

SONG OF THE SIRENS: A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION
OF AN ALL-WOMAN ROCK BAND

by

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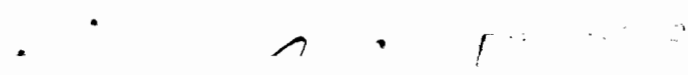


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Using muted group theory, this thesis explores the experiences of an all-woman rock band in the current cultural climate. This qualitative study uses a methodological triangulation that incorporates ethnography, in-depth interviews, and feminist critical discourse analysis.

The data reveal that women in the rock music scene are a muted group, and as such they face many unique challenges, especially when attempting to create music using a feminist collaborative creative process, or conveying a message that challenges patriarchal gender norms. The results of this study point to numerous opportunities for researchers, educators, and those involved in the music scene to examine issues surrounding gender in rock music.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mom, dad, and brother, for all of their support. Also, to the women of Sirens of Mothra, and to every other feminist out there who just wants to rock out.

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CHAPTER I

PREFACE

The idea for this project came to me in the fall of 2007, when a friend told me that she was joining an all-woman rock band. I have always been an avid music fan (although not a musician myself), and my research thus far had taken me in the direction of exploring the connections between gender and media; I asked my friend if I could attend some band practices and see what five rock and roll women looked like in action.

I must admit that I had a few preconceived notions entering into the study. I am an ardent feminist, and I expected women's issues to permeate every aspect of the band and its decisions. They were five women, after all, how could they behave otherwise? I also quickly realized that while my motivations for spending time with the members of the band were, mostly, to better understand their experiences, there was another part of me that entered into this project for personal reasons. As it turns out, I was envious of the women in the band because they were doing something that I have never been brave enough to try.

Once I recognized that a part of the motivation for this project was my own secret desire to be a feminist rock musician, my research took on a whole new layer of meaning. While reading about the reasons the music scene lacks women voices, I connected each article back to my own experiences, as well as to those of the women in the band I worked

with. While trying to understand the path that led these women to rock musicianship, I am also trying to understand the barriers that kept me from following them.

In addition to my envy and admiration of women rock musicians, I bring to this project some additional biases. I was nervous to undertake an ethnographic project, because so much of the work becomes personal. With that in mind, I took a moment to look inward, attempt to define myself, and see what I was dealing with. It is here that I will do the same for you, the reader, in the hopes that you can gain a sense of who I am and why this topic is important to me.

I am a woman and a feminist, from Portland, Oregon. I am a graduate student. I love music, and knowing about music has always made up a significant portion of my identity. I am a radio DJ, a lover of short stories, a knitter, and a good friend (or at least I try to be). I love animals, especially pandas. I come from a middle-class, suburban home and a single mother. I am Native American, but I also identify as White. I am straight and single. My favorite television show is *Arrested Development*. I like yoga. Sometimes the future makes me nervous.

Composing this list brings two important considerations to the forefront of my research: 1) I identify as a woman and a feminist before I identify as anything else and 2) I place a great deal of importance on music and the impact it has had on my life. In addition, I am a White, middle-class female graduate student in the United States. When I examine the experiences of women rock musicians, I look only at those in the Western world and am able to bring only a U.S. perspective to the information I gather. Although I have read the experiences of women in other areas of the world or from other economic

backgrounds, I am not able to relate to their lives as readily as I relate to those that share my own cultural background.

As mentioned previously, I am a feminist who has many preconceived notions about gender and its societal constructions. To me, feminism is about acknowledging gender inequality and striving to affect change wherever possible. While I love being a woman, I believe women in a patriarchal culture face unique challenges and have experiences that are different from those of men. As women, we must negotiate what it means to be female in a media-saturated, ideology-ridden culture that tells us how to be “the perfect woman.” I have the utmost admiration and respect for women who do not accept those ideologies, and instead define womanhood for themselves. I believe many female rock musicians are such women.

While I make every attempt to be as open-minded as possible, I recognize that those notions affect my perceptions of my research. I cannot view an all-woman band as simply a group of musicians. I need to know what their experiences have been in the face of a patriarchal society, and how they have navigated the invisible roads of what it means to be a woman and a rock musician in the current cultural climate. It is that desire for understanding that led me to this project, and it is the experiences of some of those extraordinary women that I attempt to understand in the following pages.

CHAPTER II

INTRODUCTION

Music and Culture

Music both creates and reflects the shared cultural knowledge of the society in which it is made (Burns & Lafrance, 2002). Music involves self-expression, creativity, the mind, the body, and the spirit. It has the power to viscerally affect audiences in a way that few art forms can (Vaishnav, 2008). Music has the ability to inspire change, shape identities, and create meaning for those who hear it. In other words, music is a significant cultural artifact (Kosokoff, 1989), one that plays a role in shaping the discursive formation (Foucault, 1970)

According to Foucault (1970), a discursive formation is the “code of a culture that governs its language, its schemas of perception, its exchanges, its techniques, its values, the hierarchy of its practices” (p. xx). Hall (2001) says discursive formation is, “The idea that discourse produces the objects of knowledge, and nothing which is meaningful exists outside discourse” (p. 73). Often, members of a particular society are not conscious of this discursive formation, but Hall believes that all of the cultural codes adhered to are a result of it. The notion of a discursive formation is significant because it suggests that individuals who are kept from participating in the cultural discourse do not have their viewpoints included in the body of shared cultural knowledge, therefore the culture is shaped without

their influences. For example, under a patriarchal system, it is women whose position is more likely to be excluded and/or ignored from the cultural discourse. Because of institutionalized exclusion of the female position, patriarchal ideology is perpetuated in myriad ways throughout the culture, anywhere where discourse is present.

The discursive formation assumes that discourse shapes culture. Whether this is a useful assumption depends on the definition of discourse being used. Wetherell (2001) defines discourse as either, “Language in use” or “human meaning-making” (p. 3). For the purposes of this study, I use the latter definition. Meaning-making incorporates not only traditional language, but also nonverbal communication and cultural exchanges such as media representation and live musical performances. It is clearly not only language that shapes a culture but also bodily performances, clothing, artistic endeavors, sounds, touches, tastes, and smells. The definition of discourse as “meaning-making” is a more comprehensive one when describing the ways in which the discursive formation contributes to the culture and thus shapes experiences and beliefs (Foucault, 1970).

Discussion of the Issues

If music is a cultural artifact that contributes to the discursive formation, then rock music most certainly plays a role in that contribution. Rock music, or rock and roll, is a genre of popular music first introduced in the United States in the early 1950s (Burns, 2002). Some of the more famous rock and roll musicians in the U.S. have been Elvis Presley, Jimi Hendrix, and Bruce Springsteen. Rock music, although performed and appreciated by all types of people, is most commonly associated with young, white males

(Dickerson, 1998). Says McRobbie (1990), “Rock has become synonymous with a male-defined sexuality” (p. 372). McRobbie suggests, “Rock is now essentially a male form of expression, that for women to make nonsexist music it is necessary to use sounds, structures, and styles that cannot be heard as rock” (p. 372). It is challenging for women rock musicians to sufficiently express themselves in a nonsexist manner, because they exist in a genre where men have shaped the dominant discourse (McClary, 1991). According to Ardener’s (1975) muted group theory, which will be discussed in detail in later chapters, women rock musicians constitute a muted group because their ability to self-express is limited by their status as a subdominant group.

With this study, I explore the experiences of women who perform in a rock band, specifically the Eugene, Oregon-based band Sirens of Mothra. I explore their status as a muted group and the ways in which they interact with and challenge dominant discourse. I also examine the ways in which the band constructs and performs gender, and the cultural significance of the messages conveyed through the band. Sirens of Mothra is a five-member, all-woman band. They compose, write, and perform their own songs, and each woman contributes to the music-making process. In Eugene, there are literally hundreds of local bands, and yet only three of them are all-women. Of those three bands, only one of them is composed of heterosexual-identified women, and that band is Sirens of Mothra.

Music is an art form that involves self-expression, but in a system of patriarchy, it is most often the position of the male that is expressed and communicated through music and other cultural artifacts (Whiteley, 2000). That male position then shapes the

dominant discourse and is spread throughout the societal structure, leaving women out of that structure. Even in the 21st century, one is hard pressed to find commercially successful females in the world of popular music; thus women's views and experiences are not expressed through music that can be easily accessed by the majority of the population (Bayton, 1998). When female musicians are visible, they can be seen most often either performing songs composed and written by males or that cater to the male gaze (Clawson, 2002), thus reinforcing their muted group status (Ardener, 1975; Kramarae, 1981; et al.).

When women musicians navigate the complicated cultural norms surrounding women and music to write and perform their own songs, they are often marginalized (Whiteley, 2000). They may be made to feel there is not an audience for their particular message, or that they are valued only for their aesthetic or anecdotal appeal and not for their worth as musicians. Most venues that host local bands are pubs or bars, traditionally male spaces, and as a result women may not feel (or be) welcome performing in them (O'Shea, 2008). These are generalizations, of course, and there have always been women musicians who overcome all of this opposition and more. For example, Bayton (1998) interviews several female rock musicians, many of whom are quite commercially successful. Pavletich (1980) explores the careers of several successful female vocalists, including Dolly Parton and Grace Slick. Still, the fact remains that an all-woman rock band is still an anomaly in our society, and the voices of those musicians are much less likely to contribute to our body of shared cultural knowledge with the same influence as

the voices of their male counterparts, because their music does not play as large a role in the discursive formation.

According to Foss (1994), feminism is “The struggle to end sexist oppression” (p. 168), and by producing their own music, women musicians in rock and roll can be said to be working toward that end, regardless of whether or not they identify as feminists.

Women working together to create music in a genre that has been gendered masculine challenge patriarchal norms simply through their musicianship and collaborative efforts.

Because I explore the feminist collaborative creative process, I do not examine the experiences of women solo artists in this study. Although the voices of women solo musicians are valuable, the experiences and constructed messages that emerge during the feminist collaborative process are unique to the all-woman band, and it is those experiences and messages that are the focus of this study. When a group of women with a shared feminist ideology work together, and when their songs deal with issues of gender norms and the experiences they have dealt with as women in a patriarchal society, they challenge societal expectations of women and raise awareness of women’s issues, thus working to end sexist oppression.

This study uses a methodological triangulation of ethnography, feminist critical discourse analysis, and in-depth interviews, in an attempt to better understand the experiences of the musicians in an all-woman rock band, Sirens of Mothra. The purpose of using these methods to explore these issues is to further humanize and shed light on women rock musicians and the roles they play in the culture.

Definitions of Terms

It is necessary to define some of the terms used in this study, so as to further clarify statements made. First, feminism is defined for these purposes as “The struggle to end sexist oppression” (Foss, 2004, p. 165) in all of its forms, specifically as that struggle relates to creativity and self-expression (Foss, Foss, & Trapp, 1991).

Although the words “female” and “woman” are often used synonymously, the first actually refers to biological sex and the second refers to gender (Butler, 1990). In this study I make every effort to use only the term “woman” or “women” whenever possible, honoring the notion of gender as a performative aspect of identity and not as something biologically assigned (Butler, 1990). In addition, many all-woman music groups have been referred to over the decades as “girl groups” (Warwick, 2007), and this trend continues today. The women of Sirens of Mothra do not object to being referred to as a girl group, but in this study I use the term only to mean the all-woman singing groups of the 1960s (when the term originated) because the term “girl” has negative connotations of immaturity and lack of agency for many people. In all other references to music groups composed of all women I use the term “all-woman group” or “all-woman rock band.”

The term feminist collaborative creative process is used to define the process of a group working together on a creative project and giving each person’s voice equal value and decision-making power (Butterick & Selman, 2003; Kaplan & Rose, 1993; Sullivan Dickens & Sagaria, 1997). This creative process embodies feminist ideologies of equality by striving to eliminate hierarchical oppression or repression in terms of creativity,

identity, and self-expression (Kaplan & Rose, 1993). The feminist collaborative creative process affords each collaborator with equal power and respect.

Because this study involves ethnographic research and in-depth interviews, the women and men with whom I worked are referred to as collaborators, as opposed to subjects or participants. This is done to highlight the influence that each person has on the finished product, and to de-privilege the position of the researcher in this study (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003). I ask questions in this work not as an expert trying to prove an academic theory, but as an interested party who is seeking to understand the experiences of everyone involved.

Summary

The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of an all-woman rock band and the ways in which they function as a muted group in relation to the dominant discourse. Using a triangulation of ethnography, in-depth interviews, and critical discourse analysis, I also explore the gender performance and construction present in the messages of an all-woman band, the Sirens of Mothra. I examine whether Sirens of Mothra is challenging patriarchal norms with their music, and, if so, how is that challenge being communicated? Because women's voices are often marginalized in a patriarchal culture, specifically the U.S. music culture, it is important to attempt to understand the experiences of women who are performing as rock musicians if we are ever to achieve equal input from every gender in our cultural discursive formation.

CHAPTER III

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Historical Context

Women have always participated in music and music making, so in the interest of time, space, and relevance, this paper will examine only the history of women in rock music in the United States. This is not to devalue the contributions of other women in music. It goes without saying that if it weren't for female musicians throughout global history, women might not be playing music today. However, the purpose of this section is to provide context for the all-woman band that is the focus of this ethnographic case study. Since Sirens of Mothra is an all-woman rock band in the United States, it is the history of women in U.S. rock music that will be briefly described in the following pages.

Of course, even after narrowing the focus to women in rock music in the United States, there is much that cannot be included here. Volumes have been written about U.S. music during the 20th century, including several books on women in music during that time period (see Burns, 2002; O'Brien, 2002; Press & Reynolds, 1995; Rhodes, 2005; Warwick, 2007; et al.). Because of the impossibility of including all of the women musicians who have contributed to the music scene in the U.S., only a few musicians or

groups have been included here from each decade or musical tradition, to provide context for the current rock music scene. Those interested in a more in-depth history are encouraged to read works by the aforementioned authors who specialize in this area.

1900 – 1960

The history of women in 20th century music in the United States begins in 1902, with a blues musician named Gertrude “Ma” Rainey (Burns, 2002). Rainey was the first woman to publicly perform the blues, joining a troupe of musicians with her manager and husband, Will “Pa” Rainey called “Rainey and Rainey, Assassins of the Blues.” The two of them traveled the vaudeville/minstrel circuit in the U.S. throughout the first part of the 20th century, earning success despite Ma Rainey being labeled, “the ugliest woman in show business” on account of her alleged bulging eyes and gold teeth (O’Brien, 2002). It was the success of her single “Crazy Blues,” which sold half a million copies to the black community, that convinced record companies to begin printing “race records” in the early 1920s, albums by members of the black community that were marketed to members of the black community (O’Brien, 2002).

With the advent of the race record, other black female performers came onto the blues and jazz scene. Black female vocalists like Bessie Smith (the top earner in U.S. blues music, male or female, at the peak of her career), Billie Holiday, and Ella Fitzgerald made music history during the 1920s, 30s, and 40s. Although the aforementioned women were talented and savvy enough as both performers and businesspeople to make a living

playing music, countless other women blues musicians were underpaid, or not paid at all, during this time period (O'Brien, 2002).

According to Lake (2002), female blues singers, like Smith, Holiday, and Fitzgerald, “used music as forms of sexual expression during times when women were forced to hide their own sexual needs and desires” (p. 46). The subversive messages of female empowerment and sexuality in their music established grounds for future reformations of popular music, performed by women, to occur in the succeeding decades (Burns, 2002; O'Brien, 2002).

It was not only blues music that thrived during the first wave of feminism in the United States. Big band and swing music was also immensely popular, and women contributed to the evolution of this genre as well. The Ivy Benson band, formed in the 1940s, was what O'Brien (2002) calls one of the “major routes for women instrumentalists into jazz and studio work” during the time period” (p. 33). Bandleader Ivy Benson recruited young women from all over Britain and North America to play in her 16-piece band, which entertained the troops via radio broadcast during World War II.

Another woman who was leading big band ensembles during this time period was Kentucky-born Sarah McLawler. Seeing herself as a crusader for women's positions in the music world, McLawler dedicated her career to forming all-woman combos like the Syncoettes and the Harlem Playgirls. Despite her best efforts, however, McLawler found the world of swing and big band music to be a difficult one for females. “It made no difference how good we were, we were always seen as a novelty,” she said in an interview

in 1990. “I’ve not been recognized for the work and pioneering I’ve done” (O’Brien, 2002, p. 32).

Although it is doubtless that there were many other women performers during this time period, most of their music was not recorded nor have they been afforded the same historical attention as have some male musicians of the same genres, such as Louis Armstrong, Count Basie, Duke Ellington, or Glenn Miller (Burns, 2002). Although first-wave feminist activists had earned women the right to vote, women were still considered better seen than heard when it came to musical performances, especially if those performances involved playing their own instruments (Burns, 2002).

The women musicians who were popular during the first half of the 20th century represented many different images of womanhood. From “Ma” Rainey’s brash independence on the vaudeville circuit, to Billie Holiday’s mysterious presence and dangerous drug problems, to Ivy Benson’s no-nonsense approach to female musicianship, it is clear that all types of women were contributing to the music culture during this time period, and performing their gender as women in a variety of ways.

After World War II ended in 1944, the music scene in the U.S. changed, as did women’s societal roles. It was during this time period that the image of women as innocent and sweet male accessories was made popular by singer/actors like Doris Day, Peggy Lee and Connie Francis. In fact, in the year 1958, the aforementioned performers were the only female musicians with any type of popular following (Pavletich, 1980). These women embodied the “good girl” image that proved to be a draw for music and box-office audiences alike. Starring in films like *The Pajama Game* (Day), *Where the Boys Are*

(Francis), and *The Jazz Singer* (Lee), performers during the 1950s combined acting and singing and to reinforce their images as variations of the “perfect” 1950s woman.

The preferred role for women in the U.S. during the 1950s was to be at home, with their husbands and children (Schneir, 1994). Economically, most families were better off during this time period, and many suburban homes had record players and even television sets, allowing them more access to popular musicians (Douglas, 1995). There was less pressure put on teenagers and children to work outside the home, and a new life of leisure for American young people was born. It was this new demographic of consumers that was the target audience for the next big musical genre: girl groups.

