Why? Perhaps, as a Hispanic female, she is aware of how her race cages her appearance: “It’s sad, because you’ve got to be white and pretty to get a record deal.” She is also the only participant to directly link beauty with a “promotion” in the music industry. In her view, the male dominated industry discriminates against unattractive, talented women, while praising those who are attractive but less talented. Male attractiveness is not a variable in this equation.

Why is beauty so important to the female musician’s work? Beauty buys one’s way into many areas of life, but it has more purchase in music because of the authenticity of the stage. As in any performance art conducted on a physical stage, gender is literally *on display*, where musicians “do gender” under a heightened public eye (West and Zimmerman, 1987). Here, the implicit purpose of “performance” and “attractiveness” converge: both are meant to be gazed upon. Essentially, music is about performance—otherwise, ticket sales would not be the largest source of revenue for the signed artist. As much as record industry insiders claim “only the music matters,” when performance is emphasized, attractiveness becomes part of the job description. Carmen understands this dynamic when she says “you have to be careful”—meaning that once beauty fades, so could a job. Consequently, what happens *when* beauty fades with time is the topic of the next section.

Aging Bodies, Aging Bands

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, at least 60% of females age 50-59 participated in the labor force in 2000 (BLS, 2001). As more women see the doors opening for work throughout their later years, aging musicians see them closing. Four women over age 40 told me how their options for work were limited by their aging bodies. According to female musicians in this study, the door to work closed for them in their late thirties. Roberta, 42, and Sahara, whose members were Maggie, Kim, and Maureen, were all full-time musicians during their 20's and 30's, but today they play music only as a hobby. Why did they quit? One reason, I hypothesize, is their age. I found that these women encountered specific forms of ageism from their audiences and the music industry that pushed them out of touring work.

Internal/External Ageism

Kim and Maureen were keenly aware of how age impacted their work. While in Sahara, Barbara, the band's leader, stood out because she was the oldest member of the group. Barbara was almost twenty years older than Kim and Maureen, and this age gap put a strain on the entire band:

When we were young, the gimmick thing was okay, but we were still more accepted. And then when we got older, we really *were* a gimmick. Young guys out of the audience would be like "Hey, you guys would be great if you'd get rid of the old lady!" We heard it so much, we started getting paranoid about it. . . . Eventually we left Barbara. We were mean to her too.

This quote contains many telling complexities about age and musicians. Firstly, the gimmick role resurfaces. Age transforms the perception of Sahara as an all-female side show. Why could Sahara resist the gimmick label more easily when they were younger? Youthfulness likely

warded off the threat of lessened credibility. Kim says they were “still more accepted,” meaning audiences were more willing to *at least give them a chance*--despite their gender and based on their youthfulness. Youth gave them a window of opportunity, until the gimmick of an all-female band multiplied into a “band of aging female musicians.” Secondly, the audience’s reaction to “the old lady” divides Barbara from the rest of her band. Audiences pegged Barbara as less talented and a bigger gimmick than her younger band mates, simply because she was older. In this instance, Barbara does not predicate an experienced, seasoned professional, but a useless, fading fossil who should “get out of the way” and let youth take over. Kim also said “*younger guys*” made these verbal attacks, alluding to ageism and sexism at work. If Barbara had been older but maintained her beauty, would younger men continue to discount her? Finally, internal and external ageism surface in Kim’s comment. Kim and Maureen admit that their relationship with Barbara was strained because of their age gap. Kim says Barbara “was like our mother,” but eventually they would, like rebellious teenagers, challenge her authority. Barbara’s experience was no longer needed after Kim and Maureen tutored under her. And clearly, the audience’s comments about Barbara stuck in Kim’s mind. Her fear of Barbara’s age bringing the whole group down becomes another layer of internal ageism. The external ageism from the audience and internal ageism from the rest of Sahara appear to be two reasons why Barbara was ousted from the group.

Ageism & the Gender Double Standard

But time was not on Maureen or Kim’s side either; eventually, they became “aging musicians” themselves. From them, I detected the presence of an “inner clock” that chimed at a

certain age, signaling when they would quit playing professionally. Maureen describes the inevitability of having to stop at some point:

Am I going to be on stage when I'm 50? I knew the day was going to come. Maybe . . . you're just not what you used to be. But our bodies from playing all those years, pretty much broke down our systems too. It's sad because I miss it so much.

After Sahara disbanded, Kim also felt like her time was running out. The next thing she knew, she was in her late thirties, and her “dream was shot.” She adds, “But I knew I couldn't quit playing. I'm not done yet, in my mind. But I'm just like ‘This can't go on forever.’” Maggie quit touring at 34, because she promised her mother she would find a “real job.” She did find other means to support herself, but she still plays music locally. Roberta, at 42, also told a similar tale of how she felt “too old” to continue her full-time music career after her thirties. Yet, like Kim and Maureen, Roberta hears the call of the stage. All have an overwhelming desire to continue their work, but they do not. Why?