1960 – 1990

When most people conjure up images of women and music, their minds go immediately to the “girl groups” in the U.S. in the 1960s. States Warwick (2007), girl groups represented “an emerging genre of pop music directed toward teenage girl listeners, a forum for discussing girlish concerns about boys, the strictness of parents, gossip, and other aspects of growing up female in North America’s cities during the Cold War” (p. 42). In 1960, the Shirelles were the first all-woman music group to have a top ten Billboard single, with the song “Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow?”

The girl group sound is one that has been widely discussed by scholars, because it presents a somewhat complex version of femininity and what it means to be a female (Douglas, 1995, Warwick, 2007). On one hand, girl groups allowed young women to sing along with songs about issues that related directly to being female, and they broke many

barriers for women in music. On the other hand, girl groups were often hand selected by male record producers like Motown's Berry Gordy, who told the girls what to sing and how they should look (Warwick, 2007). Girl groups sang about female friendship and the social lives of American teenagers (e.g., Donna Lynn's "I'd Much Rather Be with the Girls"), but they also sang about the pain that is sometimes present in female social relationships (e.g., Dawn's "I'm Afraid They're All Talking About Me"). They sang about the fun of dating and meeting boys (e.g., The Pin-Ups' "Looking for Boys"), but they also sang about crying their eyes out due to broken hearts (e.g., Reparata and the Delrons' "I'm Nobody's Baby Now").

Throughout the 1960s, many different girl groups rose and fell in popularity. Some of the most famous and perhaps most influential were the Ronettes, the Shangri-Las, and the Supremes, but there were many others. Despite criticisms of girl groups and the ways in which they represented young women, putting an emphasis on male attention and allowing record executives to mold them into marketable products, girl groups during the 1960s did give a voice to American teenage girls, one that has influenced generations of women since that time (Douglas, 1995; Warwick, 2007).

One popular characteristic of girl groups in the 1960s music scene was their matching dresses, coiffed hairdos, and synchronized movements (Warwick, 2007). However, for every women artist who made the Billboard Top 20 chart during this decade, three men did so as well (Dickerson, 1998, p. 92). Those men were mostly performing in a new genre of American music – rock 'n' roll.

This particular history provides context for contemporary musicians. However, it is important to point out that women did not perform as successful rock music musicians during the genre's advent, and that some scholars claim that rock 'n' roll, specifically the British invasion (which included popular bands like the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and the Kinks), is to blame for the dissolution of the girl group genre at the end of the 1960s, because the popularity of the British bands left no room for the girl groups that preceded them (see Pavletich, 1980). Rock music became popular in the U.S., and the early image it presented of young male rebellion is one that endures (McRobbie, 1990).

At the tail end of the 1960s, most of the women performing popular music were solo folk artists. Some of the more famous women folk singers during this era were Marianne Faithfull, Helen Reddy, and Joan Baez (O'Brien, 2002). Although these women sang of female experiences, the Women's Liberation Movement did not spawn a rebirth of girl groups, nor did it spawn another genre of all women-groups to take their place.

Not only did the 1970s fail to bring about a girl group revival, it is also considered to be the worst decade of the 20th century for female music artists (Dickerson, 1998), with more of an imbalance between women and men on the music charts than ever before. This could be due to the fact that the most popular music of this time period was guitar-driven, male-centric, psychedelic rock (Burns, 2002).

While some women performed their gender in folk music, others, like Janis Joplin, chose the more male-oriented genre of psychedelic rock music. Although most people cannot name many of her songs Joplin's self-destructive behavior and her wild image

have endured over the years (Whiteley, 2000). Say Press & Reynolds (1995) of Joplin, “For many, she exemplifies the second-class status of women in the counterculture” (p. 272). Like most of the singer/songwriters of the time, Joplin performed with all-male backing groups. Though her career was relatively short-lived, Joplin presented an image of “female machisma” (that of a woman being “one of the guys”) that very much resonates in rock music today (Press & Reynolds, 1995).

In the 1970s, a new take on American rock was beginning to formulate. With the 1975 release *Horses*, Patti Smith produced the first punk rock album (Whiteley, 2000). Smith was also one of the first women in popular music to explore androgyny, foregoing dresses and high heels for skinny trousers, ripped shirts, and short haircuts. Like so many women in music, Smith has been the object of much debate in feminist scholarship (Whiteley, 2000). While her contribution to music is undeniable, Smith always performed with men and has surrounded herself with male collaborators, something that has been seen as detrimental to the women’s liberation movement (Whiteley, 2000).

Another female rock musician who is often mentioned in the same breath as Patti Smith is guitarist, singer, and songwriter Chrissie Hynde. In 1978, her band, The Pretenders, broke onto the scene with an eponymous album. Hynde embodied a tough, androgynous, punk rock aesthetic similar to Smith’s, but admitted that her bravado was largely an act: “I *am* the loudmouthed American – no one can be meaner, no one can be more of a *cunt* than I am. But I don’t *want* to be. It’s a front, you know?” (Press & Reynolds, 1995, p. 238, emphasis by the author). By performing this act, Hynde was

going against her true nature, but felt she needed to do so in order to be a popular rock musician (Press & Reynolds, 1995).

During the 1970s, with girl groups gone by the wayside, it was less common to see a group of women playing music together (or even to see two females playing music together), than it was to see a solo artist in the U.S. rock scene. An exception to this was the band Heart. Fronted by sisters Ann and Nancy Wilson, Heart was a successful mixed-gender band in the U.S. at the end of the decade (Press & Reynolds, 1995). Heart became famous for their renditions of Led Zeppelin songs.

Whether playing shows in long dresses and flowing hair as some of the women folk musicians of the time, or performing in shredded t-shirts and men's jeans like some of the women rock musicians of the time, women in music during the 1970s were performing their gender, as women musicians before and after them have also done.

In the 1980s, the visibility of women artists increased in the music scene. Although women accounted for only 31 percent of the Billboard Top 20 hits during this decade (Dickerson, 1998, p. 157), that percentage was a marked improvement over their popular success during the 1970s. Female solo pop artists such as Madonna and Janet Jackson became popular in the mainstream, and more women could be seen playing instruments and singing their own lyrics.

Of course, at the same time that female solo artists were achieving more popularity and success in the U.S. popular music scene than ever before, the two genres of popular music that receive the most criticism for their misogynistic lyrics and exclusion

of female artists, rap and heavy metal, were also gaining popularity (Ballard and Dodson, 1999).

One of the most visible women in the rock scene during the 1980s was guitarist Joan Jett. After her all-woman punk band the Runaways disbanded in 1979, Jett began a solo career, determined to release an album even after being turned down by 28 different record labels. In 1982, her single “I Love Rock and Roll” went to number one on the Billboard charts (Jordan, Schroeder, & Stern, 2008).

The musical genre of punk, mentioned earlier in the context of Patti Smith’s album “Horses,” continued to grow in popularity throughout the 1980s. However, despite women artists’ initial contributions to the punk scene, few women gained success as punk musicians (Whitely, 2000). Debbie Harry (of the band Blondie) is arguably the most well known front woman of 1980s punk/new wave. Even though many of her songs challenged gender norms and traditional heterosexual relationships (e.g., “Heart of Glass”), “She was viewed as a rock sex symbol rather than as a groundbreaking front-line singer” (Whitely, 2000, p. 114).

Being noticed for sexual attractiveness as opposed to musical skill or creativity is an issue that female musicians have grappled with for decades, and they continue to do so. Two of the only all-women groups popular during the 1980s, the Go-Go’s and the Bangles, were no exception to this looks-based popularity. Known for being “pretty punks” (O’Brien, 2002, p. 153), these bands revived the notion of the all-female group as a marketable commodity, a notion that had been dormant since the dissolution of the girl groups of the 1960s. In addition, the conventional beauty standards and male-penned

lyrics of the girl groups were also revived during this decade. Still, despite the commercialization of their images and the poppiness of their lyrics, both the Go-Go's and the Bangles provided fans with images of female musicians playing together in all-women groups, a new sight at the time, and one that is still largely absent from the popular music scene today.

Of course, a discussion of female popular music artists from a feminist perspective cannot exist without a mention of Madonna. Madonna has long been lauded as the catalyst of female empowerment in popular music (Douglas, 1995) because of her self-possession and the control she has over the production of her music. Madonna produces and owns her own body of work, and has even written many of her own songs (McClary, 1991), something that is highly unusual for any popular music artist regardless of their gender.

Although Madonna's well-documented sexual displays during her live performances have generated much controversy in the press throughout her long career, many scholars praise her for the control she exerts over her own sexual image. McClary (1991) states that, "In a world in which the safe options for women musicians seem to be either denying gender difference or else restricting the expression of feminine pleasure to all-women contexts, Madonna's counternarratives of female heterosexual desire are remarkable" (p. 165).

As most fans of popular music know, Madonna's career did not end in the 1980s. She recorded music successfully throughout the 1990s as well, and she continued to reinvent herself throughout that time. As Douglas (1995) notes, Madonna will "portray a

virgin one minute and a whore the next, even suggesting that some virgins are whore-like and some whores are virginal” (p. 288). With her multileveled performances of gender and sexuality, Madonna continues to present an image of femininity that challenges many patriarchal norms while conforming to others at the same time. It is no wonder, then, that she is at the center of many debates about the fusion of popular music and feminism (Douglas, 1995; McClary, 1991).

1990 to the Present

The 1990s brought with them unprecedented exposure for women in the U.S. rock scene. This new movement, called “Riot Grrrl,” began with a small group of young women musicians in Washington, D.C. and Olympia, Washington who produced a two-paged manifesto that called for “Revolution Girl-Style Now” (Wald, 1998). The women, members of the all-woman punk bands Bikini Kill and Brat Mobile, used the term Grrrl (a reclamation of the word girl, which connotes immaturity when applied to adult women) to signify “an angry, assertive feminist who relished engaging in activity” (Leonard, 1997, p. 232).

Riot Grrrls worked toward many different political ideologies, from the reclamation of musical spaces by women to the resistance of the commoditization of music and music culture (Wald, 1998). Riot Grrrls sought to produce their own music, independent from record companies or slick production. It was this dedication to independent production that launched the D.I.Y. (Do It Yourself) aesthetic embraced by many third wave feminists today (Jervis & Zeisler, 2006).

Aside from the politics, another unique aspect of Riot Grrrl music was the focus on all-women groups and the process of women creating music together (Leonard, 1997). The early to mid 1990s was the first time since the girl groups of the 1960s (which were themselves commercially controlled by men) that all-women groups formed a musical genre, and the only time in music history that an entire genre of rock music has been made popular by women who play their own instruments. Interestingly enough, the Riot Grrrl who gained the most attention and popular success, Courtney Love, fronted a mixed-gender band in which she was the only woman (Burns & Lafrance, 2002). Her band, Hole, signed a contract with Geffen records that was reportedly the most lucrative record contract ever offered to a female-fronted band at the time (Wald, 1998).

Although aspects of the Riot Grrrl movement have certainly lived on in music and feminist culture, the popularity of the music itself peaked in 1993 and has not had much commercial success since that time (Wald, 1998). This could be due, in part, to the emergence of a different type of feminist ideology in the mid 1990s, the Girl Power motto championed by the Spice Girls (Douglas, 1995; Lake, 2002).

The Spice Girls were a British singing group of five women, each with her own individual persona; Sporty Spice, Posh Spice, Scary Spice, Ginger Spice, and Baby Spice. The women did not play their own instruments or write their own songs, but were instead chosen by a British magazine because of their marketability and the novelty of their presence (O'Brien, 2002). They grossed millions of dollars performing worldwide in the mid 1990s, with messages of "Girl Power" directed at a new female audience – tweens (girls ages 10 to 13) (Douglas, 1995; Lake, 2002).

Girl Power, a term coined originally by members of the Riot Grrrl movement (O'Brien, 2002) was used by the Spice Girls as “a female’s right to display her sexuality, to be autonomous and free from dependence on a man and instead to find empowerment in girl-friendships and group solidarity” (Dibben, 1999, p. 343). Although the Spice Girls have been the subject of much criticism over the years for their overtly sexual displays and the consumerism they embodied through product endorsements and marketing, it can also be said that the overwhelming media attention they received highlighted and connected feminist politics with social issues, and introduced the concept of girl power to a population of young women all over the globe (Driscoll, 1999). As Whiteley (2000) says of the Spice Girls, “They have made a difference, not least in being the first mixed-race all-girl vocal group to front the tensions between individuality and collective identity that are intrinsic to both 1990s feminism and pop music” (p. 227).

Although the mid to late 1990s saw a rise in all-women musical groups, from the Riot Grrrls to the Spice Girls, the late 1990s and early 2000s were a time for female solo artists like Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera. These young women performed (and continue to perform) their sexuality and femininity in ways that have garnered much attention from both scholars and the media (Lake, 2002). Like so many marketable female musicians before them, these women do not write their own music or play their own instruments, but they have earned legions of primarily “tween” fans (O'Brien, 2002). Their sexuality is expressed in ways that highlight the virgin-whore dichotomy, and every aspect of their sexual attractiveness and femininity is utilized in order to gain more attention and popularity (Whiteley, 2000). These solo women artists and others, including

Jessica Simpson, Beyonce Knowles, and Kelly Clarkson, have used their performance of gender to become immensely popular.

It is for this reason, perhaps, that in the year 2008 (when this study is taking place) one seems to see an increasing number of female musicians who are not much more than images; a collection of ideas about sex, femininity, and girlhood, wrapped in a pop music package. Currently the television show “Girlicious” is looking for young women to join a singing group, while the Pussycat Dolls, another singing group, hosts a reality television show called “The Search for the Next Doll.” Is this what it means to be a woman in the music industry in the 21st century? Fitting into a mold created by marketers and record executives, wearing bustiers and high heels and singing songs written by and played by other people?

Of course, women in the music industry have not only been performers. For centuries, women have played important supportive roles in music scenes as well. Although this chapter does not explore those roles thoroughly, women have been in the music scene as fans, critics, friends, wives, girlfriends, journalists, and groupies since music began, and my goal in this chapter is not to diminish those roles in the least. I myself am a music fan and a journalist, and I certainly recognize the importance of supporting roles in the music culture. Women in supporting roles have influenced the music industry in countless ways (see Evans, 1994; Rhodes, 2005) and I wish there were room for a more extensive exploration of those roles in this chapter.

From “Ma” Rainey to Britney Spears, many women musicians made significant contributions to music in the U.S. in the 20th century. Although the female artists

discussed in this chapter are quite different from one another in myriad ways, they all share their femaleness and therefore have experiences in common. They have all performed their gender in various ways, based on the feminist ideologies of the time, their own personal politics, or the decisions of the record companies for which they worked (or a combination of several of these factors).

Women in the music industry have different experiences than men, in part because music has always been an industry that has been controlled by men in the U.S. (Dow, 1990; McRobbie, 1990; Van Zoonen, 1994). It is male record executives who sign bands, and male record producers who mix the music that is recorded by those bands. Women performers face different expectations than men, because they are attempting to exist in a culture that was created by men, and to express themselves in that culture.

Muted Group Theory

Because women in rock music have different experiences than men, I start with a theory that possibly allows for a more in-depth understanding of those experiences. Muted group theory (Ardener, 1975) suggests that some groups in society are “muted” because the language formulated and maintained by the dominant group does not allow for sufficient communication by the subdominant groups. The members of the dominant group devalue the communication of members of subdominant groups. States Kramarae (2005), “their [subdominant groups’] knowledge is not considered sufficient for public decision-making or policy making processes of that culture; their experiences are interpreted for them by others; and they are encouraged to see themselves as represented

in the dominant discourse” (p. 55). The theory further suggests that a group maintains its dominance in a culture by stifling and belittling the speech of community members viewed as being outside of the privileged circle maintained by the dominant group.

This dominance is also maintained through the language used by the dominant group to refer to members of the subdominant group. Using women in the United States as an example, Kramarare (1981) writes, “our culture has a large lexicon of derogatory terms for women, most of which refer to sexual activity” (p. xiii). One needs only to think of the terms available to refer to a woman who is sexually promiscuous, and then compare them to the terms available to refer to a man who is sexually promiscuous, for an example of this type of shaping through discourse.

Muted group theory was conceived from a gendered perspective, although it can be applied in any situation where a power structure exists among populations (Ardener 1975; Ardener, 2005; Kramarae, 2005). In a patriarchal society, men are the dominant group in the power structure, and it is men who formulate and influence the language and modes of communication. Therefore women, as the subdominant group, are not afforded the same expressivity as men because the language does not reflect their (women’s) influence or experiences (Baer, 1998). In this way, women are “muted.” Muted does not mean silent, rather it means that the communicative abilities of a muted group are hindered due to their lack of representation in the dominant discourse. Writes Ardener (1975), “the important issue is whether they [muted groups] are able to say all they would wish to say, where and when they wish to say it” (p. 21).

One of the main assumptions present in muted group theory, when applied to feminist issues, is that women are different from men, and therefore have different life experiences and require different modes of communication for self-expression (Kramarae, 2004). Because women are not members of the dominant group in most societies (including the U.S.), “Women have had to fit their needs for self expression to the vocabulary and thus the value system of the other, custodian group [men]” (p. 9).

Of course, muted group theory does not suggest that women are in any way inferior to men, or that men are somehow experts in self-expression because they contribute more prevalently to language and culture formation. In fact, some scholars who study muted group theory posit that it is women, not men, who have a better capacity for understanding both sexes, because “males have difficulty in understanding what members of the other gender mean” (Wall & Gannon-Leary, 1999, p. 24). Men see only themselves and not members of the other gender reflected in the dominant discourse. This is not the case for women, who have the opportunity to understand their own experiences as well as men’s within the framework of the discourse. Also, muted group theory holds that, because they are not able to express themselves adequately through the modes of communication formulated by the dominant group, women communicate in more creative ways, because they are pushed “to find ways to express themselves outside the dominant public modes of expression used by males” (Wall & Gannon-Leary, 1999, p. 24).

This does not mean that women do not have the ability to express themselves; clearly that is not the case. Rather, muted group theory merely suggests that women face

more obstacles when attempting self-expression, that expression is more difficult for women because there are no words in the dominant discourse readily available to express many women's life experiences. Therefore, women's experiences are not reflected in the culture with the same frequency as men's (Kramarae, 2004). In addition, muted group theory is not meant to encourage any type of victim/oppressor dichotomy. Instead, muted group theory can be used to highlight instances of defiance and creative cultural resistance (Kramarae, 2005).