These stories demonstrate an enduring theme: body vs. mind. Do these women feel biologically betrayed by their bodies? Or do society's aging standards evoke this feeling of betrayal? Conflictingly, their minds are willing and able, but I believe something other than biology tells them they must stop at a certain age. That “something” is societal attitudes toward aging workers: pressure to quit at the onset of old age. Gerontologists call this phenomenon ageism via “forced retirement.” Older female musicians experience this form of ageism more intensely. Roberta and Kim felt the demands of forced retirement at a much younger age than most workers. Moreover, they felt pressure earlier than most *male musicians*. It is not uncommon to see a male musician working past his mid-to-late thirties. Carmen, one of the younger

musicians in this study, explains how the threat of a premature retirement comes earlier for female musicians:

Getting old, it's a feeling that girls will get signed at sixteen, eighteen. I'm twenty six. I have to say that I'm twenty one. I'm telling you I'm twenty six because you won't put my name down. But in interviews I'm say I'm twenty-one.

Carmen was acutely aware of how ageism could block her from a record deal, thus, she lies about her age, even though she is only twenty-six! Consequently, both Carmen and Kim have a back up plan. At a certain point, they hope to avoid forced retirement by going behind the scenes as producers. Kim says “you can always do that. The older you get, it doesn't matter, because you are behind.” Here is proof, in Kim's statement, that the phenomenon of early retirement in music is not *genderless*, nor is it a demand of *biology*. To continue working past this “thirty-something time bomb,” both find it necessary to move into a job that will hide their aging bodies—bodies that are just as capable, but lack the aesthetics expected for their gender. For the women in this study, the message is clear: when your beauty runs out, move behind or move out.

Why is age so recalcitrant for women in this type of work? The answer, I believe, lies in a simple social fact: music culture's exaltation of youth. A younger musician's work is praised as hip, daring, intelligent; older musician's work is shunned as uncool, tiresome, and irrelevant. Youth is the site where new music is invented and old music reinvented. What's more, music critics use “relevancy” as a time test to see if an aging musician's work has kept up with his/her younger audience. For women, however, the emphasis on youth cuts across beauty more harshly than it does for men. If our culture assumes an indirect correlation between beauty and youth, then women, whose identity derives from beauty, are caught in a relentless search to preserve

their beauty in spite of their age. Of the double standard for gender and aging, Quadagno (2002) says,

Women are more likely to be evaluated according to their sexual attractiveness, whereas men are more likely to be evaluated by their occupational success. Thus for women, avoiding age discrimination depends on maintaining a youthful appearance (p. 21)

Admittedly, discontentment, monotony, alcohol, drugs, arguments, and deaths were all cited as reasons for Sahara's "retirement." But as I have shown, ageism is a formidable culprit for female musicians because of the double standard of gender.

The concepts of sexuality, beauty, and age transform into a single, overarching facet of identity for a female musician. Some women felt they had to "become" the ideal female musician: young, beautiful, and heterosexual. For instance, Kim retired and Heather dressed feminine when age and gender demanded it. The women strove for the age/beauty/sexuality ideal in the hope that it would dispense credibility to their musicianship. More importantly, Maureen, Carmen, Kim, and Heather ordered their lives around this ideal, so that it became, for them, *part of their jobs*.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

The central question that sparked this research is “Are female musicians subject to gender discrimination?” After analyzing the narratives of nine working women, the answer appears to be a *yes*. Overall, I detected the presence of subtle discrimination that is typical for women in male-dominated occupations. Thus, this different treatment was not blatant gender discrimination *per se*, but emerged as a system of micro-pressures that force women into different spaces, roles, and bodies. I can say with confidence that female musicians experience these pressures at every life stage, *on* every stage that they perform, at every celebration of success, in every music genre, and with every instrument played. These pressures take three interrelated forms: 1.) tokenism, 2.) lessened credibility, and 3.) gender/age inappropriateness. All of these pressures compound the evidence for both gender discrimination and the social control of gender in the work of female musicians.

Strong Evidence for Tokenism

Female performers share similar experiences with the female executives in Kanter’s (1977) research. As mentioned previously, Kanter argues that tokens exhibit three characteristics: higher visibility, contrast, and assimilation. Female musicians encountered all three consequences. Tokenism gains traction when we see how female musicians were frequently singled out, set apart, and supervised.

First, female musicians stood out. In all circumstances—control, roles, and bodies—females were more visible because they were few. The nine women in this study fleshed out the

consequences for heightened visibility. Some women felt pressure to outperform men. Others felt like showpieces with limited participation in the “grunt work” of the band. In most cases, visibility obscured talent and skill. For instance, Shannon, the most “structurally aware” of the interview pool, remarked how visibility obscures her talent and hurts her career:

“Sometimes guys get mad because you get ‘special privileges’ because you’re a girl . . . oh, you get all this attention because you’re a girl. Like, I get attention because I’m doing good!”

On the other hand, a few women credited visibility with helping launch their careers. Roberta felt that tokenism helped her: “I think I’ve been treated really great because I’m a chick.”⁴ Maureen and Maggie, lead guitarist and drummer, respectively, admit that their names were sought out because A&R representatives remembered their faces in clubs. However, Sahara agree that their visibility did not propel their career far enough. Because of the difficulties Sahara faced as a “female band,” rather than as a “female musician,” Sahara’s tokenism doubled.

This study departs from Kanter in one instance. Kanter asserts that uneven gender ratios produce tokenism. She uses the “X and O” metaphor to illustrate how tokenism exists solely based on visibility:

If one sees nine X’s and one O:

X X X X X X O X X X

The O will stand out. The O may also be overlooked, but if it is seen at all, it will get more notice than the X (p. 210).

The easiest way to reduce tokenism, according to Kanter, is to bring in more “O’s”. This hypothesis may apply in the corporate world, but it does not entirely fit in the world of music. This current study suggests that women stand out even when they are the majority. As shown with Sahara, who played after a strip act and who club owners charged with lesbianism, and with Kate, who became a token in a band with balanced genders, tokenism results, not from numbers,

but from another process entirely. If numbers failed to explain why all-female bands experienced tokenism, what else could be going on? This study shows how deeply entrenched gender roles govern beliefs about who makes music and who makes it well. Thus, sexism proscribes female musicianship (this is discussed further in pressure #3). My findings confirm Yoder's (1991) assertion that gender ratios do not always result in tokenism. The root cause of tokenism appears to be a conflation of numbers *and* attitudes. Consequently, Kanter's X and O metaphor now looks more like this:

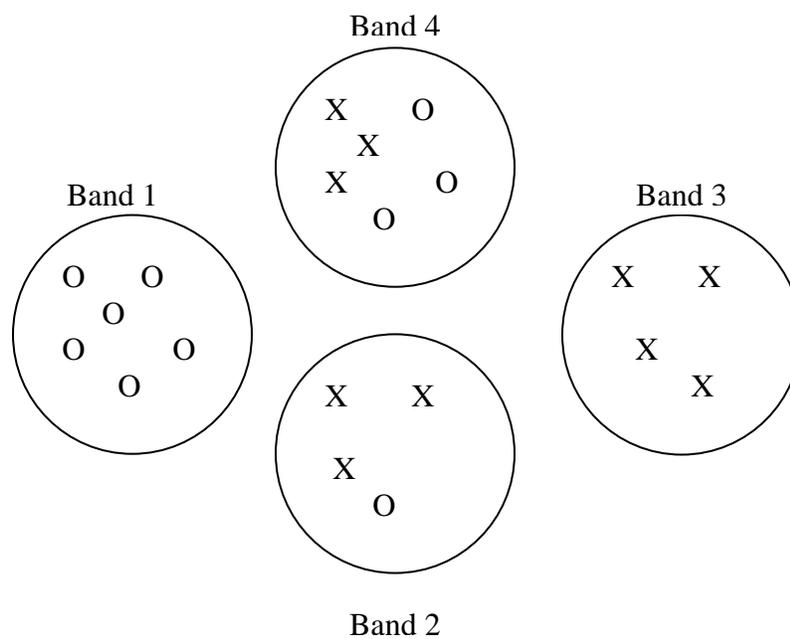


Figure 1: Visibility/Tokenism Among All-Female, All-Male, and Gender Mixed Bands

According to Kanter, the “O” in Band 2 would experience the greatest amount of tokenism and the “O’s” in Band 1 or 4 the least. But notice how Band 1 stands out from the whole, even though “O’s” are the majority within it. Also, the population of “X’s” and “O’s” is evenly distributed within the whole diagram, but the eye is first drawn the strong curvature of the “O” instead of the oblique “X”. So, when a critical mass is reached, are women in music no longer tokens? On the contrary, the data in this study did not appear to support Kanter’s hypothesis that more women equals less tokenism.

Here is how music erects tokens through visibility: simply, women stand out no matter what the gender ratio. There is no “tipping point” for female musicians. Christian band Eisley, grunge punkers Hole, and Natalie’s hip-hop band resemble Band 4. Audiences mark them instantly for the “oddity” of equality. Even by itself, Band 1 would stand out because the X is *implied by its absence*. This observation was confirmed the night of VAGINA fest, when female musicians dominated. Both the mixed-gender audience and I were attracted to the festival because it showcased female talent. It was a night for “women to stand out”—a token festival for women. This parallels how an equal number of “O’s” in Band 1 persists as tokenism. What’s more, tokenism doubles due to their extremely high visibility: all-female bands experience multiple pressures as “one big token.” In sum, tokenism persists in music because a female musician is deviant even when other deviants surround her.

Second, the analysis confirms that contrast, or boundary heightening, emerged in reaction to the “threat” posed by female musicians. Simply put, female musicians made male musicians uncomfortable. The “loss of control” by male band members was a prime motivation for boundary heightening. Female ‘intrusion’ into the masculine territory of music—especially in the most male-dominated genres—sparked a fear that women would take over the band or the

genre. Scrutinizing femininity, acting out jealousy, trivializing talent, tampering with artistic license, assigning different roles and tasks, and questioning sexuality are examples of how the distance between men and women was carefully monitored. As a result, women's careers were sabotaged to protect male turf. This finding echoes Frith's statement from the Introduction--that women are excluded as friends, craftsmen in the studio, on the road, and in performance.

Boundary heightening illustrates that this exclusion exists for reason and is not merely incidental.