Another assumption of muted group theory is that, "In order to participate in society women must transform their own models in terms of the received male system of expression" (Kramarae, 2004, p. 21). In other words, women can express themselves, but in order to do so in any sort of a public setting, they must transform their message or presentation in order to make it palatable to an audience that has been socialized to accept only the viewpoint of the dominant group. This audience can include not only men, but also women who have been brought up in a society where men are the dominant group (Baer, 1998).

It has been posited that muted group theory may be outmoded, since most scholars no longer accept the "monotheistic" construction of gender that relegates women and their efforts to the private sphere (Wall & Gannon-Leary, 1999). In addition, critics of muted group theory state that it "fails to acknowledge the empirical fact that women do in fact speak, and in public" (Puckett, in Wall & Gannon-Leary, 1999, p. 25). These scholars do not, however, address the issue of whether or not women speaking in public

do so using modes of expression that are acceptable to the dominant group, or whether those modes of expression used are sufficient in communicating women's experiences.

Another criticism of muted group theory, or rather of members of muted groups, is that subdominant groups should simply refuse to adhere to the communication modes put in place by the dominant group. However, that criticism greatly undervalues the human need to communicate and self-express. As Nakayama (2005) puts it, "We are taught and we learn to obey the rules of language and society. Our obedience is secured by our desire to communicate" (p. 67). Human beings want to communicate with one another and to be understood, even if that means conforming to a discourse that is not always sufficient for self-expression. Through socialization, muted groups learn that violating communication norms is unacceptable, and therefore they adhere to the societal rules in place surrounding the dominant discourse.

Although there may be some aspects of muted group theory that are in need of redefining, such as the notion that women do not speak in public, it is a theory that still has relevance and can be applied to many present day situations. Muted group theory thus far has addressed mainly issues of language when discussing women's self-expression, but it can and should be examined in terms of other modes of communication as well, such as fine art, nonverbal communication, visual communication, or music. As Ardener (2005) says, "Muting, *by dominant groups through control of dominant discourse*, is refracted through and embedded in many different social spaces" (p. 51, emphasis by the author). It is my hope, then, to explore the ways in which muted group theory applies to women

participating in rock music, a genre in which men have traditionally been the dominant group.

Feminist Cultural Studies

The conception of music as a cultural artifact has been contested by some music theorists that are interested solely in the ways in which music is constructed from a technical standpoint, and are not concerned with the cultural implications of music and the effect it has on audiences. Some feminist scholars, on the other hand, look at music solely from a cultural, gendered perspective and do not take the technical construction of music into account. To bridge this gap, many scholars are turning to feminist cultural studies to inform their research (Burns & LaFrance, 2002; McClary, 1994). Because, as Balsamo (1991) states, “feminist cultural studies has been multi-disciplinary, multi-cultural, and inherently contradictory” (p. 50) throughout its existence, a definition of the term as it is used in this study is necessary. Feminist cultural studies is used here to mean an academic approach to music that views music as a cultural phenomenon while still considering the technical construction of music and the gendered messages contained therein.

With that in mind, I use the feminist cultural studies to inform my research. This does not contradict the notion of using cultural studies to examine music as a cultural artifact but is rather a more specific lens through which to view women’s music while still operating within the framework of cultural studies. Feminist cultural studies assumes that women’s experiences are different from men’s and that women’s experiences are not now

reflected in the culture (Foss, 2004). This method provides “a framework that enables and restores a fundamental belief in human agency while remaining alive to the fissures and contradictions of such agency” (Lafrance, 2002, p. 4).

Music contributes to the creation of culture in many ways. For instance, music plays a critical part in the identity formation of adolescents (Christenson & Roberts, 1998). During their formative years, many people choose peer groups and activities based on the types of music with which they identify. This is a practice that, for many, continues on in later life as well (Frith, 1990). Music connects people by offering a communal, aural space in which people can interact with one another on the grounds of a shared experience (van Dijck, 2006). Music provides the soundtrack to human lives, and therefore people have strong attachments to and associations with various pieces of music. This could be due to the fact that “music has the ability to move the listener, to make the listener share the emotion of the one who performs” (Simon, 2004, p. 436).

Particular pieces of music cause the recollection of specific memories and feelings, and music can also inspire changes in attitudes and ideas (van Dijck, 2006). It is for these reasons that people of all cultural backgrounds form strong attachments to music, and that music has the ability to play an important role in identity formation and cultural formation. For these same reasons, music can also play a role in formulating the ways that members of a society think about and perform their gender (McRobbie, 1990).

Love (2002) notes, “In a rational/ized society, music is easily dismissed as an irrational, and hence, unimportant form of communication. Yet this also makes it a potentially powerful threat to the established order; voices are instruments, and songs are

willed sound” (p. 77). Says Hamm, “ours is now a society characterized by multinational exchanges, and musical practices (if not our theories) have acted both as barometers and as active participants in the articulation of cultural reality in the late twentieth century” (in Love, 2002, p. 79). Thus, music plays a critical role in the creation of culture. As such, it plays an equally critical role in shaping the social construction of gender (Frith, 1990). Therefore, feminist cultural studies is an appropriate lens through which to analyze it.

When examining music through the lens of feminist cultural studies, it is crucial to look not only at the cultural artifact itself (the particular song or genre of music being studied), but also at the wider cultural environment that has contributed to the construction of that artifact (Sardar & Van Loon, 2007). In a patriarchal society, then, the construction of gender and the marginalization of women must be examined when discussing the contribution of rock music to the discursive formation. It is important to realize that, while rock music is associated with the masculine in the current cultural climate, masculinity is not an inherent trait of rock music. Rather, according to Cohen (1997), “Rock is produced as male through the everyday activities that comprise the scene; through the sensual, emotional aspects of the scene; and through the systems of ideas that inform the scene, including the contested concept of the ‘scene’ itself” (p. 17). Cohen (1997) uses the word “scene” to mean not only rock music itself, but also the culture that surrounds rock music, which has also been produced as male. It is important also to note that, while the rock scene has been produced as masculine, men who perform rock music are still performing their gender according to societal norms associated with masculinity and the rock scene.

Gender in Music

Writes O'Shea (2008), "Music is a gendered discourse in which the meanings of musical acts differ according to whether the musician is male or female" (p. 66).

Therefore, the meanings assigned to different genders affect the messages conveyed through music. Because of that gendered discourse, the ways in which women are received in the public arena of musical performance must be noted, as well as the effects that reception has on the public discourse.

Scholars who have examined these effects have researched many different gendered issues surrounding the formation of rock and roll bands. While many studies of gender and music have looked only at individual women performers, or at all-women groups, it is important also to look at women musicians in a larger context and acknowledge that they exist in a world that is primarily masculine in many areas, not just in rock music (Clawson, 2002). Says McRobbie (1990) on this issue,

The subordination of women in rock is little different from their subordination in other occupations; as unskilled rock workers women are a source of cheap labor, a pool of talent from which the successes are chosen more for their appropriate appearance than for their musical talents (p. 378).

Looking further into the motivations behind rock band formation, Clawson (2002) discovered that males begin to play music at an earlier age than females and are more likely to form bands at a younger age as well. This is most likely due to the fact that males are encouraged, through socialization and media representations, to play music in a way that women are not. Men are brought up to socialize by performing, and by "doing" with their friends as opposed to the more female notion of "talking" (Christenson & Roberts,

1998). In addition, women are socialized to be more self-conscious, which limits their comfort level with engaging in activities that require public performance, such as rock music (Clawson, 2002). This self-consciousness can be heightened when the activity requires performing in an area typically considered to be masculine, which is the case with rock music (Whiteley, 2000). Therefore, young women are less likely to form rock bands.

Writes Clawson (2002), “The notion of the band is central to rock music in more than formal musical terms; it lies at the centre of rock’s social organisation and cultural identity . . . rock music identifies the entire band as its ideal creative and performing unity, its focus of attention and adulation” (p. 101). Thus, the experiences of musicians in a band differ in significance from the experiences of solo artists, because being in a band requires a collaborative creative effort at every level, from songwriting to performing to rehearsing, and everything that exists in between.

There are many theories regarding why women are less likely to form bands than are men, especially bands that are all-women. For instance, research has been done on the voice and its communicative properties. It was an interest in this topic that prompted Barthes (1977) to develop his notion of the grain of the voice, which is defined as, “The body in the voice as it sings, the hand as it writes, the limb as it performs” (p. 188). The voice has many unique properties that allow it to convey information about a speaker (or singer) that cannot be conveyed through text alone.

Much of the scholarly work that has been done in voice and vocal philosophy has taken the notion of a “sexed” voice and looked at the topic from a feminist cultural

studies perspective, which suggests that meanings attached to male and female voices are not inherently biological but are in fact social (Cameron, 1985). There is no inherent reason why a lower-pitched voice (traditionally associated with males) should be thought of as more powerful than a higher-pitched one, that notion has been socialized into our culture just like so many other gender norms. The fact that women's voices are not taken as seriously as men's voices has nothing to do with pitch. Says Cameron (1985), "If men talked in higher pitches than women, low voices would be said to lack in authority... Linguistic sex-differences act simply as a badge of female-ness, and are valued negatively quite irrespective of their substance" (p. 18).

According to Dunn & Jones (1994), "Since both language and society are structured by codes of sexual difference, both the body and its voice are inescapably gendered" (p. 1). In many contexts, because of the sexual undertones associated with voice, audiences and society at large may actually fear women's voices, believing them to represent both otherness and familiarity, both danger and sexuality. When looking at this issue from the standpoint of musical performances, this fear of the female voice and its sexual qualities may be the reason why there are fewer popular women musicians than there are male musicians. Audiences may be more comfortable listening to a male voice, especially since we live in a society in which the male voice has shaped the dominant paradigm.

Interestingly enough, the role most often occupied by women in the rock scene is that of vocalist. While Dunn & Jones (1994) may be correct that audiences fear the female voice, there is also something that about the female voice that attracts listeners, even if

they are afraid. This is clearly a complex and nuanced issue with no one solution, which is why it has been examined from so many different angles.

Research on gender and music inspires reflection also upon the relationship between mind and body (Cusick, 1994). In music, the “mind,” or the conductor, is thought of as masculine, whereas the feminine “body” is often dismissed, or, simply ignored. Says Cusick (1994), we must acknowledge the “inextricable presence of the body in music” (p. 15). Bodies do not only perform music, it also has a bodily effect on the listener. This notion of the body in music is crucial to an understanding of gender and musical performance. Gender is constituted by bodily performances, and metaphors of gender are constantly circulating through discourse; therefore, elements of all bodily performances can potentially be read as metaphors of gender. Musical performance may actually constitute gender for the performers, and audience members may be picking up on that as well in the qualities they attribute to the music they hear.

These ideas about the body and musical performance directly relate to Butler’s (1990) theories regarding gender as a performance. Writes Butler, “Gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts* (p. 179, emphasis by the author). Thus, gender is a performance and different people perform their genders in different ways, based on social norms.

Many music theorists posit that voice plays an important role in the performance of gender. Cusick (1999) expands on this notion by suggesting that the voice does not perform only gender but in fact also performs sex, because “voices originate inside the body’s borders and not on the body’s surfaces” (p. 32). A woman’s performance of her

gender through her voice is quite different from a man's, because men's voices "change" at the time of puberty, but women's voices do not. Thus, the notion that women are, as Cusick (1999) posits, "unfinished persons who do not change from childhood to adulthood" (p. 33) is perpetuated through vocal performance, if not consciously. This may contribute to women rock musicians being referred to often as "girls" (Warwick, 2007).

When women communicate vocally, they are using a part of their bodies to tell of their experiences, thus challenging the patriarchal norms that focus on the mind and not the body and view the female body as subversive. Says Forte (1988), "Women performers challenge the very fabric of representation by refusing that [patriarchal] text and positing new, multiple texts grounded in real women's experience and sexuality" (p. 227).

This message conveyed by women's voices changes depending on the number of voices performing. As was established previously, most successful women in music have been solo performers, and yet music that incorporates several voices has the ability to make a stronger impact on listeners (Simon, 2004). States Simon, "Music that exhibits melodic unity uses harmony to allow all the voices to be heard while at the same time enabling the piece to be perceived as a whole" (p. 453). Although there could be many reasons for the relative lack of women's groups in the music scene, one explanation is that the combining of voices creates a much more powerful message. Therefore, if a group of women is singing about something that challenges patriarchal gender norms, they will be less likely to be accepted by the dominant discourse even than a solo woman singing about the same topics.

Of course, there are other cultural factors beyond associations with vocal performance that might explain why women are less visible than men in the rock music scene. Some scholars posit that women are less likely to join the rock music scene because of a lack of visible media representation of female rock musicians. The fact that there are very few successful women rock musicians in the mainstream media means that young people grow up with the reinforcement of the notion rock bands are something exclusively of and for males. Says Cohen (1997) of media representations:

The music media play a particularly important role in guiding consumers towards particular meanings, describing and assessing music and musicians in ways that commonly involve reference to well-established gender stereotypes or assumptions, and that reinforce inequalities between men and women within local music scenes. (p. 29)

The ways in which media culture portrays rock music and the gender of those who perform it can have significant ramifications.

Frith (1981) expands on this issue, saying, “Sexist lyrics and aggressive, misogynistic performance styles comprise a ‘rock n roll’ discourse’ which constructs its performers in sexually differentiated terms and so makes it difficult for women and girls to envisage learning the skills that might take them there” (p 228). Adolescents in a mediated society such as the one in which we live look to media representations when forming ideas about music (Christenson & Roberts, 1998). If women are underrepresented in those media portrayals, women in the society are less likely to make music, or to even imagine that they could. Rock music is associated with the masculine, and therefore it “must be eschewed by the young woman who wishes to preserve her femininity” (Bayton, 1998, p. 41).

Not only has rock itself been presented in the culture as primarily masculine, it also combines elements that have been separately associated with the masculine: physical strength, and technological prowess (Bayton, 1998). Rock musicians can be seen smashing their instruments, flexing their muscles, and being generally physically intimidating, especially in certain genres of rock music like heavy metal or grindcore. In addition, much rock music (and many other genres such as electronica or industrial music) incorporates sounds made by complex technological equipment (Frith, 1996). Although it is certainly a generalization, most women are discouraged from participating in activities that involve brute physical strength or an intimate knowledge of technology, providing yet another reason women might shy away from becoming rock musicians.

Other research suggests that participation by women in rock music conflicts with the social pressures of childrearing, domestic work, and heterosexual relationships placed on women in a patriarchal society (O'Shea, 2008). Women are expected to bear the brunt of domestic, emotional, and familial responsibilities, and there is no place for those responsibilities in the current music scene because it has been constructed under the assumption that the majority of musicians are male and therefore are not concerned with childrearing or other domestic issues (Bayton, 1998; Grieg, 1997).

Given that this is a complicated issue, the reality is most likely that a number of factors contribute to why women do or, more likely, do not form rock bands. Culture is formed through myriad artifacts and influences, and the reality is that all of the cultural factors that might inhibit women from forming bands or becoming musicians (e.g., media representations, psychological and social discrimination, or domestic responsibilities) most

likely converge to result in a relative absence of women from popular music and therefore from the discursive formation of the culture.

Of course, there are women who break through those barriers and more and who become rock musicians. Interestingly enough, most women musicians perform as solo artists or as the front person of an all-male backing band (Wald, 1998). It is less common to see a group of women in the rock scene who compose their own music and play their own instruments (O'Brien, 2002). If a group of women do form their own rock band, their struggles with gender norms are far from over.

One obstacle faced by women who perform rock music is that of visual presentation. It is an unfortunate truth in society that women are valued more for their physical appearance, and their looks are scrutinized much more closely than are the looks of males. This truth is magnified when women step on stage to perform rock music (Leonard, 1997). It is often the case that women musicians are objectified and harassed based on the way they present themselves visually, be that in a sexual manner or in a manner that is deemed not sexual enough. Bodies are not only biological, they are also read as social texts (Wallis, 2008) and this is even truer for women who perform in public, whose looks and dress are scrutinized by audiences.

Says Bayton (1998), "The expectation that women [in the rock scene] look 'attractive' is both a constraint and a pressure, and women who deviate can expect censure" (p. 107). One need only enter a record store and see the glossy images of the thin, beautiful women musicians in makeup, dresses, heels, and hairdos on the album covers to see examples of how conventionally beautiful women are more likely to achieve

success in rock music. While there is pressure for male musicians to have a certain image as well, men in the rock scene are not held to the same beauty standard, nor are they objectified to the same extent (Bayton, 1998).

Another issue that cannot be overlooked when discussing the experiences of women in music is that of commercialization. The very presence of an all-woman band is an anomaly and an affront to the cultural value system that deems rock music something that is created by and for males. It is perhaps because of this, combined with the cultural factors that discourage them from even playing music in the first place, that many all-woman bands do not achieve commercial success or even success on a local level (Bayton, 1998).

Scholars have examined the issues faced by women in the music scene using a variety of methods (Burns & Lafrance, 2002; Dickerson, 1998; Frith, 1981; et al.). However, as Cohen (1993) suggests, “Emphases within popular music studies (e.g. upon music as commodity, media, capital, and technology) and a reliance upon theoretical models abstracted from empirical data, and upon statistical, textual, and journalistic sources, needs to be balanced by a more ethnographic approach” (p. 123). Ethnographic research requires the researcher to spend time immersed in a particular community in order to better understand the experiences of its inhabitants (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999). Although gender and music have been researched using quantitative (e.g. content analyses), and even some qualitative methods (e.g., interviews), there has yet to be an academic, ethnographic case study that attempts to understand the experiences of an all-woman rock band. This is possibly because most research on gender and music

focuses on artists with a certain level of commercial success and notoriety and excludes the experiences of local musicians (with whom it is more feasible to work in an ethnographic setting). The experiences of local musicians can say more about a culture than the experiences of well-known musicians (Cohen, 1993), and yet a group of local, non-professional female musicians have never been explored using ethnographic methods. An exploration of this type could humanize the experiences of women rock musicians, and shed light on many of the complex issues they face.