Tokenism greatly affected women's identities in this study. Thus, the final consequence of tokenism mirrors the role encapsulation found in Kanter. We saw how five specific scripts are written for female musicians: the "good for a girl," the hard(er) worker, the child/mother, the invisible accessory, and the gimmick. These roles were full of contradictory expectations that pitted individualism against stereotypes. For instance, gender denied women the opportunity to perform on the same level as men ("good for girls"), while their status was either demoted (the gimmick) or scrutinized (hard worker). Misidentification left women constantly reasserting what they were and deflecting what they were not. Though these women knew who *they* were, they were at a loss for how to make the message clearer: I am a *musician*, not a gimmick, bitch, child, spinster, dyke, slut, or princess—not to mention I *can play well!* Eventually, these conflicted identities led female musicians down confusing roads. Women expressed uncertainty in their capabilities. They wondered aloud, "What is the next step in my career?" (Shannon & Roberta), "Is my music good enough?" (Kate), "Why do they want to bring me down?" (Heather), and "Will I be able to play music again without the drugs?" (Kim).

Did female musicians actively challenge role encapsulation? Previously, we saw how riot grrrls and female gangsta rappers cultivate agency by singing about their prescribed status. But few women in this study infused resistance into their art. Instead, female musicians resisted

passively. Interviews overflowed with resentment at being accessorized, ignored, or cheapened, but rarely did women “call men out.” When women did challenge these roles, they were misidentified. But again, the word *challenge* can be misleading. Women did not resist these roles through action. They chose to shrug the roles off as ignorance or what “comes with the territory.” Indesco’s women, too, felt that it was “often easier to accept stereotyped roles than to fight them.” (p. 236) Female executives and female musicians are both told “not to rock the boat,” to be patient, and to take on the values of men that surround them (ibid). This latent attitude reinforces the pattern of stereotypes and encourages men to treat women differently.

With Kanter as a guide, we begin to see an image of the token female musician. Tokenism goes beyond numbers; sexism is its carrier in the music world. Masculine attachments to music prevent women from joining in--thus the need to control women’s space and artistry. Stereotyped roles persist, even after misidentification. Moreover, these roles were rarely challenged on an individual level. Above all, these women knew they were different; they sensed they were “O’s” in a field of “X’s.” They also knew how difference shaped their experiences, making them special, but not “in a good way.”

Work not as credible

Female musicians get less credit for the same amount of work performed. Early in the interviews, Shannon told me “I have to have ten times the talent to get a third of the credit.” As the study progressed, “credibility” continued to implicate control issues, roles, misidentification, and body image. Thus, a female musician’s credibility suffered whenever someone controlled her work, misidentified her role, or judged her body. For example, when encountering jealousy,

female musicians are seen as less capable of being front women or “the stars” of the band. When their artistic control is challenged, they are seen as incapable of creating their own work. Moreover, through all of the roles discussed—mother/child, good for a girl, the gimmick, the accessory—runs the current of devaluation of women’s talent and skill. Women were also mistaken for girlfriends, backup singers, or fans. People “doubted” their identity before they performed, and even during performances, men were given more songwriting credit. Also, if beauty was “properly” displayed, sexuality was not attacked, but musical competency took a back seat to “eye candy.”⁵ Conversely, women who did not align with femininity received less credit for their work because they were written off as “butch.” And beauty expectations obscured the experience and wisdom that accumulated with age. Professional musicians like Kim felt this pressure the most, as youth, beauty, and gender conspired to bankrupt their qualifications.

What are the larger repercussions for a credibility gap? On an organizational level, credibility means power. Kanter saw how at Indesco,

People with credibility were listened to, their phone calls were answered first, because they were assumed to have something important to say. People with credibility had room to make more mistakes and could take greater risks (p. 169).

Credibility impregnates power. Power, in turn, prevents questioning:

Power is synonymous with autonomy and freedom of action. The powerful can afford to risk more, and they can afford to allow others their freedom (ibid., p. 197).

In this study, these concepts worked similarly on an individual level. All interviews indicate that female musicians have resources to accumulate power. However, these resources ultimately restricted autonomy, rendering female musicians’ power superficial. Beauty could be considered a resource for women because it garners attention from the people *in* power. But Carmen could not “risk” neglecting her body and her beauty. Roberta, furthermore, used sex as weapon to be

both feared and desired. Her sexuality was not questioned, but her autonomy was controlled by a jealous band mate. Masculinization was another strategy to collect credibility. Heather acknowledges she received credit because she was a female who was as tough as a man. But her “toughness” tainted her sexuality, and she had less freedom to toy with her femininity. Women could also accumulate power as front women—that is, the “main attraction” or the “most recognizable band member.” But as we saw from Roberta and Shannon, whose bands were both destroyed because of jealous men, female power is sabotaged in an act of covert discrimination. Women also claimed that their gender gave them adoration and respect because they “stood out.” Many women were “role models” for younger girls who aspired to become rock stars themselves. But were these women more credible because they were *incredible*? If so, is this a true route to autonomy through power? If its effects are *real* to the women—that is, it gives them a *feeling* of freedom and credibility—then yes. But until role models change male attitudes and patriarchal structures (i.e., we no longer have role models who are not tokenized), then power-through-inspiration is merely ornamental.

In conclusion, women in music are judged on a higher standard than men. This causes women to work harder for less. These two pressures, expecting more (a double standard) while crediting less (a reverse double standard), leaves women in lose-lose situations. The linkage between credibility and power is tantamount to giving women autonomy over their music careers. Kanter shows how women in large, hierarchical organizations are caught in a cycle of powerlessness. This cycle also applies to female musicians, where the lack of credibility chips away at the ability to maneuver freely. Thus, the pressures of femininity, sexuality, space, and tokenism must be reduced structurally, not merely individually, in order to create widespread change.

Inappropriate for their jobs

Tokenism and the credibility gap result from the fact that female musicians work in an industry that is considered inappropriate for their gender. Misidentifying, i.e. incredulous reactions to the work women do, criticizing a woman's appearance, and deeming women less capable at performing their jobs send a clear message: "women don't belong here." Previously, I mentioned how female musicians continued to be seen as deviant even when other deviants surround them. Why is this so? I believe that the rigidity of sexism in music overwhelms any numerical concentration of women. It is difficult for women to "feminize" their industry—music will not be occupationally resegregated. Thus, this study illustrates how sexism permeates the work spaces between men and women, granting men the appropriateness necessary to succeed. But the "fault" cannot be directed at any individual man. Patriarchy pulls male strings as much as women's. Patriarchy in music, however, is a unique kind. Coupled with patriarchy are the ideological values in music---sex, drugs, and rock 'n roll, i.e. the "ideology of rock." Structure and ideology combine to exclude women from the role of "rock star," in all its playful raunchiness or weighty show"man"ship. Traditional gender roles throughout western culture determine who will become a musician, who will ride to the top, and who will be canonized in music history. Carmen remarks, "it's a man's world out there," and Natalie adds, "you have to play a man's game." Thus, when Shannon attempts to insert herself into music history, she is "expected to play guys' music." Sahara, too, masculinized their sound and played like a female version of a male band. For instance, Kim says that her dream was for Sahara to sound like "the Beatles...but with girls." Female musicians, then, avoid "sounding" like females. Doing so includes them in networks that will move them upwards in their careers.

Yet the reason for exclusion puzzled me. The stories of male jealousy illustrated how music is “protected” by men. Are female musicians feared? If not, then why was boundary heightening used to exclude female tokens? What is threatening about a female “star” in a band? Why did Sahara infringe on the sanctity of serious musicianship? These are questions that I returned to over and over. Yes, male musicians reacted as many men do in situations that jeopardize their authority, but *why in music?* Jealousy destroyed bands, relationships, and careers for both women *and* men. What did it preserve? In truth, controlling female space by erecting walls of difference preserves a sacred male institution. Music, like politics, sports, or pornography, transcends merely a “male-dominated job.” It constructs friendships, subcultures, lifestyles. We “do” music everywhere, so we find new technologies for carrying it with us. Music elicits emotions—a band or artist provokes religious fanaticism or scorching repugnance. Music, in other words, is firmly woven into our social and psychological fabric. At the same time, music is an essential part of the male experience. The literature on gender differences in friendships shows how men bond instrumentally—men *do* things with their friends (see Aries and Johnson, 1983; Duck, 1988). As an outlet for relaxation and fun, men make music, listen to it, discuss it, share it, and ultimately protect it as a haven “away from women.” As Kimmel (1994) argues, men must flee from women and repudiate everything feminine. Music, then, is where men flee *toward*—it is a stage on which masculinity can be performed. Thus, as women begin to share in the musical experience as creators, male and female musicians engage in two different crises. Men protect a hallmark of masculinity, while women struggle with their exclusion from it.

What are the consequences for this exclusion? First of all, the women I spoke with knew there was “something odd” about what they did. Nevertheless, they felt that they belonged in

music, that they possessed a “god-given talent.” As we have seen, however, the male music institution demands that a woman’s gender speaks *before* her talent. Thus, women used different techniques to neutralize their gender and promote their talent. They “played like a man” while dressing like a woman (Heather, Maureen), adopted a masculine authority (Shannon, Kate, Carmen), or ignored feminine beauty standards (Natalie, Maggie). Meanwhile, the counterstrategies of different treatment are used to bring gender back into focus. In the end, we confront the paradox of female musicianship: *transgressing gender to neutralize it, while gender is reinforced because it was transgressed*. In general terms, this paradox affects all women, making the climb to equality more hazardous (see Lorber, 1994). In particular, however, female musicians experience gender as an inescapable situation because their work *requires* a transgression. Women reacted to this paradox with confusion, bitterness, anxiety, and amusement. More importantly, they reacted to their own inappropriateness with determination. When I asked the women this question: “Does all this just make want to give up?” Every musician replied: “No. Never.”

A Tighter Pattern of Difference

Tokenism, credibility, and inappropriateness craft an environment of difference for women in music. These processes mirror the findings from studies on non-typical occupations. Consequently, it is important to note that occupational studies are usually products of large, complex organizations—law firms, hospitals, corporate offices, and government bureaus. Gender discrimination for female musicians comes with a major dilemma: local (and sometimes national) level music is an unregulated industry. Enforcing government regulations becomes

difficult when there is no formal “hiring” process. Changing attitudes becomes even more difficult when organizations are not clearly defined. And even if we consider labels or management an “organization,” how do we communicate changes like counseling resources, performance review, job ladders, decentralization, hierarchy flattening, job enrichment, and flexible hours? These propositions were introduced by Kanter and others in 70’s, and enormous changes occurred in the workforce since then. We can assume, then, that the structure of the music workplace lags behind industries that have since remodeled. The lack of organizational centrality and government regulation in music ensures male success.