Summary

I began this chapter with a brief history of women's experiences in rock and popular music in the U.S. during the 20th and early 21st centuries. This established that, while women have always participated in the music scene in a variety of ways, they have been marginalized and have, on the whole, never achieved a fraction of the commercial success afforded men in the rock scene.

Because women in rock music exist in a genre formulated and controlled by men, they function as a muted group within that genre. Muted group theory (Ardener, 1975) provides the theoretical frameworks, by explaining that women rock musicians have been "muted" in their creative efforts.

Examining these issues of gender and rock music from a feminist cultural studies perspective allows for an interpretation of music as both a cultural and technological artifact, one that contributes to the discursive formation, and to the performance of

gender. Because rock music is created and controlled mainly by men (Whiteley, 2000), this discursive formation describes mainly men's experiences.

Scholars have posited that the subjugation of women in rock music may be due to a socialized bias against women's voices, the exclusion of women from spaces where music is traditionally performed, a lack of media representation of women musicians, and countless other cultural factors (Douglas, 1995). Rather than blaming this lack of women in music on any one issue, it is important to realize that it is probably a combination of cultural factors that contribute to women's experiences in the rock music scene.

Once women join the music scene as rock musicians, they are confronted with an entirely new set of issues, such as sexual objectification and lack of opportunities for commercial success. Researchers have examined these issues (although not nearly as frequently as they have the issues faced by male musicians), but often the larger cultural context has been neglected. Also, for the most part researchers who have explored women's experiences in the music industry have used surveys, interviews, and rhetorical analyses as their methods but have refrained from an ethnographic approach (Cohen, 1993).

Through an ethnographic case study, it is possible to move beyond the posited reasons why women may or may not form rock bands to actually gain an understanding of the experiences of women rock musicians who are performing in the current cultural climate. Certainly the socialization of men and women and our cultural assumptions about gender and music are important, but equally important is understanding what takes place once women have broken through the barriers placed between them and rock

music, and how those women function as a muted group in relation to the dominant rock discourse.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODS

Research Questions

When examining complex human issues such as women's roles in music, specifically the issues faced by women who play in a rock band, it is important to attempt to understand the experiences of women musicians as completely as possible. It is my belief that an ethnographic approach to these topics, triangulated with interviews and rhetorical analyses to assure more comprehensive results, is the best way to explore those experiences.

In looking at muted group theory and what constitutes a muted group, it is clear that women in rock music can be defined as such. Women's experiences are different from men's, and in rock music (a genre which is most often gendered masculine) audiences react to women musicians differently as a result of their gender. With that in mind, this paper explores the following questions: 1) How do women in rock music, specifically the all-woman band Sirens of Mothra, function as a muted group? 2) How does the band communicate and perform their gender through textual and nonverbal modes of communication? 3) How do audiences receive those messages? 4) How does Sirens of Mothra operate in relation to the dominant discourse, and what do their

experiences signify about the experiences of women in the music scene in more general terms?

Methods

Methodological Triangulation

I examine these issues using a triangulation of methods, incorporating ethnography, critical discourse analysis, and in-depth interviews. With this study, I use methodological triangulation as it is defined by Denzin & Lincoln (1994) as “the use of multiple methods to study a single problem” (p. 215). A triangulation of methods allows for more comprehensive data and a more in-depth analysis of a particular issue, because the issue is being examined from several perspectives.

Ethnography

Though I use a triangulation of three methods in this study, my primary method is participant observation research, or ethnography. “Ethnography is a scientific approach to discovering and investigating social and cultural patterns and meaning in communities, institutions, and other social settings” (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999, p. 1). Through ethnographic research, the researcher is able to obtain a more complete picture of what is happening in a particular social setting by actively participating in that setting along with her/his collaborators. Cohen (1993) outlines the ideal ethnographic project, which includes:

A lengthy period of intimate study and residence with a particular group of people, knowledge of the spoken language, and the employment of a wide range

of observational techniques, including prolonged face-to-face contacts with members of the local group, direct participation in some of that group's activities, and a greater emphasis on intensive work with informants than on the use of documentary and survey data. (p. 124)

With that in mind, for the ethnographic portion of this particular study, I spend time with the band Sirens of Mothra in a variety of settings. I attend band rehearsals, live performances, radio interviews, birthday celebrations, and trips to the record store. I participate in band meetings and songwriting sessions. Over a period of six months, I spend a significant amount of time with the Sirens of Mothra, and as a result I feel I gain a much more comprehensive understanding of their experiences than could have been gained through any other research method. As a result of the time spent together, I also consider the members of the band as personal friends, something that no doubt affects my research processes.

An important component of ethnographic research is reflexivity. To paraphrase Denzin (1997), writing reflexively allows the ethnographer to write “for and not about the other” (p. 268) and to negotiate ways of knowing out in the open, so that the conclusions come to at the end of the text are shared conclusions and not only those of the privileged researcher. With that in mind, I make reflexivity a priority in this paper. It is important to me that readers understand my inherent biases and that the journey through the text is one we take together. Therefore, I make every effort to be as reflexive as possible in my work without losing sight of the focus of my research.

The ethnography contained in this study is viewed from a framework provided by feminist cultural studies. Says Balsamo (1991) of this approach:

The best ethnographies can only produce partial truths that are always politically inflected. Far from closing off ethnography for feminist cultural studies, these insights reinforce the understanding that all knowledge, both the kind that is fiercely personal as well as the kind that is contoured according to more public sensibilities, is discursively constructed and culturally determined (p. 58).

Ethnography allows the researcher to examine an issue on a micro-level. With a cultural phenomenon as complex as an all-woman rock band, an ethnographic case study is ideal because it allows for an in-depth analysis of the gendered interactions of the band members in a way that no other method could. The gendered dynamics present in the band occur through situated interactions in a moment-to-moment process, so focusing on one band and being able to spend an extended amount of time in their environment allows for an exploration of these processes. When attempting to understand dynamics between people, the ways in which they create and convey messages, and the overall cultural significance of their experiences, ethnography makes a thorough analysis possible.

Critical Discourse Analysis

In addition to ethnographic research, this paper incorporates feminist, rhetorical criticism through critical discourse analysis. By examining the unique message of the songs of the band Sirens of Mothra and the ways that message operates in the larger cultural context, I perform a critical discourse analysis of the messages constructed in one of Sirens of Mothra's songs. I use the term "critical discourse analysis" as it is defined by van Dijk (2001), as focusing on "the role of discourse in the [re] production and challenge of dominance" (p. 300). A critical discourse analysis examines the role of power structures

in language use and human interaction. Critical discourse analysis “states that discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned” (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000, p. 448).

I perform a critical discourse analysis (Burns & Lafrance, 2002) of one of the Sirens’ songs using feminist rhetorical criticism, which is a type of discourse analysis. Different scholars approach feminist criticism in different ways, but for the purposes of this particular study I use the method of feminist criticism as it is outlined in Foss (2004). There are two ways to use feminist criticism to examine a cultural artifact. The first is to look at the construction of gender in a particular artifact as a reflection of the dominant culture. An example of this would be the portrayal of women on the covers of popular magazines, posed in a manner that caters to the male gaze even when a particular magazine is being marketed to women.

The other approach to feminist criticism is to examine a cultural artifact that contains a form of resistance to the patriarchal ideology through its construction of gender (Foss, 2004). An example of this would be Judy Chicago’s art installation “The Dinner Party,” which uses mixed media to explore women’s roles in world history. Because the work is independent from male-created reality, it creates new standards for evaluation of its own rhetoric, and women are clearly labeled as agents within the piece. It shows women as active agents in the shaping of history and cultural discourse and through doing so raises awareness in our own culture as to the sexist treatment of women in the discursive formation of culture (Foss, 2004).

There are three underlying assumptions present in feminist rhetorical criticism. In the interest of reflexivity and acknowledgement of biases, I list them here. The first is that

“gender has been constructed so that women’s experiences are subordinated to those of men – women are not allowed equal self-expression” (Foss, Foss, & Trapp, 1991, p. 274). This is certainly the case for women rock musicians, whose status as a muted group renders them hindered in terms of self-expression, due to rhetorical oppression from the dominant discourse.

According to Foss, Foss, & Trapp (1991), the second assumption of feminist rhetorical criticism is that “women’s perceptions, meanings, and experiences are valued” (p. 276). Women’s experiences are different from men’s, but they are no less significant or meaningful. Finally, the third assumption of a feminist criticism approach is that the research done is meant to improve women’s lives. “Feminist research is done to empower women – to assist them in developing strategies to make sense of and act with confidence in the world in which they live and in which they are denied status and voice” (p. 276). The empowerment of women rock musicians and aspiring women rock musicians is a goal that is at the forefront of this study.

Feminist rhetorical criticism is used to analyze modes of gender construction, to explore “how the patriarchy is constructed and maintained, or how it can be challenged and transformed” (Foss, 2004, p. 170). With this study, I analyze the song “Tiny Suicide” by Sirens of Mothra, paying close attention to messages and constructions of gender. With any critical discourse analysis, the results are my interpretation of the artifact.

In-Depth Interviews

The final method I use is in-depth interviews. The purpose of conducting in-depth interviews is to more fully understand another person's or group of people's lived experiences (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003). Although interviews can be conducted in a number of ways, for this project I conduct five one-on-one interviews (one with each member of Sirens of Mothra), one focus-group style interview (with the entire band together), and several group interviews with audience members who have attended Sirens of Mothra performances (see the appendices for interview guides). Although interviews are conducted in order to better understand the perspective of another person (or group of people), the interviewer is also an active participant in the process. By selecting the questions and guiding the conversation, I recognize my role in shaping the interviews I have conducted. Say Gubrium & Holstein (2003), "It is the interviewer's job to direct and harness the respondent's constructive storytelling to the research task at hand" (p. 78), and I accept responsibility for that task with this study.

It is of note that I used a digital voice recorder during all of my interviews, save for one (my one-on-one interview with Eva, the keyboardist, during which my recorder refused to work properly). Although the presence of a digital voice recorder may have an affect on the conversation that takes place during the interview, it also allows for richer data because a full transcription can be made from the recordings (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Out of the seven interviews I conducted, I typed a full transcription of six (all of them but the interview where the recorder failed to work, during which I took extensive notes).

Examining the Data

A triangulation of methods, especially qualitative methods, produces many pages of notes and transcriptions that must be coded in order for the data to be analyzed effectively (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). As the researcher, I transcribe all of the interview recordings myself as a protection of privacy on the part of the interviewees, and to more thoroughly review the conversations. The transcriptions are documented verbatim, and no interpretation of data begins until all transcriptions are recorded.

I use the method of open, axial, and selective coding that originates in grounded theory (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003) to interpret the data in this study. This method requires three close readings of all transcriptions and notes, during which I organize the findings into categories that grow more descriptive and comprehensive with each reading. Because my work is informed by feminist rhetorical criticism, I pay close attention the aforementioned notions of gender construction in all of my coding.

In qualitative research, the researcher functions as a recording instrument (Lincoln & Denzin, 1994). As the researcher in this case, my own personal shortcomings and biases no doubt factor into the interpretation of the data. I have previously mentioned the importance of reflexivity in this chapter, and in the Preface section I have disclosed some of my own personal biases. While biases can aid in understanding the nuances of certain issues, it is important for the reader to keep in mind that no interpretation can be completely objective or universal.

Summary

This chapter has provided an explanation of how the research study is conducted, including a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of using methodological triangulation. A methodological triangulation permits a more in-depth analysis of any particular issue, due to the its inclusion of several methods. In this study, I use the methods of ethnography, critical discourse analysis, and in-depth interviews to explore the experiences of the all-woman rock band Sirens of Mothra. The following chapter contains the results of this research.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS

Narration

This chapter is written in a narrative style, to better provide an understanding of the experiences of Sirens of Mothra and myself during the research process. This is a writing style widely accepted in ethnographic research, as narrative writing has the capacity to better describe experiences and allow the reader to formulate ideas along with the researcher and collaborators, by allowing a more comprehensive understanding of the research experience than does an academic writing style (Denzin, 1997).

This narrative chapter is compiled from field notes, interview transcriptions, and personal observations. As discussed in the previous chapters, seven in-depth interviews are conducted and transcribed for this project, as well as six months' worth of ethnographic fieldwork and notes. In addition, a critical discourse analysis of song lyrics is also included. This analysis reflects the responses and opinions of the collaborators: the women of Sirens of Mothra, several members of their fan base, and me as the ethnographer. A discussion of these results and their meanings in relation to the literature can be found in Chapter Six.

Participants

All five members of Sirens of Mothra are interviewed for this section, both separately and together as a group. In addition, three audience members are interviewed to better provide an understanding of message reception. The shortest interview lasted approximately 50 minutes, and the longest interview lasted slightly over two and a half hours. Each participant is assigned a pseudonym as a privacy protection (see table 1). The pseudonyms are used throughout this study when attributing observations and quotations. Demographic information about each participant is included in the following table.

TABLE I. Band Information

Name	Age	Instrument	Yr.s Experience	Hometown	Relationship St.
Kendra	35	Drums	19	Everett, WA	Dating a male musician (formerly married)
Oriana	34	Vocals	14	Anchorage, AK	Living with a male musician
Eva	25	Keyboards	15	Pottsville, PA	Single
Stacia	38	Guitar, Keyboards	20	Detroit, MI	Married to a male musician
Ashley	37	Bass	6	Dayon, OH	Dating a male musician

Meet the Band: Introductions and Formation

No Girls Please

An advertisement in a Detroit Michigan newspaper reads, "Guitarist wanted for a new rock band. Into Iggy and the Stooges and MC5. No girls please." A guitarist sees the

ad, calls the telephone number listed, and sets up an audition time in a low, growling voice. At the audition, the guitarist is told to "fuck off" by the rest of the band. Why? Because the guitarist is a young woman in drag, complete with a sausage in her pants. The woman continues to call this and every other ad in the paper that specifically requests that girls do not audition for the band. She knows she will never be hired as one of their guitarists, but as she puts it, "It just feels so good."

If this above story seems larger than life, it's because the guitarist in question, Stacia Smith, is larger than life herself. Growing up in a poor neighborhood in Detroit, Michigan, Stacia (who was then called Terry Ann O'Rourke) first learned to sing in the Catholic Church choir. By the time she was a teenager, she was singing on stage and playing the guitar in musicals and high school talent shows. "See you on MTV!" scrawled her classmates in her yearbook. So far Stacia has not appeared on MTV, but that doesn't mean she's quit trying.

After high school, Stacia Smith moved to Seattle, and then to Hollywood. For a brief time, she struggled with a heroin addiction and worked as a prostitute and an exotic dancer. After a series of break ups (of both the band and relationship variety), close calls, violence, and guitar lessons, Stacia is now living a relatively peaceful life as a caretaker for the disabled and a part-time musician in Eugene, Oregon with her husband Mickey. One conversation with Stacia, however, and as she tosses her mane of black hair (which is often enhanced by a wig or a brightly colored hat) and brays her loud, warm laughter, anyone can see that there is still a wild streak running not far beneath her tattooed surface.

Stacia has played in many bands over her 25-year music career, from an 80s rock band called Sound Corporation (in which she wore dreadlocks and spandex) to a psychedelic band called Heavy Liquid (in which she dressed “like a dude”), but all have broken up for one reason or another. She currently fronts an otherwise all-male rock band called Alpha Dahlia, in which her husband is the drummer. Although she is happy to be playing music, she always feels that something is missing from the sounds she creates with her various bands. While growing up in Detroit, Stacia would practice her vocal harmonies with her sister. Their mother called Stacia the black angel, and her sister the white angel, because of how different their personalities were. It is those differences that prevent the sisters from singing together today, as adults. It didn’t matter when they sang as girls, though. Their voices would blend together in perfect harmony, capturing what Stacia calls “that automatic beautiful sound that happens when women sing. There’s that siren sound. And I’ve been begging for it my whole life. Because I’ve always wanted capture what my sister and I had.”

Unfortunately, Stacia lives in a culture where it is not easy to find a group of women musicians to sing or play music with. This is the reason why, one January night, as she lugs her heavy black guitar case and amplifiers into the Black Forest Bar, Stacia is delighted to see that her band is playing with the Dead Americans, a punk band that boasts a female lead singer.

Sticking Together

As she watches the Dead Americans take the tiny Black Forest stage, Stacia feels an immediate connection with the singer of the band. In a Bo-Peep dress and pigtails, accessorized with fake blood and gothic eye makeup, this woman looks like a cross between Snow White and her wicked stepmother. Her pale skin reflects in the stage lights, and she opens her dark eyes wide and flails her long, thin arms to a dramatic effect. The crowd appears mesmerized. After the show, the woman in question is introduced to Stacia as Oriana Kelly.

From then on, the two women become fast friends. They book shows together for their bands whenever possible, because each appreciates having another woman to talk to in a scene overrun by their male counterparts. Although their backgrounds are quite different (Oriana grew up in Alaska and moved to Eugene to be a part of a radical feminist performing arts group), they are both dedicated to their friendship and to the idea of fostering a sense of community among Eugene musicians. Stacia because she was part of the grunge community in Seattle in the early 90s, and Oriana because she has dedicated her life to empowering women through artistic collaboration.

This continues for a while; Stacia and Oriana book their bands' shows together whenever possible, and support one another in their respective musical endeavors. As Oriana says, "it's really important that we as women stick together, and that's what this is all about." Oriana's training in female empowerment shines through when she talks about meeting other women musicians. She has spent time working for several radical feminist outreach agencies, including a self-esteem camp for girls and a women's drop-in

center. It's as if she is always focused on a loftier goal, beyond the simple task at hand. It's a good thing too, because without this spirit of sisterhood combined with perseverance, she and Stacia would not have the chance to befriend two other women musicians that play in a band called the Ginger Hustlers.

You're Beautiful

Upon first seeing the Ginger Hustlers, at a joint show at John Henry's Bar in Eugene, Stacia is intimidated and feels she can't approach them. Although outgoing and boisterous, Stacia claims that "my low self-esteem has always been my looks" and she is nervous about befriending women who are so beautiful.

The women in the Ginger Hustlers, Ashley and Eva, are indeed beautiful, and it is easy to see why someone might be intimidated. Eva looks like the heroine in a Japanese anime film as she plays her keyboards and sings backup vocals on the dingy stage at John Henry's. She is so petite that only her wide eyes and tousled dark hair are visible over her instruments, yet the crowd is instinctively drawn to her presence.

Next to her, on bass guitar, Ashley Miller is a different kind of beauty. With wavy brown hair and sparkly eye shadow, Ashley is soulful on the bass and mysterious in her stage presence under the dim show lights. She does not sing, but her stance exudes a quiet confidence that affords her the crowd's attention. Seeing these women on stage supporting their male band mates, it is easy to see why they are sick of getting compliments on their looks and not on their musicianship. Eva says that after their set people approach the band's front person with remarks of, "Oh great guitars, Thom" and

approach she and Ashley with “oh, love your outfit, you’re beautiful.” She asks, “is someone complimenting me because they think I’m a good musician, or are they complimenting me because I’m a girl and they’re trying to get in my pants?” Ashley echoes her sentiments. Just once these women would like to feel that they are getting recognition for their music and not for their physical qualities.

After the John Henry's set, it is Ashley and Eva who approach Stacia and Oriana and introduce themselves. They have seen the women before, at the Grrrlz Rock! Music Festival, but they have never met officially. It turns out that they too have yearned to meet other women in this music scene. "Look Eva, it's another girl!" Ashley squeaks with delight upon meeting Oriana and Stacia.

Sam Bond's Garage

The summer after their first show together at John Henry's, Stacia, Oriana, Eva, and Ashley, now casual friends, find themselves at another bar in Eugene: Sam Bond's Garage. This time however, their purpose is to talk about bands, not to play in them. As it turns out, they are all dealing with many of the same issues, both as women and as musicians. Oriana asks the other women if they have considered having children. The answer around the table is a resounding no. “We just want to do music, and art. We don’t want kids.” Previously, Oriana had thought she might be the only one who was “freaky like that,” and also maybe the only one struggling to do music and to “get respect for that in a man’s world. And male band members are often like, congratulated and supported

and have this enthusiastic crowd response whereas maybe you [as a woman] don't get that, or maybe you get it in weird ways."

As they drink beer from the bar's signature Mason jars, they begin to hatch a plan. What if the four of them played music together? "We could make some music, why don't we just do that?" Oriana asks. "You know, we're always talking about how frustrating it is to be in these bands where we don't quite get our own needs met, so let's do it." Stacia tells the others that it is her "lifelong dream" to play with other women and Ashley says she, too, has always wanted to play in an all-woman band. They all respect one another's musical ability and like each other as people. Why not? Musicians casually say they want to "get together and jam" all the time, but these women are serious. So a date is set, a location is chosen, and the next thing they know the women are planning to make music together.

Description of Rehearsal Space

As Stacia and Oriana pull up to their first all-woman jam session, they are greeted at the door by a 13-year old calico cat named Sadie. Although she appears to be friendly, Sadie has a propensity for biting hands when those who pet her least expect it, something Ashley warns the women of before it's too late. The jam session is taking place at Ashley and Eva's house, located in a residential neighborhood of South Eugene. One look around the practice space (which serves double duty as the living room) and it is easy to see why the Ginger Hustlers call it "The Sanctuary." All natural light is blocked by a large blanket that covers the picture windows (for soundproofing purposes), and to compensate,

Eva has lit candles on every available surface. Their light, combined with the black and purple scarves that hang about the room, give off the sort of heady, spooky feel that a witch's lair might have in a porno movie.

The first thing the women notice is that they are all, without any planning involved, wearing purple. This will certainly not be the last time they talk about a possible psychic connection that exists among them. There is some band gossip, some chatter about fashion and relationships and social lives, some chocolate and cheese is eaten, and then Ashley, Eva, Stacia, and Oriana get to work.

The jam session turns out to be so much fun, so relaxing, and so different from what the women are used to in their other bands that they make a plan to play together once a month. The next month rolls around, and they pick up where they left off with their jamming and conversation.

Different Drum

All four of the women at these jam sessions are used to playing rock music, and rock music is what they came to this house to play. Unfortunately, out of the four of them they have a keyboardist, a guitarist, and a bass guitarist, but no drums. At first, Eva plays drum loops on her keyboard. When that doesn't work, Stacia tries her hand at the drums, but then there is no guitarist. Without drums, everyone agrees that the music just doesn't sound right. Ashley mentions that she has seen a female drummer playing for the band Telepathic Dumpster. In fact, this woman is in the process of making a documentary film about rock music and has even interviewed Ashley and Eva as a part of her project. As it

turns out, Oriana knows the drummer as well, through some volunteering they did together at a female empowerment camp. The women agree that the drummer in question, Kendra Haberkorn, should join them in their music making.

A thin, red-haired woman, Kendra has the serious air of a wise martial arts sensei as she hauls her drum kit into The Sanctuary. She might seem frail in her oversized military-style jacket and combat boots if it weren't for the amount of heavy equipment she is lifting out of the back of her blue VW van. Although she is happy to play with these women, Kendra is also a bit apprehensive. After all, she spent many of her formative years being wary of other girls, and she has only ever played in all-male bands. Even as a graduate student who studies gender and music, Kendra isn't sure that she wants to play her drums in a room so full of what she calls, "Girl energy."

Her apprehension increases as she enters the practice space. The other women seem to swarm her, talking about how much they love her hair, and how they can't believe that they are all wearing the same color - again! Although it goes against some of what she has studied in her research on women in music, Kendra begins to feel more scrutinized for her appearance here among other women than she does in her mixed-gender band, Telepathic Dumpster.

Grrlz Rock!

The equipment has been set up finally, a process that always takes much longer than it seems like it should. Eva doesn't know if this is because of the time spent socializing, or just because everyone is particular about their amplifiers, microphones,

drum stands, effects pedals, and keyboard settings. Either way, it is time to get to work and she is usually the one who has to start things off. "OK ladies, is everyone ready to play?" she asks. The women settle in behind their respective instruments, with Kendra in the corner behind her imposing Yamaha drum kit, Ashley beside her with her legs set in her bass-guitarist stance, Stacia and Eva on the other side of the room with their keyboards and guitar, and Oriana standing in the front, ready to wail on the microphone.

Although by this time the women have only been practicing for two months, they have already upped the frequency of their casual jam sessions because they are enjoying themselves so immensely. A local booking agent, Cindy Ingram, asks them if they will play as a band for the 2007 Grrrlz Rock! Festival, which is taking place in Eugene in just two months.

"I don't know; do we want to play?" Ashley asks the other women. "I mean, we don't have any songs, we don't even have a band name." A consensus is reached; they will play in the Grrrlz Rock Festival. Ashley says that Cindy will need a band name by mid-September, and that they will of course have to have their songs ready by then as well. It won't be easy, but everyone has been having so much fun that they have no reason to say no.

Ideas are thrown around, names are suggested, and everyone is working together to come up with some sort of an identity for this new band, a project that was supposed to be "just for fun." Oriana suggests the name Drama Queen, in part maybe because Eva has described the band's sound as being "modern Queen." Stacia says she is no drama queen, she is "a drag queen, honey, because it's more fun." So the brainstorming

continues. Finally, Stacia suggests the name Sirens of Mothra. It's interesting; it implies womanhood, singing, and even science fiction (since it is the name of two characters in the movie *Godzilla*). It's perfect.

Story of the Sirens

“I mean I’ve got to say, the Sirens of Mothra, this is my true love, because this is a dream come true for me. It’s always been hard for me to find other female musicians, let alone four” Stacia says, her mouth full of *Muchas Gracias* burrito. “I grew up loving girl bands.” The other girls agree; they are enjoying playing with their new band, and although they have not yet played a live show, the media’s response to them has been really positive. After all, it’s like Oriana says, “our society is starved for the empowered female voice. It’s really rare.” And the Sirens of Mothra might just have the voices society is starving for.

The Journalist: I Join the Discussion

It wasn’t until October that I first entered the Sirens of Mothra scene, complete with my laptop and a head full of ideas about feminism, music, and women rock musicians. I knew Kendra, the drummer, because we had taken a few graduate-level folklore classes together, and when she mentioned to me that she was in a new all-woman band I asked if she would let me sit in on some of their practices. She emailed the rest of the band and they reluctantly agreed to let me come if I promised not to get in the way (their first show was less than three weeks away at this point and they didn’t want a

journalist to interfere with their work). Kendra sent me the directions to their next practice.

Rehearsal Dynamics

Practice Time

I furiously type notes while the girls compliment each other on their hair and outfits, and lay out the snacks they brought for each other out on the kitchen table. Kendra has made lentil soup, and Oriana has baked cookies. The feeling in the room is very friendly, and very female. I can't help but wonder how a male band gets ready for practice, or how the conversation might shift if a man were to enter the room. Eva's opinion on this matter is that having even one male in a band opens the door to all kinds of "sexual weirdness." Not so among these women. "Eva, I love your hair"! Stacia cries. "Thanks Stacia, I cut it myself, I just couldn't take the length anymore," Eva replies, launching a conversation among the band about hair cuts that lasts for several minutes while everyone plugs in their amps and microphone cords.

After a good forty minutes of chatting, readying the equipment, serving tea and water to everyone, and checking in repeatedly to make sure everyone is comfortable, Sirens of Mothra begin their rehearsal. "Let's start with 'Tiny Suicide'" Eva says brightly, her smile barely visible from behind her keyboards. Although the band is careful not to have any one leader, (as Ashley says, "we're all kind of in this together") Eva is usually the one who kicks things off and helps to keep everyone on track. She is not bossy or demanding, but you can tell that she is very focused on the task at hand, perhaps more so

than the rest of the band. The women stop talking to one another about their weekend plans and concentrate on the music as a “tick, tock, tick, tock” sound begins to swell from the amps. Oriana sways as she coyly sings the opening lines, “She’s hot she’s tight, she’s built just right, the girl of your dreams. But is your sweet Lolita, really what she seems?” Kendra screams maniacal laughter into the microphone. They continue the song, about a girl who seems sweet and innocent on the outside but on the inside is filled with rage, a girl who ends up committing suicide; it is clear that Sirens of Mothra does not shy away from difficult subjects.

Description of Sound

Circus Music

At a bar in downtown Eugene, Ethan, Ashley’s boyfriend, is trying to describe to me the sound of Sirens of Mothra’s music. “It’s circus music,” he says, scratching his beard, “and I mean that in a good way.” Many of the band’s songs do sound a bit like circus music. Another fan, David Velasco, described the music as “burlesque”. The sound is very keyboard-heavy (often both Eva and Stacia play keyboards simultaneously), and nearly every song is performed in a minor key, which makes the music sound haunting, sometimes almost creepy. On the faster songs, like “Superbitch” and “Toxins”, the keyboards do whine like a circus midway organ, and the guitars and drums jangle like change in a pocket. But as Eva says, “these songs are something you don’t hear anywhere else.” And in that respect, it is the vocals that are most prominent.

Of the five women who comprise the Sirens of Mothra, four of them sing. In fact, all four sing in harmony on every single Sirens of Mothra song. The only band member who doesn't sing is Ashley, and Stacia fights to change that. "Ashley too, she's coming in, you just wait. She's got perfect tonal quality." Stacia is not the type to readily take no for an answer. Of course, when Stacia (or any of the other musicians) says this, Ashley laughs nervously, claims she can't sing, and changes the subject. Ashley is definitely the shyest, quietest member of this group, and the chances of her singing on stage with the band seem slim. Every once in awhile at practice though, she loses track of herself and sings along with the band, letting her secret out of the bag: Ashley can sing just fine.

Although Kendra sings some harmony with her band Telepathic Dumpster, vocal harmony is still a rarity among most of the bar bands in Eugene. Kendra has a tendency to take the vocal harmonies for granted because she grew up in a musical family, but to the audience the harmonies are quite noticeable. Sirens fan Jenny Horton remarks, "such great voices! And in harmony! I couldn't get over it."

It might seem that having four singers in one band would bring nothing but headaches. After all, if popular culture is to be believed, it is always the singer in a band who is the most difficult to get along with, the hardest to please. That's certainly the way it goes in every episode of VH1 *Behind the Music*, and it's what might be expected in this case. Four singers could mean quadruple the number of feelings that could get hurt, and quadruple the number of egos that would be vying for attention. The issue is not that simple, however.

Sirens of Mothra make a concerted effort to include everyone's voice as much as possible, and to take everyone's feelings into account. Eva says that's because,

I know that everybody's intention is strictly loving and good and just creative and wanting to assist. Everybody came in with such a pure heart and such an open, creative mind that when somebody does give you a criticism with that backing it, it's so much easier to take than when someone's giving you a criticism based on competition or based on negativity or based on, 'I want these to be perfect songs,' or based on ego.

Like Stacia says, "all egos aside in this band."

So here I am, at Ashley and Eva's house, watching this ego-free band practice their hearts out. At this point, Sirens of Mothra have eight songs, all of them originals. They begin the practice with the aforementioned "Tiny Suicide," a song about a misunderstood, silenced woman that sounds like black magic on the keyboards. The next song is "Superbitch," a lyric of which reads "She's hell on wheels ready to attack/ All eyes and ears got her sister's back." During the refrain, the band members all shout "Bitch baby, bitch baby, bitch baby, bitch," while Kendra bangs on the drums like she's trying to put out a fire. It rocks.

Because they are getting ready for their first show, Sirens of Mothra play all eight of their songs during this rehearsal. "Help Me," their third song, is up-tempo and manic, about being left for dead and feeling like "the blood-red stain on your white sheet." Not only are all of these songs about dark topics (and the chilling music certainly helps to drive that point home), many of them are also about what it means to be a woman. "It makes me happy," Oriana says. "We're kind of pushing the limits of what women can voice and express in music. Because for a while there, people liked girl bands if they sang about love and heartbreak and Billy Bob and Bobby Joe and all of that, all of that was

safe.” Oriana is not interested in sticking with what’s safe, and neither is the rest of the band.

The band continues with the next few songs of the rehearsal, “Mother of God” and “Haute Couture”, about religious iconography and how it reflects upon women, and about the pressure women feel to purchase products that will make them more attractive, respectively. “I’m not going to write a sweet love song,” Eva says. “We’ll probably never, ever do that.”

The remaining three songs Sirens of Mothra perform at their rehearsal are “Spinning”, “Toxins”, and “Made in America.” “Spinning,” the only Sirens song to date with lyrics by Stacia is about the emotional rollercoaster that is the result of some romantic relationships. “I wrote that song 15 years ago, with the guy I moved here from Hollywood with,” Stacia remarks, adding that it was a highly dysfunctional relationship. “Sometimes I still get tears in my eyes hearing it.” The relationship was not just highly dysfunctional. When Stacia found out her former fiancé was cheating on her while he was on tour with his band, he tried to strangle her to death. She called the cops and never looked back; no wonder the song evokes emotions in her.

The band finishes their practice with the songs “Toxins” and “Made in America.” Both are about social class, and how it feels to be poor in a society that places such a high value on consumerism. The intro to “Made in America” asks “Gimme this, gimme that, won’t you give it to me now?” As women in contemporary culture, Kendra says Sirens of Mothra know what it’s like “to feel like you need to go out and buy and buy and buy but

feeling hollow on the inside no matter how much you can, you know, adorn yourself on the outside.”

Description of the Songwriting Process

The Alchemists

Although different band members contribute different parts, all of the Sirens’ songs are written in basically the same way. The women record their “improv jam sessions” and listen to them together, picking out parts that all of them like. According to the band, this all occurs quite naturally. “We’re all kind of contributing to this whole alchemy,” Oriana says knowingly, making it sound like a mystical process. “We’re putting in our ingredients and taking stuff out, and it’s totally collaborative.” Once the music is chosen from the tapes, lyrics are written. Of the eleven songs to date at this point, Oriana has written the lyrics for five of them, Eva has written four, Kendra has written one, and Stacia has written one. All of them are quick to point out however, that really, everyone contributes their own parts to the songs and no one person is the songwriter for this band. “Everyone’s pretty much writing the songs, or writing our own parts to the songs, you know,” Eva adds emphatically, gesturing with her thin arms covered by an oversized black cardigan that makes her look, somehow, even more pixie-like, “even if you didn’t write the song, everyone’s writing their own part.”

Ashley, the only band member who has not written lyrics for any of the songs, adds self-deprecatingly that she’s, “Not the kind of person that’s really good with words. Or putting words together. So as far as writing lyrics, not too interested in that. Mine

would come out very like, kindergarten.” She hastens to add though, that she has “definitely contributed musically... I just recently wrote a whole song on bass that is being built around.”

Oriana elaborates more on the songwriting process. “For me, it’s like a really exciting process,” she says. “I can just sort of take it in pieces and I don’t really think too consciously about it, but then later I can look at it from a lot of different angles. So that’s really fun too. It’s different, I think, than sometimes in more traditional rock bands.” The other band members agree that they do feel more freedom in Sirens of Mothra to express themselves in a way that perhaps they don’t in their other bands. For instance, when Kendra writes personal songs for her band Telepathic Dumpster, she says, “It’s exposing things that I feel like need to be said, but I’m nervous, and as I’m performing them I’m singing really quietly into the microphone, like ‘I don’t really know if I want people to hear this, especially I’m not sure if I want these guys [her band mates] to hear it.’”

I thought upon beginning this project that I would hear these women say that they weren’t free to express themselves in their other mixed-gender bands, that the men socially oppressed them and that the only space in which they could really create music was in a group with other women. This is not the case, as three of these women (Oriana, Kendra, and Stacia) do write music in their mixed-gender bands, and do find ways to express themselves. However, that form of expression is different in Sirens of Mothra than it is in the mixed-gendered groups. Like Oriana says, “It’s different when you have women around you, like ‘oh I’m safe, I can do whatever I want.’”

Eva claims she is “definitely more emotional and expressive in this set-up ... like when I’ve been writing the last couple of months, I’ve never, like, wrote the words down and thought ‘no no, I can’t bring that to this band.’” The conversation stops for a moment while all of the other Sirens chime in to agree with Eva. They too feel safe being honest with each other when writing the music. Eva continues, “Because they’re going to like it, they’re going to support me, and they’re going to be all singing it with me.”