“Being in rock n roll is the best way to amplify any situation, because it brings it right to your face.” Thus Shannon explains how the gendered pressures in music are felt more intensely compared to an everyday job. These pressures are not unique to musicians. Still, Shannon means that gender pressures lay over female musicians in a tighter pattern. What’s more, no formal resources exist to alleviate their presence. Ultimately, social constructs and ideologies impede the success of female musicians. In this study I have shown how three ideologies/constructs directly affect women’s experiences. These include: 1.) sexism and sex roles 2.) music as a masculine haven, and 3.) binary thinking of men as “musicians’ and women as “female musicians.” All use specific pressures to ensure that women will be treated differently. These ideologies fuel tokenism, decrease credibility, and confirm inappropriateness.

The ideologies and pressures behind music have multiple consequences for numbers, opportunity, agency, structure, roles, and bodies. First, these ideologies restrict opportunity to begin and sustain a career in music. Women have less cultural capital to form bands on their own because of their diminished power and credibility. Moreover, opportunity directly affects the number of women in music today. The “big stars” in music are those who made it, but the

spotlight does not grant immunity from gender. Second, social control executes gender ideologies. The social control of gender involves restricting a musician's territory and artistic freedom, regulating beauty and age standards, and accumulating music's cultural capital. Tokenism is also a form of social control, keeping female musicians shallowly visible. Chart successes and overall representation depend on a number of social control techniques that discredit and divide talent. Resistance to social control can be active, like with riot grrrls, pre-war country music stars, or gangsta rappers. These women, who resist from within, are outcasts in mainstream music, but their artistic control is much less restricted. Meanwhile, the women in this study engage in passive resistance. They desired success but felt compelled to play by the industry's rules. In doing so, they expose their credibility and their bodies to harsher scrutiny. Moreover, men who monitor masculinity by heightening the boundaries restrict the opportunity for advancement within or outside of a band. Social control also affects roles. It ensures that stereotypes stick, and gives women less latitude to create new images of themselves. It also works under misidentification, which confirms women's inappropriateness as "rock stars," and shoves them back into a more appropriate role. All in all, the narratives of the women in this study can be summed up in one phrase that embodies the female musician's experience: "you're just a girl."

Female Musicians and Social Change

Despite the overwhelming obstacles female musicians face, we have reasons to be optimistic about the future. Comparisons between the older and younger women in this study indicate that positive social change has occurred over the past thirty years. Kim, Maureen,

Maggie, and Roberta have been involved in music over the course of their lifetime. Their stories vary on the point at which when women began to enter music in larger numbers. But, they do agree that fewer female musicians surrounded them in their beginner years. Therefore, the older women attest that there are more women in music today than in the past. My own experiences in the research process suggest that this change is true. Before I began the data collection, I thought that finding female musicians would be difficult. In the end, I underestimated their presence. Female musicians were plentiful enough that I completed the interviews quickly. At one point, I interviewed four musicians in a week. I ended the data collection with pages of contacts for future studies. I began to wonder: would my chances for finding female musicians decrease if I had conducted this study twenty years ago?

In exploring this question, I discovered a disjuncture between the two age groups in this study. The younger women could not visualize the roads that social change had paved for them. The older women say that today's female musicians take their opportunities for granted. Specifically, the feeling of regret stood out in Sahara's narrative history. They mourned the fact that women now have more opportunities than they had. Kim, Maureen, and Maggie saw how social change in music helped others after them, because Sahara rode on its wave. Hence, older women felt "cheated" by time. The first all-female band that Kim saw on national television was the Go-Go's. She greeted them with disappointment:

And then here they are, in their early twenties. We've been there, done that. Now we're in our late twenties and early thirties. And it's like, wow, we missed the boat somewhere. And then the all-girl bands started coming out of the woodwork. I don't know if the timing If everything had happened at the time ten years ago for us, we probably would have made it.

Moreover, their bodies prevented them from reaping the benefits of social change. Though they all continue to play music individually, ageism drastically diminishes Sahara's chances for getting back together:

It's a shame that we aren't any younger, and be able to get into it now, because we might have a chance (Maggie).

When I brought up these observations to Maureen, my last interview, she was floored:

My god, it just hit me like a ton of bricks! You know we're all clean, we're ready to . . . we could do it right now. I just feel like if we were younger, you know. But man, it's done with now, it's gone.

As painful as this irony was, I reminded them of what they accomplished for the younger women I interviewed. Sahara was literally "ahead of their time" for women in music. But without them taking that leap, fewer female musicians might exist in music today. Even though they did not see fame and fortune, Sahara is rich in precedence.