It’s interesting the emphasis the band puts on the group process and not having a leader. Like ants gathering food and building tunnels, the music and lyrics seem to magically emerge through a series of collaborative efforts, with no one woman calling the shots. This is important to everyone in the group, perhaps because they do not experience this type of collaboration elsewhere. Every woman in Sirens of Mothra is also in at least one other band, and all of those other bands include men. Also, most of their other bands have a more traditional structure, with a singer/songwriter/leader who tells the rest of the band what to do and how the songs should be played. (The only exception to this is Kendra’s band, Telepathic Dumpster. Kendra says this band “doesn’t really have a leader, but that’s like the fourth or fifth band I’ve been in ... the first one I’ve been in that really has been able to do that pretty fluidly.”)

Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

The Message

In addition to my ethnographic fieldwork and in-depth interviews, I chose to analyze the specific message of Sirens of Mothra using a feminist critical discourse

analysis. I feel it is important to understand not only the songwriting processes of Sirens of Mothra, but also the messages they produce when writing their songs. In the following section I analyze the band's song "Tiny Suicide"; the first song of theirs that I heard. It is also the song the band chose to play on their web site, which makes it an appropriate choice to represent their music.

To begin my analysis of the song "Tiny Suicide" I start with the song's title. Clearly the word "suicide" carries with it dark connotations, and the word "tiny" is used to indicate insignificance and unimportance. Before the song even begins, it is evident that an event will be described that is tragic on the one hand, but insignificant on the other.

The song begins with the following lyrics: "She's hot, she's tight, she's built just right/ The girl of your dreams/ But is your sweet Lolita/ Really what she seems?" followed by sardonic female laughter. Immediately, the audience is addressed directly with the phrase "the girl of *your* dreams," indicating that the audience has always dreamt of the type of girl who is "hot" and "tight" and "built just right." Because there is no specific target audience for this song, there is an underlying assumption that no matter who hears it, that person will have in their mind's eye a vision of the perfect girl, someone who is sexualized and objectified, and valued mainly for her physical appearance. This implies that as a society, we have an image presented to us of what the perfect woman should look like and how she should behave. By referring to the subject of the song as "your sweet Lolita," Sirens of Mothra imply that the woman in question is a young, naïve, sexual object, as it conjures up images of the title character in Nabokov's 1955

novel *Lolita* who possesses those same qualities. Saying she is “*your*” sweet Lolita implies that the audience has ownership of the subject and that she has no agency. The subject of the song is clearly a woman, but she remains nameless and the audience is given few identifying characteristics beyond that of her physical attractiveness.

The lyrics continue to describe the subject, saying: “No choice/ She’s got no voice/ She’s hunted and cold and lonely/ Her bleeding keeps feeding/ The pain she holds inside.” It is clear from these lines that the woman in question feels powerless. It seems that she has no choices in life, and that she can’t voice her frustrations because no one will hear her. She is isolated, and “hunted” by people who want to objectify her for the way she looks. On the surface, because she is conventionally beautiful, it seems she has everything a woman should want; yet she is suffering. Her pain is private but relentless. The line that reads, “her bleeding keeps feeding” conjures up images of her pain and blood as if it were an insatiable animal.

In keeping with the dark imagery that exists throughout the song, the next lines describe the personal demons faced by the subject, now on display as she struggles with thoughts of suicide: “Dance with the skeletons/ She hides them in her closet/ They’re up for grabs/ They’re broken/ They’ll jump into her kitchen/ To measure like a treasure/ Each tiny aching morsel/ They think she keeps inside.” Because the subject is contemplating suicide as a result of the despair and loneliness she feels at having been objectified by the people around her, the secrets she has kept hidden are now “up for grabs,” because she is beyond caring who might see them. It is obvious that she has kept these secrets hidden for quite some time, because they are “broken.” This verse also

contains powerful food imagery, saying that the skeletons will jump into the kitchen to take each “tiny aching morsel” they think the subject has left. Of course, she has nothing left, which is why they only think they know what they will find when they “jump into her kitchen” to measure and scrutinize her. It is implied, then, that the subject in question has possibly been starving herself. In addition to being drained emotionally, she is also physically empty and is perhaps struggling with an eating disorder.

The subject is described in the next verse as “Waiting and hating/ Their questions and their stares/ She’s up she’s down she wears a crown/ of Chaos and destruction.” Again her powerlessness is highlighted, because while she is waiting she feels frustration and anger. She feels scrutinized by those around her, people who don’t understand her or her actions. She has been made into an object for others to judge and disapprove of. “She’s up she’s down,” meaning that her life is an emotional rollercoaster. She is described as wearing a crown, which conjures up images of fairy tale princesses, women who were also objectified for their beauty and also often had no agency. The subject’s crown, however, is made of “chaos and destruction,” because she feels simultaneously both powerless and angry.

The song continues, describing the subject’s feelings as: “Lonely/ She’s bleeding/ You try to catch her eye/ She’s too far gone/ She’s lost her vest/ So many ways to die.” The subject is “too far gone” to be reached by anyone at this point. You (the audience) “try to catch her eye,” implying that those around her don’t realize the pain she is in. The audience is still trying to get the attention of the subject for superficial reasons, possibly sexual in nature. The audience is put in the position of being oblivious to the subject’s

pain. When the song says “so many ways to die,” the connotation is that the subject has killed herself. If not physically, then at the least she has become emotionally and spiritually dead as a result of her anger and loneliness. Her feelings of despair and desperation have finally won out, and she has given up on life.

The song concludes with the lyrics: “It’s too much/ She’s had enough/ Of schoolgirl fantasies/ She’s far beyond the mirror/ Of what you think you see.” By using the phrase “schoolgirl fantasies,” Sirens of Mothra imply that the subject has given up on her dreams of a happy and fulfilling life, and has resigned herself to being objectified (or to physical death, depending on the interpretation of the previous verse). She is “far beyond the mirror,” meaning that even the impression the audience had of her was just a surface reflection of her true self, and that she has now moved beyond even that. She has either died physically by committing suicide, or she has died spiritually and emotionally by retreating so far into herself that she no longer feels pain and loneliness but instead feels nothing. As the song concludes with the same sardonic laughter with which it began, Sirens of Mothra seem to be saying that it doesn’t matter what type of death she suffered. The subject is dead and the audience was complicit in her death, therefore they should feel satisfied in some way.

“Tiny Suicide” is formatted in a traditional pop music style, with an introduction, a verse chorus verse bridge chorus structure, and a conclusion. However, each section of this song is performed first by a solo female voice, and then a chorus of female voices singing in harmony repeats it. This indicates that it is not only a solitary woman who is expressing the sentiments of the song, but rather a group of women who are expressing

those sentiments together. From this, it is possible to generalize and say that with the song, the Sirens of Mothra attempt to give voice to the experiences of all women in the culture. In addition to that fact, the repetition of each section of the song gives audience members a chance to more clearly hear each lyric, and to further emphasize the points that are being made about the solitude and objectification felt by women existing in a patriarchal society.

Nonverbal Communication

Fashion Show

Tonight is the Sirens' last practice before their Grrrlz Rock! Debut. At the Sanctuary, Stacia and Oriana are talking in the kitchen about how they haven't been sleeping well. Stacia is sick, and is drinking Emergen-C packets mixed with vodka, "the best way to cure a cold!" The nervous energy in the room is palpable, no one feels quite ready to perform on stage. Ashley makes the other girls mint tea laced with schnapps to help everyone relax.

While sipping their tea and schnapps, the band's conversation turns to the outfits they will wear on stage Saturday night. These are beautiful women, and I am expecting them to glam it up for their big debut, with boots and boobs and big hair and the whole bit. As feminist as I claim to be, I think I truly believe that one of the best parts of being in an all-woman band is getting to dress up. In fact, I am especially excited to get to witness their wardrobe selection for that exact reason.

“Classy is definitely the key word. We’re going somewhat less than sexy. Classy. Conservative.” Eva explains the wardrobe concept to me as the other band members take their prospective outfits out of shopping bags and backpacks to try them on in front of the group. This conservative classiness is to be achieved by wearing all black. “Cover it up. No skin.” The selections of outfits include long black pants and floor-skimming skirts, ankle-length black dresses, and long-sleeved black tops. Sensible shoes are also encouraged. I have to admit, part of me is disappointed not to be witness to a fabulous band dress-up session, complete with feather boas and pleather bustiers, even as another part of me understands why the band is choosing to dress conservatively.

“In this culture it’s not safe to just be like, ahhh,” Oriana emits a high-pitched sexy sound and tosses her dark mane of hair. “You’ve got to kind of sneak it in.” This is the logic behind her decision to eschew her slinky black dress for something longer and more demure. “And that’s social conditioning right there. Men are judged mainly on what they do, and women are judged on how they relate to other people and how they look.” And that is the reason that Sirens of Mothra are choosing to dress down for their first big performance. When I ask Eva (the sexiest offstage dresser in the group, perpetually in shiny boots) about any attention the band might get based on their looks, she replies, “that’s why I kind of wanted us to really focus on not having it be our look for awhile. Because I want the songs, our songs do say something. They really do. And our musicianship.” Kendra chimes in, “right, and it won’t be seen. Because so much of the visual of us being a gaggle of women is what’s seen, and so it’s almost like we have to downplay that... You can’t distract them by what you look like, otherwise they won’t be

able to hear.” Ashley, Eva, and Oriana agree with her. They want the audience members to see them for the musicians they are, not to focus on the clothing they wear or their makeup.

Just Girls

At John Henry’s, the band hustles to get their gear together. If the nerves were palpable at the last practice, then at this point they are practically strangling us as we load gear from Kendra’s blue VW van through the back door of John Henry’s. In addition to the five members of the band, I help to load in gear (and got props from the band for carrying amps while wearing high heels, just like a real woman rock musician) and so does Jason, a friend of the band’s who is wearing a fancy jacket with epaulets. Although Jason is a friend, the band will later come to regret allowing him to help them unload their heavy, awkward equipment. This is because, as Eva puts it, “somebody said to me, ‘oh you girls could not have done what you did without help.’ ... Like we could have not possibly made out the way we did that night without Jason’s help. And they weren’t saying it in like a crappy way, they were just like ‘oh, thank god for Jason, otherwise you girls wouldn’t have been able to do that’ and it’s like, no, we would have been able to do that.”

Eva is not the only member of the band who felt pressure while setting up for the show to refuse any help from the males in the audience. Kendra agreed that she felt that way with her drums, and Ashley said that she thinks the solution might be for Sirens to “just get a crew of women” to help with the equipment, so that the crowd won’t judge

them. “It would be great to have that,” Eva replied, “but I won’t ask anybody now. Fuck it.”

The reason for this sensitivity in setting up for their first show is that Sirens of Mothra feel that their identity has much to do with their being exclusively women. “Whether they’re just awed, or whether they want to like it because it’s all-girl, or they want not to like it because it’s all-girl, I feel like it has to be hitting people on some level, before they even hear the music, because it’s unusual,” says Kendra. The rest of the band agrees. Even if they don’t want to acknowledge what Stacia refers to as “that gender shit,” the audience can’t escape the fact that the Sirens are a band of all women; that that is what many people notice first when they hear about the band. Eva and the rest of the band feel that “people either love us or hate us before they even see us.” And they do not think that is something that an all-male band would not have to contend with, although Stacia adds that maybe “a really cute all-male band would” because they might also be objectified by the audience.

Gender is only a part of the reason why Sirens of Mothra are so nervous for their first show. They have been a band for only three months, have never played a live show, and yet this week there have been two feature articles written about them (in the *Eugene Weekly* and *The Ticket*) and they have given a radio interview on KWVA (a local FM radio station). This has caused a little bit of a rift in some of their other bands, bands that have been working and playing shows around town for years without getting the publicity Sirens of Mothra is receiving right off the bat. Stacia says that, “Alpha Dahlia’s [her other band, in which she is the lead singer/songwriter] a damn fucking good band, man! You

know, we bust ass, and we rock! You know, and we kick ass! But it just doesn't get the hype, because I've got these guys." She's right about the hype. John Henry's is crowded with people who want to see this all-woman band, whether it's because they want to support female musicians, because they resent female musicians, or because they want to have sex with female musicians. It is no wonder the band is nervous.

Live Performances

As many nerves as the band was feeling before their set begins on the night of their first show, or as cautious as they had been about their female identities and the way the crowd might view them, all tension seems to disappear as start their first song. It is "Tiny Suicide", the song they began with the first time I saw them. After the show, when listening to a tape of their performance, Ashley will say, "When we start, like the whole crowd just starts going wild." And it's true. Whether the crowd's enthusiasm is a result of the music, or the fact that the band is all-female, or the fact that it is after midnight and a lot of people have been drinking, is hard to say. One thing is for sure though; the audience seems to love Sirens of Mothra.

All of the women in the band love performing live. They love the adrenaline, and the energy of the crowd. Kendra describes the audience as being like, "the other member of the band, that isn't there at rehearsals but suddenly shows up for shows." Even those in the band who feel nervous about crowd reactions can still find themselves caught up in the energy of a live performance. And the audience seems to feed off of that energy as well.

When Sirens of Mothra is on stage, they work hard to make sure that everyone in the band can see one another. With the vocal harmonies and the changes in instrumentation that are present in their music, it is helpful for communication purposes for the women to be able to make eye contact with one another and convey nonverbal messages. Oriana stands near the front of the stage, with her tall, black, microphone stand. To her right is Eva on the keyboards. Just like in practice, her keyboards are so large and she is so petite that only the top of her head is visible behind the two-tiered instrument and microphone stand.

Moving counter-clockwise around the stage, Stacia stands near Eva and a little bit behind Oriana. She has two guitars and a keyboard on a stand, as well as her microphone. Although she does play the keyboard on some songs, Stacia is freer to move about the stage because her instruments are not as large. Neither is Ashley's, who stands to the left of Stacia. Armed with only her bass guitar and her amp, Ashley is comfortable to stand more toward the back of the stage, but she is still clearly visible from the floor.

Kendra's drum kit completes the misshapen circle the women create on stage. Positioned to the right of the rest of the band, Kendra is able to make eye contact with all of the other women. In a more typical rock band formation, the drummer is in the back, but not being able to see one another doesn't work for Sirens of Mothra. The band's process is too collaborative to have anyone feeling left out.

Audience Reception

The Fans

The typical crowd at a Sirens of Mothra show is a melting pot that demographically represents the Eugene community. Although there are plenty of college-aged men and women, drinking beers in their jeans and hooded sweatshirts, there is also a handful of people in the crowd that are old enough to be the band members' proud parents. The ages of the women in the band range from Eva, who is 25 to Stacia, who is 38, and the majority of the crowd reflects those ages as well.

Since their first show at John Henry's, the women of Sirens of Mothra have been trying to figure out exactly what it is about their band that draws a crowd in this town where bar bands are a dime a dozen. "I want people to notice our songs," says Eva, but she is afraid that their crowd is interested in the band for other reasons."

"The bartenders at Black Forest said, 'Oh, I was going to leave but then I saw how hot all you chicks were so I decided to stick around. And hey, you guys were actually pretty good!'" Stacia recounts, after a show. This sentiment is fairly typical for the Sirens. In fact, I had a few fellow graduate students tell me the same thing about Sirens of Mothra. They were not interested in seeing them perform live until they saw a photograph of the women in the band. Although most of the Sirens are uncomfortable being noticed for the way they look, Stacia "love[s] every minute of it... I don't get that [in her other bands]. I've got a big nose and big ears." To her, it feels good to be a part of a band that gets attention for their looks; it is something she has never consciously

experienced before. “I’m not Miss Sexy on stage,” she adds. “I am very much a dude. You know what I mean? I didn’t expect that.”

Of course, there are plenty of people in the Sirens’ crowd who are not there to ogle the band. The motivations of a crowd are varied and difficult to generalize, and certainly there are fans of Sirens of Mothra whose main focus is not the way the band looks. Still, the band’s look does play a role in their overall message. As Ashley points out, “I mean, I do think a large part of it is the fact that we are female. Because I think maybe if you were to just listen to our songs on like, a CD, like if you weren’t at the show, it would probably be different for some people. I think like, the whole aesthetic like, ness of it definitely plays a part.”

Most music appreciators agree, seeing a band perform live is a much richer and more complex experience than hearing a recording of their songs. During a live performance, it is possible to see the band interact with one another and the crowd, to see them play their instruments. In addition to hearing the music being performed, the sounds of the audience are also audible. At a live show, many of the senses are stimulated, not just that of hearing. For that reason, the impressions left on the audience after live shows differ greatly from those left by a recording. There is just so much more to experience. It is that experience I was trying to explore when I interviewed several Sirens of Mothra audience members after one of their live shows.

David Velasco, a 30 year-old man with tufted brown hair and a sleepy smile, has played the drums in several bands throughout his life. For this reason, it is the musicianship of the women, specifically Kendra, which stands out most to him at Sirens

of Mothra shows. “It is very syncopated, very kind of beat-oriented but then it also has a lot of melody and stuff, especially with the keyboard and everything. Yeah, and they all have great voices,” says David, sipping his coffee.

His girlfriend, 28 year-old Jenny Horton, echoes his sentiments. Although neither of them have really seen any all-women bands perform live prior to Sirens of Mothra (David has seen one, Hell’s Belles, an all-women AC/DC cover band) Jenny is impressed by the abilities of the Sirens. She is especially drawn to Oriana and her “kind of funky dance... Her movement is just sort of mesmerizing. And it goes with the music. It’s nice to have something to watch. I feel like a lot of the live bands we [she and David] go to, they’re just playing and singing, but they’re kind of doing the same thing the whole time.”

Jenny’s friend Lauren Diment, a 31-year old local music publicist, agrees that Oriana is “a performer” whose presence is kind of “like a vampire.” As a music industry professional, however, Lauren appreciates different aspects of the Sirens of Mothra’s stage show. “I think that they do a good job putting together a cohesive uniform, they all look like they’re members of the same band, which is something a lot of bands fail to do” she says.