A tentative foundation for female musicians now existed after bands like Sahara. A few theories explain the female increase in numbers from the late 80's to the present. First, technological advances in recording equipment and album distribution flatten the hierarchy for musicians. No longer do musicians require a record company to place music into consumer's hands. With the right equipment, a musician can even become her own band. Roberta sees how the ability to record in one's home and sell music online opened doors for her. "I can be a singer, I can be a girl just doing vocals or lounge stuff. You don't need a band to do that." Secondly, the women's movement, combined with the "first wave" of women like Sahara, changed attitudes. This progress also helped women access the networks required to start their own bands. Four women out of the nine I spoke with had started bands on their own, without being asked to join or forming a band with a boyfriend. This advancement is key, because band initiation gauges the

amount of cultural capital women possess. Three of those women were in the younger age cohort, so they likely possess more capital than Sahara did in their 20's. Thirdly, women actively help other women. All of the younger musicians felt like they had a "responsibility" to represent women in music. Some felt like activists for a cause. For instance, Heather stands on stage and tells the audience, "Listen, I'm up here for a reason. I'm up here to show all you girls that you can do this, I can do this." And Natalie tries to "open doors in people's minds" to envision a new kind of female musician who can make choices without consequence. Shannon and Kate make the simple gesture of passing female artists on to friends, or calling attention to bands with women in them.

These efforts help. But what else can be done to bring more women into the creative process? I asked the participants for their opinion on what needs to change. Natalie thinks that fewer women become musicians because of the fear of being labeled. So instead of fashioning a wholly new identity, they conform to stereotypes or quit in fear of media backlash. She suggests that attitudes and access need to change before women feel comfortable in music. Shannon says that a big problem for women is the lack of information on how to manage their careers. She suggests that those women who *have* made it share their knowledge. She has many questions about the rise to the top:

I want to ask them: "Do I do this, or do I do that? Do I sign to a major label? Do I do it Ani DiFranco style, where I just start myself? Well, who helps me with that? Do I get entertainment lawyers?"

These questions are valid, and feminist groups have tried to provide resources. Female musicians can turn to the internet for advice. For example, a website called the *Female Artist Network* provides a wealth of information on how to handle radio, equipment, producers, and recording software. Magazines like *Venus* and *RockGRRRL* also showcase talent while dispensing advice.

Better training and tools are available locally in different parts of the country. Conferences, festivals, and camps bring women together to share information and celebrate female talent. In 2000, for example, the Seattle based *Rock Camp for Girls* began a hands-on approach of teaching young girls how to play music together as a band.

But as women create resources for themselves, the music industry needs to look inward at the same time. Corporate organizations and smaller labels should address age and gender discrimination by opening the gates to women's entry and the elevators for women's ascent. They could also require their artists to attend workshops that would address the rampant presence of subtle discrimination. Consequently, this study's findings lead me to believe that music lags behind traditional work places in terms of the monitoring of sexism. I believe, then, that women gaining ground by numbers alone will not completely alleviate the problem. Before everything else, the attitudes about women in music need to change. Musicians themselves will not become genderless overnight, but music does not have to be a masculine playground. Fifteen years after the riot grrrl movement addressed women's exclusion, discrimination persists. We need another movement that will continue to reinvent music as a safe place for women, where they can aspire to be musicians without the baggage of tokenism. Music should become a work place where women's jobs and abilities are not questioned. Above all, women need to feel in control of their careers, without social control impeding their choices.

Reflection and Expansion

I began this study with a vague curiosity: why were fewer women in music. Because Clawson made the link between teenage experiences and permanent careers, I thought that I

needed to focus on early opportunities for women to answer this question. My hunch was that these opportunities were comparatively different from men's. But *difference* became such a loaded term that I first needed to explore its implications in music. Therefore, as I sharpened my focus, I had to shift away from men and lean toward women's lived experience with difference. Once that was established, I began the interviews with the central question of discrimination. A few things surprised me in the course of my research. First, early experiences did not connect across each interview. Some women joined their first bands as early as fifteen years of age, others at eighteen. Some came from musical families, most did not. A lot of women taught themselves how to play or sing, but then again, there were exceptions. In other words, women did not share similar opportunities in musical training. This finding was unexpected considering Clawson's research (1993, 1999a). Second, the proximity to Kanter was not intended from the outset. The presence of tokenism was quite a shock; I realized its presence late in the analysis. The women did not *seem* like tokens when I conversed with them. They were all strong, confident; they plodded on in spite of their setbacks. Perhaps if I could have frequently observed the women at band practices or at concerts, like Kanter observed Indesco, I might have caught the tokenism sooner. Third, I was surprised at the "wild card" theme of misidentification. I knew that identity posed some risk for female musicians, but I had no idea that it carried so much weight. After the second interview, I saw that misidentification posed a serious problem for credibility. Additionally, the phrase "good for a girl" came up so frequently I had to include credibility as a major finding. Fourth and finally, the regret expressed by the older women confirmed my faith in the importance of social change. Sahara's story was fascinating on so many levels. Their uniqueness, their age, and the depth of their history brought nuance to the

entire female narrative. In the future, I intend to study older musicians for their longitudinal possibilities.

In hindsight, what else can be explored? First, I believe a similar study on men will compliment these findings. Not only could we detect how men see themselves in relation to women, but we could begin to construct an image of *privilege*. If we know about the tensions women experience, we can then ask “What *kind of* and *how much* authority do men have as musicians and power holders?” The theory of “music as a masculine haven” should also be investigated. A study of men, therefore, would complete the circle on discrimination. Next, now that we know about the structural barriers to women’s success, we should subsequently examine music organizations. What do labels and management expect of their female artists? Why were some signed and others not? Are binary gender messages sent by pop culture conduits, like *VHI*, *Rolling Stone*, and *MTV*? In other words, what role do organizations play in keeping female musicians incongruous, tokenized, and less credible?

I admit, like Kanter, that studying women’s experience—especially women who have not “quit” music altogether—presents a methodological limitation:

Accurate conclusions about work attitudes and behavior cannot be reached by studying people in the token position, since there may always be an element of compensation or distortion involved (Kanter, 1977, p. 236).

Distortion likely played a role in the interviews because I focused solely difference. Sometimes, women knew that I was “looking for the bad stuff.” Consequently, I must qualify the presence of discrimination. I only heard the musician’s version of events, and I did not verify other player’s motives. It is necessary, then, to clarify what this study did not find. Musicians were not *systematically* fired or denied a job based on their sex, age, or sexual orientation. That is, I found no evidence that every musician interviewed encountered overt forms of gender discrimination.

However, some women would have strong cases for discrimination if they chose to go to court. In the clearest case, Maggie was denied a job because she was female (“jealous wives” was cited as the reason). In another, Sahara was fired because they attracted a gay audience, but it is unclear whether their (assumed) sexual orientation played some role in their firing. Second, this study did not examine wage inequality between musicians, mainly because of the difficulties in testing for a wage gap. Moreover, female musicians rarely mentioned sexual harassment as a problem⁶. All of these scenarios are *likely* to occur, however, in light of what this study did find.

Music and the Bigger Picture for Women

The research on female musicians is important for musicians, the music industry, and any workplace where women are the minority. Female musicians operate in an openly sexist environment that socially controls their every movement. Nevertheless, women’s mere presence is a direct confrontation to the ideology of music. This study contributes to understanding how women interpret their difference under a blanket of structural disempowerment. We can increase their chances for success by changing numbers and attitudes on two levels: within bands and within organizations. As soon as female musicians feel uninhibited by age, beauty, sexuality, identity, or image, then we know that difference is no longer an issue. Indeed, the road is long and difficult, but I have hope that changes, however small, will come in the future.

I end this study on a final note about the importance of women’s success in music: female musicians can pave the way for a female president. The connection appears laughable, but Shannon makes the point convincingly. She explains how, since the social movements in the

1960's, musicianship was an important stepping stone to higher ground for minorities. This all fell into perspective as Shannon and I discussed the importance of her craft and my research:

If we can accept women as musicians, we can accept women as politicians. If we can accept women as our main source of respected entertainment that we have—and not sexualized—then we can be presidents. I think . . . the revolution happens in art, in counter culture, and number one, our highest form of all of that is music. What brings everybody together? Their music. Everybody loves music. They want to sing along, they want an anthem. [Music is] our culture on display. So if we only have a few women in our main cultures, then we don't give women as much poise to carry those strong leadership positions. As a female musician [you are] in the public eye, constantly scrutinized. . . . It is a leadership position that you take on.

Though I doubt we will see a female musician running for president any time soon, Shannon makes a staggering point: music is a public forum that showcases female talent and success, which bleeds over into other structures of patriarchy. Thus, the gendered order in music must change before we see changes for women in politics.

APPENDIX: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Do you play an instrument, sing, or both?
2. How long have you been doing this?
3. Do you consider it a full-time job?
4. How did you get into playing music?

Probe: Tell me about your musical experiences growing up.

5. Tell me what it's like being a female musician now.

Probe: Throughout your career, do you think your gender has helped or hurt you?

Probe: Do you think male musicians experience things differently?

Probe: Can you recall of any moment when others may have questioned your musical abilities?

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END NOTES

¹ I could find no study that tackled such a project.

² The person who completed an interview but declined her participation afterward did not want to have her name attached to this study because she had been “quoted out of context” in a recent interview with musicians.

³ That I found out she was a lesbian after the interview might be one reason why sexuality never surfaced as a theme for Carmen.

⁴ Unlike the rest of the participants, Roberta admits she has “had an easy life,” and she has “no gender issues.” Roberta is also the only participant to purposefully use her sexuality on stage to gain power over men. She is known for appearing on stage naked or in lingerie:

If you’re selling sex, it’s a smash with the boys. And I’ve done that, I like to do that. I think it’s a great game. I think its just so funny.

The remainder of the women refused to act overtly sexual on stage.

⁵ When I think of the link between credibility and image, I think of the nationally known all-female band The Donnas. Their first album cover had the band all in black with jeans and T-shirts, striking a masculine “bad boy” pose. Their next album cover recreated a slumber party, with the women in feminine pajamas and lingerie, huddled together on a bed as if gossiping. Which image makes the women look more competent as rock musicians?

⁶ Sexual harassment appeared once or twice, but never across all the interviews. Nor did the participant give much substance to the incidents. The types of sexual harassment that occurred were: slut bashing, from Heather (“People said ‘this is what I heard about Heather, she slept with this many people and she’s a slut...’”); sexual pressure, from Shannon and Connie (“guys will come on to you; guys want to sleep with you”); and Sahara’s stripper incident (“The audience was telling us to take it off...that’s all I remember was, how humiliating.”)