Clearly, different people have different motivations for being fans of a particular band, and there is no way to say that one or another characteristic is the dominant reason that a band is drawing a large audience. The gender of the band in this case, though, is noticeable to everyone in the room. As much as some of them might try to transcend their gender, the women of Sirens of Mothra do not have the luxury afforded some all-men bands of having their gender fade into the background. As Lauren says, “when a

band is all women who are playing their own instruments, it's something that I notice and feel surprised by." Jenny adds that she is not surprised to see a model like, "all men playing the instruments and the woman is maybe like, the singer. And so like, seeing a female drummer or a female bass player, it's cool, you know? It's like, 'oh yeah, that's right, we [women] can play instruments too!'"

Perhaps because of the band's gender, or stage presence, or maybe due to the nature of live music, David, Jenny, and Lauren did not hear many of the band's lyrics during their performance, although Lauren adds that "I really notice that they have female-oriented messages, especially that Superbitch song." Jenny chimes in, "I was going to say, the Superbitch song was probably the only one where I really noticed the lyrics... I liked it, it felt like girls banding together and being strong women. That's kind of how I felt." David, as a musician, noticed the lyrics on a few more of the songs, but overall he agrees that it is "hard to distinguish live what everyone is saying. And with them [Sirens of Mothra] the lyrics are so melodic it almost becomes like another instrument."

The three Sirens of Mothra fans may have not heard all of the lyrics during the show they attended, and they may all like the band for different reasons. One thing that stands out to all of them, however, is the gender of the band and the feeling they get seeing an all-woman band perform live. Although they are all active music appreciators, between the three of them they have only ever seen two all-woman bands in concert, something that hadn't even occurred to them prior to their discovery of Sirens of Mothra. It appears that, regardless of their motivations for attending a show, audience members

who see Sirens of Mothra are reminded of gender dynamics in music and the challenges women face in the music scene.

Band Dissolution

Luckey's

It is now late February, and the band, which has been together for six months, is playing a show at Luckey's Bar in Eugene. The venue is long and narrow, with a cramped corridor running alongside the bar that opens up into a large room with a stage at the far end. The crowd is large, even for a Saturday night. Although the band didn't publicize their show very widely, there are rumors flying around town that this will be Sirens of Mothra's last show, and it is those rumors that have drawn much of the this crowd. A bearded man standing near a pool table tells me that he "isn't surprised they're breaking up, it was predicted" by him and many of his friends. When I ask him why this is, he tells me that the band received too much hype to be successful long term, and that all-woman bands always break up, anyway.

Although largely unsubstantiated by most of the crowd, the rumors of a band break up are in fact true. Over the past month, the dynamics among the members of Sirens of Mothra have been rapidly changing, and the band has made the tentative decision to break up. In any group that has five members, especially one where creativity is involved, there are bound to be creative differences that arise at some point, and the way that those differences are dealt with has an affect on the outcome of the group. Sirens of Mothra is made up of five women who are all fiercely dedicated to the collaborative,

group process, meaning that no one person makes decisions and no one person decides the direction of the band. As Oriana puts it, “that right there is kind of a conflict, it’s just hard, it’s like trying to fit a square peg in a round hole, and you know, we all care so much about wanting everybody to feel good about the band, and everybody’s needs to get met, we haven’t figured out a way to really resolve that.”

Oriana also adds that people in the band were feeling scrutinized, and that made things difficult. “We’ve been so anxious about what people are going to think of us and we’re going to be perceived that I’m a lot more self-conscious than I have been in other projects... Like, ‘who’s in the audience, what are they thinking, how is my voice sounding, you know, what are they thinking about my presence?’ So that’s been unfortunate.” She feels hurt by the break up not only because she is not a part of the band anymore, but also because she doesn’t like what their termination signifies for other women musicians.

I think women need to feel like they can bend their own rules a little bit, and that they can bend the rules that have been sort of superimposed by the music industry and by the culture around who’s a real musician and who’s not. I just feel like we as women need to be a little bit smarter than that, and not buy into it so much, but it’s hard.

Still, Oriana tries not to be discouraged. “You know, we’re women, we’re different, why don’t we just do it a different way? Why don’t we just play a different game?” No matter what type of music or art she finds herself playing, Oriana will always focus on collaborating with other women. “I think that’s the kind of stuff that will create more positive empowerment for all of us,” she says.

Of course no one person can answer the question of why the band is breaking up, and each woman has a different take on the situation. According to Eva, it was just too difficult to find a balance of voices when they were dealing with five musicians, four of who sing and write songs. To her, because the roles were not defined at the outset, there was too much conflict when it came to determining who was going to do what in the band. Although everyone is committed to the group process, it can be difficult for a band to operate without a leader. Since this dedication to meeting everyone's needs is a characteristic most commonly associated with women musicians, she asks, "Can women do this? Can we collaborate? With male bands it is not about getting satisfied and making everyone in the band happy," but with female bands, or at least with this one, that has been the focus. Still, she adds, "even if it is true that female bands can't stay together because they're female, maybe that's nothing to be ashamed of. Maybe it just means we're human."

Eva is upset about the band's break up, but she also understands that sometimes bands can't stay together and that all of the women will remain friends. Her other band, the Ginger Hustlers, is also breaking up, and she now has the opportunity to perform as a solo artist.

Kendra agrees with Eva that one of the reasons for the band's dissolution is that they haven't been communicating well with one another. They didn't want to step on each other's toes or upset one anyone, but in the process of attempting to preserve each other's feelings "we haven't really been as communicative, I think, because we've been

wanting to be loving and accommodating... And oddly enough though, I think there was this kind of homotopic idea that because we're all women it was just going to work."

Kendra says that she is

Finding that it feels a lot like the break up with a romantic partner. It's like, somebody you really invested in and wanted to create a future with. And at some point you realize that that person isn't really the ideal person for you.

Not everyone had the same motivations for joining the band, and not everyone wanted to get the same thing out of being in the band, and that is at the heart of their disbanding.

Kendra will continue to do her work as a graduate student and documentary filmmaker, and to play drums for Telepathic Dumpster.

The break up of Sirens of Mothra was not a unanimous decision. While Oriana, Kendra, and Eva all have different reasons for thinking that it might be time for everyone to go their separate way, Stacia and Ashley feel differently about the situation. Ashley says that, "different visions were starting to pop up" and that not everyone in the band was agreeing as to the direction things should move. Still, she was against the band splitting up, and she felt that the issues they had could have been resolved.

Ashley is still dedicated to playing the bass with an all-woman band, and is looking for other musicians to play with. Because she too was in the Ginger Hustlers, she does not currently have a project she is working on. She has been jamming some with Stacia, and they are thinking about starting another all-woman rock band.

Stacia, like Ashley, did not want Sirens of Mothra to stop playing together. She says, "I'm still going through grief because I was thrown for a loop when it split up." She has other reasons, beyond the personal attachment she feels for the other women and

their creative efforts, to be upset about the split. Stacia has spent half her life trying to make a living as a musician, and she thought she had finally found a band where it was a possibility.

I don't come from money. I come from very little money. Poor poor poor. Super fucking poor. De fucking troit Michigan fucking poor. OK? Yeah, I wanted to make money doing what I love. Yeah, I've been trying to do this for 25 fucking years. Yeah I saw the light at the end of the tunnel, and the light came and burned me. You know? And, again. You know? So to me, what I told all those girls when they split up, right in front of my eyes, me just bawling, trying not to bawl, trying to be strong, but the reason I went home and cried on my husband's shoulder is because, you know, I've heard this song so many fucking times.

Stacia can't believe that the other women in the band would give up on this group, not only because they care about each other and produce good music, but because they are a band that people want to see. They may have been able to make a living as a band, especially with Stacia's connections to the music scene in Hollywood, and now they will never have that chance.

Stacia will continue to play music in her band Alpha Dahlia, and in several other side projects, including looking for more female musicians to put together a band with she and Ashley.

As they leave the Luckey's stage, Sirens of Mothra know that the life of their band has ended. Sure, there are those who tell themselves that maybe it can continue every once in a while, because everyone is such good friends with one another, but deep down even they know that they will never play together as a band again. They will go back to their other bands, or to their jobs, or to their schoolwork, no longer a part of the new female super group, but just as women.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The previous chapter revealed the dynamics of Sirens of Mothra as a band, the ways in which they interacted with the dominant discourse, insights into audience reception, and details of the band's break up. My ethnographic field work with Sirens of Mothra, triangulated with in-depth interviews with each member of the band and several fans, and with a critical discourse analysis of the band's song lyrics, provides me with a unique opportunity to understand the experiences of women rock musicians, the gendered construction of their messages (both verbal and nonverbal), and the ways in which they function as a muted group within the dominant discourse. To begin my analysis of my observations and field notes, I start with a review of my coding methods (discussed previously in chapter four).

To allow categories to emerge from the data, I employ the method of open, axial, and selective coding that originates in grounded theory research (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003). Basically, this involves several close readings of the field notes, interview transcripts, and song lyrics, during which time I highlight any themes that emerge from the data and organize them into tentative categories based on connections I perceive among the emergent themes. With each reading of the data, the categories become more refined and consolidated. I still employ the feminist rhetorical criticism method (Foss, 2004) of analyzing issues relating to the construction of gender, but by using the three-

step coding process I am able to further immerse myself in the data, resulting in categories that are more comprehensive and informative.

Throughout the coding process, six categories emerge from the data. They are: band/personal identity, gendered experiences, reception/construction of messages, nonverbal communication, issues of conflict, and expository narrative information. The category of expository narrative information was sufficiently explored in the previous chapter, but I analyze the other five categories in the following pages, trying always to better understand the experiences of an all-woman band in relation to the dominant discourse. There is quite a bit of overlap between the categories, as these are complex issues. For the sake of simplicity, however, I analyze them one at a time.

Band/Personal Identity

Individual Identities and Politics

The information conveyed by members of the band in interviews and fieldwork emerged as their “identity,” both individually and as a band. It is clear that the members of Sirens of Mothra identify as an all-woman band, although within the group there are varying degrees of intensity in that identity. For instance Oriana, who has long been involved in radical feminist politics, identifies very strongly as a woman and enjoyed that aspect of playing in a rock band with other women. Her motivations for being a member of the band were largely to promote a sense of sisterhood and to spread a feminist message. Stacia, on the other hand, identifies less as a woman and more as a musician.

Her motivations for joining the band were largely commercial, because she felt an all-woman band would be more financially successful.

This identification with all-woman groups recalls the literature that suggests that gender is a large part of any person's identity, but this is especially the case for those who do not identify as men, because they are not members of the dominant gender (Butler, 1990). This also reinforces Sirens of Mothra's position as a muted group in the rock scene (Ardener, 1975; Ardener, 2005). By strongly identifying as a group of women, they are differentiating themselves from the dominant group in their genre – men.

I had assumed prior to beginning this project that all of the women in the band would identify themselves as feminists, because in my eyes they were doing feminist work. While both Oriana and Kendra do identify themselves in that way, Eva, Ashley, and Stacia never once referred to themselves as feminists, or as having feminist politics. In fact, Ashley used the word feminist in one of our interviews to refer to all-lesbian bands with more radical politics, telling me that she definitely does not identify with feminist ideologies.

Although I respect each woman in the band's right to identify herself and her values however she chooses, by the definitions used in this study the women of Sirens of Mothra are feminists with a feminist message. They perform music in a genre that has been traditionally populated by men and that has been traditionally associated with masculinity (Cohen, 1997). Their music contains messages of gender inequality and challenges patriarchal norms (more on that in following sections), and they compose that music using a feminist, collaborative, creative process. The definition of feminism used in

this study comes from Foss (2004), who defines it as “the struggle to end sexist oppression” (165). By breaking ground in the areas where women, a muted group in rock music, are permitted to express themselves, each member of Sirens of Mothra can be considered a feminist.

The fact that not all of the band members themselves identify as having feminist politics, however, sheds light on an important issue. Too often female rock musicians are seen as sharing similar ideologies simply because they are all women, and women are scarce in the rock music scene (Burns & Lafrance, 2002). This is proven not to be the case with Sirens of Mothra. Though they share much in common, including rock musicianship, all of the women are different from one another and have different political and personal values, even when it comes to feminism.

Other areas of identity arose throughout the interviews and fieldwork as well. Identity is a complex and multilayered issue, and each woman in the band identified herself in many ways, including by her hometown, economic status, relationship status, work ethic, physical attractiveness, upbringing, and academic background. Although time and length do not allow for a discussion of each woman and all of the ways in which she identifies herself, I will discuss some patterns I noted during my research.

To begin with, four of the five women in Sirens of Mothra identify as being in long-term, heterosexual relationships. Stacia is married, Oriana lives with her boyfriend, Kendra and her partner were married and are now separated and living in separate dwellings but are continuing their romantic relationship, and Ashley and her boyfriend date but do not live together. Out of all of these women, each one’s boyfriend is also a

musician, and three of them play in bands with their respective romantic partners. This is interesting, because it suggests that men who are not musicians may be intimidated by women who are. In fact, Ashley has dated only one non-musician in her lifetime, and the relationship did not last because he had a hard time dealing with her music career. The romantic relationships of the band members support the literature that suggests that many women get started in rock music as a result of romantic relationships, or continue to play rock music for that reason (Clawson, 1999).

Group Identity

In terms of the identity of the band as a whole, no one individual band member was able to clearly define the identity of Sirens of Mothra. In fact, lack of identity was an issue brought up by Eva as a possible reason for the band's break up. As a participant observer, I do feel the band had an identity. Because they were one of only three all-women bands in town, I felt their identity was that of being, as Kendra put it, a "gaggle of women." Their female-ness was certainly what the crowd remarked on first, as did the press the band received. Of course, it was also what I noticed about the band, which is why I chose to conduct this study in the first place. To me, gender is enough of an identity, especially when, as in this case, the collaborative process is also gendered. Interestingly enough, however, the women in the band did not feel they had a clear identity because they did not have one particular sound to their music. Certainly they identified as a group of women, and most of their songs had female messages, but this was

not enough to form an identity. To them as musicians, the identity of a band exists in the sound of the band's music, not in the gender of the musicians.

Gendered Experiences

All of the women in Sirens of Mothra recounted instances of feeling oppressed at certain points in their musical careers as a result of their gender. As a drummer, Kendra told me that she has often felt that she gets attention for being an anomaly on stage, and that people tell her that they are surprised at her talent because she is a woman. Ashley, who plays the bass, reported feeling the same way as a woman playing a “masculine” instrument. Stacia, Eva, and Oriana have experienced similar instances of being singled out as a result of their gender, which were described in previous chapters. Their recounting of these experiences supports the literature that women rock musicians are marginalized simply because of their status as women in relation to the dominant discourse (Clawson, 1999; Cohen, 1993; McClary, 1991; Pavletich, 1980; Warwick, 2008; Whiteley, 2000; et al.).

Of course, each woman in the band is her own individual and each has her own separate gendered experiences, to which she attaches varying degrees of significance. For Oriana, being a woman and a rock musician means she is trying to have a voice and be creative in “a man's world.” Eva feels she cannot express herself in a way that is readily accepted by rock music audiences, because they are used to seeing masculine displays of aggression (e.g., guitar smashing) from passionate rock musicians. Stacia, who is the member of the band who is probably least interested in what she calls “that gender shit,”

still feels that as a woman she has had to work harder in the music scene than her male counterparts. Stacia's opinions on this subject are of special note, because as a former prostitute and exotic dancer, she has had to endure more sexual objectification and gendered discrimination in her work than have many other women. For this reason, she may be less interested in issues of gender, simply because she has dealt with them in the extreme for most of her adult life. Regardless of their differences, each woman has felt that she has had to work harder or to frame her self-expression differently because she is a female rock musician, which again supports the Sirens' position as a muted group (Kramarae, 2005).

Those feelings and others like them are what signify that the women of Sirens of Mothra function as a muted group. As was established in previous chapters, muted groups must find ways to express themselves that are acceptable to the dominant group (males, in the case of rock music) or risk being ostracized (Ardener, 1975; Kramarae, 2005). The Sirens of Mothra feel they must either re-package their message (through masculine posturing) or take it elsewhere, because as women a mainstream audience does not readily accept them as rock musicians.

Gendered experiences in the music scene are quite complex, and there are many more sides to this issue. Muted groups do not only function as marginalized populations, they are often more creative in their modes of self-expression than are members of the dominant group (Wall & Gannon-Leary, 1999), and they are often able to communicate well with various groups because of the sensitivity they have to the communication issues present in the dominant discourse. As was stated in chapter three, women in male-

dominated areas are pushed “to find ways to express themselves outside the dominant public modes of expression used by males” (Wall & Gannon-Leary, 1999, p. 24).

An example of this would be the female blues singers of the early 20th century who, as was described earlier, sang popular blues music that was encoded with messages of subtle sexuality not readily understood by a mainstream audience (O’Brien, 2002). Another example, of course, would be Sirens of Mothra’s decision to dress conservatively so as not to draw as much attention to the gendered content of their messages (this is discussed further in the following paragraphs).

Sirens of Mothra functioned in a similar way during their live performances. Although they drew large crowds of male supporters (which many of the women felt was due to their physical appearance or anomaly status as an all-woman band) the majority of their audience was female. While there are several possibilities for this (both Oriana and Stacia recounted instances of being sexually harassed by lesbian fans, so sexual objectification does not only come from men) one explanation is that the women in the crowd were able to relate to and engage with the music on a deeper level because of their gender.

The fact that each member of Sirens has felt scrutinized in various ways as a result of being a member of a muted group supports the literature that suggests that women are discouraged from participating in rock bands because of the public display it requires (Clawson, 1999). As Kendra put it, “as women we are always on stage, so why would we want to bring more of that on ourselves”? Women are looked at and evaluated for their physical appearance in a way that men are not in our society, and this affects their desire

to perform publicly, especially if that public performance involves self-expression in a space that is gendered masculine.

Construction/Reception of Messages

It was clear to me after observing just one Sirens of Mothra practice that the band had a distinctly female message, which is something not heard very often in rock music (McRobbie, 1990). While on one hand this is not surprising, given that five women comprise the band, it has already been established that not many all-woman bands exist in rock music, and those that do often perform songs that have been written by men or that cater to a male audience (Bayton, 1998; Grieg, 1997; O'Brien, 2002; Warwick, 2007; Whiteley, 2000; et al.).

Because their songs were written using a feminist collaborative process (as defined in chapter one) Sirens of Mothra had a message that is unique to an all-woman band. While female solo artists also deal with gendered experiences, the combination of five different women's experiences is able to produce a message that has the ability to be more universally representative of the experiences of all women in the culture (Butterick & Selman, 2003; Kaplan & Rose, 1993; Sullivan Dickens & Sagaria, 1997). The collaborative process ensures that the finished product is something that could not have been produced by one woman working alone (Kaplan & Rose, 1993).

The women of Sirens of Mothra place a great deal of importance on collaboration, although of course their motivations for collaborating in this way were not based in feminist academic literature. Rather, they chose to write songs about women's

experiences using the feminist collaborative creative process because they are women, and they do not have the opportunity to collaborate in the same way in their mixed-gender bands. This again supports the notion of women rock musicians as a muted group who are unable to sufficiently express themselves using the modes of communication provided by the dominant discourse (Ardener, 1975).

Because of the gendered nature of Sirens of Mothra's songs, most of the women in the band feel that the primary audience for their music is other women. This is not to say that they wish in any way to exclude men from listening to their music, only that they felt it is other women who would most be able to relate to the themes present in most of their songs.

Audience Reception

It is true that none of the audience members I interviewed for this study are musicologists, nor am I one myself. However, the majority of music consumers are not professionally trained in music criticism, yet music plays a large part in shaping both the culture and the lives of most people, and nonprofessionals regularly form opinions about music and the messages it conveys. As McClary (1994) says of non-professionals analyzing music:

Why pay attention to the impressions of someone who could not label a chord, even at gunpoint? Well, largely because these are the listeners who reliably make up the audiences for the never-ending stream of *Carmen* performances, and because such people are often in closer touch with music as it operates in the social world – they are concerned not with chords of forms per se, but with *effects*, and thus are in some respects better witnesses than many professionals, given our

[musicologists'] training to regard effects as vulgar, subjective, or irrelevant" (p. 73, emphasis by the author).

It is with that in mind that I interviewed audience members from a Sirens of Mothra performance, and that I include my own interpretations of their music and its effects. The audience's perception of a live musical performance may not be the same as that of a professionally trained musicologist, but nonprofessional audience members are still affected by music, and can offer a valuable perspective when it comes to the interpretation of musical performance.

Of the audience members I was able to interview, all of them found the music and the band members themselves to be quite appealing. Although none of them were able to clearly make out many song lyrics during the performance, it is interesting that all of them mentioned that they felt Sirens of Mothra had a feminist message of women's empowerment. This supports the literature that suggests that, while song lyrics certainly convey meaning, many other nonverbal cues provide meaning as well (Simon, 2004).

I was not at all surprised to hear that what stood out the most to the audience members was the gender of the Sirens of Mothra and the ways in which they performed their gender. After all, it has already been established that a live all-woman rock band is a rare thing in many music scenes. Although the audience members I interviewed are well versed in music (one of them being a musician and another being a music publicist), they could name only one other all-woman bands they had ever seen prior to the Sirens' show. Similar to some of the other rock scenes described in the literature (Bayton, 1998; Cohen, 1993) the Eugene music scene is made up of mainly men musicians.

It was clear during the interviews that, although every audience member liked Sirens of Mothra and their music, they were surprised to see an all-woman rock band, and they had come to the show with expectations that the music might not be very good. Lauren said she was “surprised” to see women playing instruments, and David and Jenny agreed. Jenny added that she was “reminded” that women can perform rock music, and that she felt inspired by the band’s presence on stage because of their gender. This supports the literature that suggests that a lack of images of women in rock, both live and in the media, contributes to an absence of women rock musicians from the dominant discourse (Cohen, 1997; Foss, 2004; McRobbie, 1990; et al.). Because they are not used to seeing women playing rock music, the audience members do not associate women with rock music without even realizing that they are doing so.

The results from my interviews with audience members suggest that if more women rock musicians were present in the music scene, they would have an audience for their music and their feminist messages would become a part of the discursive formation. I know that this is true for me as a fan of rock music. I grew up listening to music that was mainly performed by men, and even today as a feminist who attempts to be aware of these issues the vast majority of the live shows I attend are for all-male bands. This is not because of a conscious sexist decision on my part, but rather because the majority of the music in the rock scene is performed by men. If women were heard and seen more often, it is likely that the messages contained in their music would become a part of the dominant discourse.

Discussion of Critical Discourse Analysis

As was shown in the feminist critical discourse analysis of “Tiny Suicide,” that particular song is about the struggle many women face in contemporary, patriarchal society (a theme that runs through several other songs as well). Time does not allow for a discussion of the messages contained in every Sirens of Mothra song, but I discuss the meaning of “Tiny Suicide” in the following paragraphs as representative sample.

By casting the audience in the role of perpetrator, “Tiny Suicide” is saying that we all, as members of society, are complicit in the objectification of women. Although the woman who is the subject of the song is in a great deal of pain, no one around her realizes it, including the song’s audience. In fact, clear up until the scene of her suicide she is still receiving attention based only on her physical appearance, and the audience still believes her to be content because she continues to be sexually desirable.

It is interesting to note that in a typical cultural artifact, the position offered to audiences is a masculine one, in which “audience members are asked to identify with a male protagonist who controls events and conveys a sense of omnipotence” (Foss, 2004, p. 170). This song challenges that notion by asking audience members to identify with a female subject who is feeling objectified. In this way, the song sheds light on those experiences, even for those who have not dealt with them first hand.

While this song describes the inner life of only one woman, I believe it is meant to represent the experiences of many women, and that many women would be able to identify with some or all of the feelings of the song’s subject. The subject remains nameless, and few identifying characteristics are given about her beyond her gender and

the objectification she feels. This makes it easier to generalize her experiences, and to identify with them. As a woman in contemporary society, I know that I too have felt objectified and disconnected because of my physical appearance, and have felt that people decide whether or not to value me as a person based on the way I look. I believe that most women have felt similarly at one time or another, and therefore most women in our culture would be able to relate to the experiences of the subject as they are described in the song (were they to hear them), even if not every woman has felt literally suicidal.

In addition to presenting a narrative with which many women can relate, I also believe that “Tiny Suicide” has the ability to shed a light on these issues for audience members who may not be aware of women’s experiences. This song addresses an audience that is sexually attracted to the female subject, or at least willing to sexually objectify her. Because of this, the song also serves to raise awareness of women’s experiences among the heterosexual male population, and the role that they as men play in those experiences. “Tiny Suicide” speaks directly to those in power in a patriarchal system, heterosexual males, and asks them to examine their behavior and to bear witness to the suffering of a woman whom they have made to feel like an object.

Because this song presents such a strong image of female suffering at the hands of society, it challenges the patriarchal norms and serves as a form of cultural resistance. By addressing those in power directly, “Tiny Suicide” is meant to shed light on the issues faced by women in a world in which they feel powerless and scrutinized. It asks men (and other women) to examine their own place in a culture that devalues women by turning them into voiceless sex objects, something that relates back to the earlier experiences

explored by muted group theory (Ardener, 1975; Kramarae, 2005; et al.). By composing and performing this song, the Sirens of Mothra are a muted group that is resisting the discourse of the dominant group, challenging it, and seeking to change it.

It is true, of course, that many audience members are unable to decipher song lyrics during a live performance. According to the three Sirens of Mothra fans I interviewed, only a few of the songs had lyrics that were articulated clearly enough to be understood on the first listen. This does not mean, however, that Sirens of Mothra's messages of sexual objectification and oppression went unnoticed by their audience. Many of the lyrics were audible to the people in the crowd, and the message of female empowerment and the band in other ways, which will be discussed in the following section, also expressed social awareness present in many of their song lyrics.

Nonverbal Communication

The next theme that emerged during the coding process was that of nonverbal communication. Through clothing choice, performative behavior, and other modes of nonverbal communication, the members of Sirens of Mothra communicated much about themselves and their band without ever saying a word.

Clothing Choice

The most notable mode of nonverbal communication performed by Sirens of Mothra was their physical appearance and clothing choice. As previously mentioned, all of the members of the band are conventionally attractive and most of them have had past

experiences as musicians of getting more attention for their looks than for their musical ability. Because of these previous experiences, and because the band members already felt they were receiving attention just for being women, careful attention was paid to clothing choice and personal presentation. This relates to the notion of gender as a performance and clothing as a mode of nonverbal communication used to signify gender (Butler, 1990).

The clothing worn by Sirens of Mothra during each of their live shows was conservatively cut and dark-colored. Although each member of the band made an effort to exhibit some individuality through her clothing choice (e.g., Stacia often wore a hat or scarf, Eva often wore silver accessories, etc.) Sirens of Mothra as a band always followed the same color scheme, usually dressing in all black or in black and blue. The dark colors were meant not only to reflect the dark themes expressed in the music, but also to further minimize any attention the band might have received for their clothing or physical attractiveness.

In my opinion it is unfortunate that Sirens of Mothra felt so scrutinized for their physical appearance that they felt they had to dress conservatively. Off stage, many of the women in the band express themselves in the way they dress; yet they felt that if they carried that same form of self-expression with them on stage that it would have taken away from their music. As suggested in muted group theory, members of a subdominant group must edit themselves to conform to the norms reinforced by the dominant group (Kramarae, 2004). Were the Sirens to have dressed in more sexually suggestive outfits, it is likely that that would have distracted some audience members from their musicianship.

There is another side to the choice to wear conservative clothing, however. Just as muted group theory suggests that subdominant groups must edit their messages, it also suggests that subdominant groups are more creative in their modes of communication as a result of being repressed by the dominant discourse (Wall & Gannon-Leary, 1999). With this in mind, wearing conservative clothing that did not threaten or distract audiences with their sexuality allowed the Sirens of Mothra to convey more radical feminist messages through their songs than perhaps would have been accepted otherwise.

Ashley mentioned to me that none of the males with whom she has played in bands have ever expressed anxiety over clothing choice. Stacia echoed this statement, as did Kendra, Oriana, and Eva. This reinforces the notion suggested by the literature that women musicians are sexually objectified to a degree that their male counterparts do not experience (Bayton, 1998).

Positioning and Vocalizing

In another display of nonverbal communication, during live shows Sirens of Mothra positioned themselves in a half-circle where they could all make eye contact with one another (as mentioned previously), as opposed to a more traditional placement that would have had the drummer in the back and all of the band members facing forward. This allowed for more communication between the band members, resulting in a more collaborative live show. If one person wanted to change the set list or a part of one of the songs, she could communicate that to the other band members nonverbally through eye contact and gesturing. This also helped the band with their vocal harmonizing.

Vocal harmonies played a large part in the nonverbal messages contained in Sirens of Mothra's music. By all singing together, the band reinforced their identity as a group of women, and as feminists who do not value one voice over another but instead respect each group member equally (even though Ashley chose not to sing, she would have been welcomed to do so, so her absence as a vocalist does not refute this point). As Simon (2004) says, "the act of singing together helps to create and reinforce more fundamental communal relationships" (p. 436).

During our interviews, each member of the band mentioned vocal harmonizing as something that stood out about the sound of their music, and it was something they worked hard to perfect. The structure of vocal harmonies mirrors the structure of the band in general. If vocal harmonizing is to work, each vocalist must sing her part correctly, and sing only her part. It is only when the parts are combined that the sound can be created. As Kendra put it, "you can't make a good chord if anyone in particular is not hitting their pitch." This is true not only in vocal harmonizing, but also in band dynamics as well.

Issues of Conflict

During my interviews with each member of Sirens of Mothra, many different reasons were given for the break up of their band. Given that a rock band is a group that incorporates many different dynamics, from interpersonal relationships, to creative expression, to public relations, it comes as no surprise that their break up was extremely complex and multifaceted. In the following section, I analyze some of the key reasons

each band member gave for the break up, keeping in mind that it was no one reason but rather multiple issues that caused it to occur.

According to Oriana, the band members were feeling so scrutinized by the community at large that some of them no longer felt comfortable playing live shows. She felt that it was so difficult for women in the rock scene to try and compete, with men and with one another, and that it would be difficult for any group of females to succeed and stay together as a band. This relates to the literature that women struggle to be commercially successful in rock music (Bayton, 1998) as well as the history of all-woman bands having a difficult time staying together (Burns, 2002). Oriana also suggested that, as opposed to attempting to fit into a mold made by male musicians, women in the rock scene should “play a different game” and try to express themselves in different ways. As members of a muted group, the modes of communication formulated by men (the dominant group) are insufficient for women’s self-expression (Ardener, 1975; Ardener, 2005; Kramarae, 2004; et al.) so it makes sense that the dynamics of a rock band, which have also been formulated by the dominant group, are equally insufficient.

Eva echoed Oriana’s sentiments about the difficulties women have in the rock music scene. As previously mentioned, Eva suggested that perhaps women were not cut out for rock bands in general. In her mind, being a member of a successful rock band means being able to give and take criticism and scrutiny, something she believes women are not socialized to do effectively. As a music fan and a musician, she could not think of any all-woman rock bands that have had successful careers (there are a handful of them, but they are few and far between). It was for this reason, combined with a lack of a clear

identity, that Eva feels the band fell apart. She also added that she does not view this as a bad thing, and that if being a female in a rock band means having to express yourself in a stereotypically masculine way (e.g., smashing guitars or singing songs with misogynistic lyrics) that she would rather not be any part of it.

Kendra, on the other hand, did not feel that gender had anything to do with the break up of Sirens of Mothra. In her mind, the members of the band had creative differences that they were unable to solve, something that happens in many bands regardless of the gender of the musicians. Although I certainly believe that Kendra is being honest when she says that gender did not factor into the band's break up, Kendra has also had a lot more experience as a woman playing a "masculine" instrument than many of the other women in the band, and has perhaps built up more of a tolerance to gender discrimination and is less sensitive to it.

According to Ashley, Sirens of Mothra broke up because the members of the band did not share the same direction and goals. Although she thinks that gender did play a role in their break up (because of the ways in which they interacted with one another), she does not believe that gender was the primary reason for the dissolution of the band. As the member of the band with the least musical experience and the most desire to play in a group with other females Ashley has a unique perspective on the situation. It is also important to note, however, that she is the only member of Sirens of Mothra who is not a vocalist, and did not write any of the band's song lyrics. Therefore did may feel as judged or scrutinized for her performance in general as some of the other band members.

Lastly, Stacia was the band member who seemed the most hurt by the break up of Sirens of Mothra, and was unable to give any real explanation as to reasons why it may have happened. She says she feels like maybe some people's egos got in the way of the success of the band as a whole, but that she just wishes that they could give the whole thing another try. As far as issues of gender go, Stacia seems not to care or to pay much attention to gender beyond its effectiveness in getting publicity for the band. As long as all-woman rock bands are an anomaly to some people, Stacia will continue to want to play in one and make her music in any way she can.

As far as my own observations about the break up are concerned, I feel that it had a lot to do with the band's identity as an all-woman band. All of the band members expressed feeling some sort of scrutiny or receiving extra attention because of their gender, and although that affected some people more than it did others, it still had a bearing on the overall situation. Also, many of the reasons for the break up of the band stemmed from the band's dedication to the feminist collaborative creative process. It was of utmost importance to them that they operate as a collective group, without any one leader or decision maker. For a model like that to be effective, all members of a group need to be open and honest with one another, something that the women in Sirens of Mothra were unable to do.

Along these same lines, it is of note that at the beginning of my time spent with the Sirens, everyone appeared to get along beautifully and made every effort to always agree with one another. When I conducted the first focus group interview with the entire band, they couldn't say enough good things about the group process and how much they loved

one another. Over the course of the next several months, however, their group process became more difficult, and the dynamics between the band members grew more tense. To me, this serves as evidence that the women of Sirens of Mothra wanted so badly for their female model of band unity to work that they suppressed some of their opinions about the direction of the band early on in order to preserve one another's feelings, something that eventually contributed to the break up of the band.

In the interest of reflexivity, I must admit that I was personally quite disappointed to learn of the Sirens' break up. Not only do I love the band's music and the women themselves, but I also did not like what the break up suggested about women's abilities to work together. As Maddison (2007) writes, "conflict and disagreement play an important role in processes of collective identity...Attempts to repress conflict, however, do not recognise its significance as a creative force" (p. 395). This suggests that, while Sirens of Mothra's break up does not prove that women cannot work together creatively, the fact that women are socialized to hide their true feelings and to avoid conflict (Hesse-Biber, 2007) makes collaboration more difficult.

Summary

In this chapter, I analyzed the data in order to explore the research questions posed in chapter three. For the sake of clarity, I restate them here, with a brief summary of the results found: 1) How do women in rock music, specifically the all-woman band Sirens of Mothra, function as a muted group? The data suggest that Sirens of Mothra

faced many challenges as a muted group in the rock scene, some of which contributed to the dissolution of the band.

2) How does the band communicate and perform their gender through textual and nonverbal modes of communication? By paying close attention to dress, on stage presentation, lyrical and musical messages, and many other modes of communication, Sirens of Mothra performed their gender as an all-woman rock band.

3) How do audiences receive those messages? The audience members interviewed for this study were surprised to see an all-woman rock band, but they enjoyed the experience of seeing Sirens of Mothra perform live. The data suggest that the audience perceived feminist messages from the band, and that those messages were interpreted in a positive way.

4) How does Sirens of Mothra operate in relation to the dominant discourse, and what do their experiences signify about the experiences of women in the music scene in more general terms? Sirens of Mothra faced difficulties relating to the dominant discourse because, as an all-woman group, their gender led to them feeling pressure and scrutiny. Although their experiences cannot be generalized, the data suggest that women in the rock scene are not afforded the same privileges as men, and that bands that place an emphasis on the feminist collaborative process have a difficult time staying together.

While this analysis in no way proves that women are unable to function as a rock band, what it does suggest is that women face unique challenges as a muted group that make participation in a rock band more difficult. Because they were scrutinized simply for their gender in a way that male rock musicians are not, Sirens of Mothra had a harder

time performing the tasks required to make a band successful, such as communicating openly with one another and feeling secure performing in front of audiences. The Sirens felt they had dress conservatively and take precautions so as not to distract their audience with their sexuality, which created tension because certain members of the band were not able to express themselves through their clothing.

In addition, the messages conveyed by Sirens of Mothra through their song lyrics and nonverbal performances, which come from a female perspective and deal with feminist issues, were not the typical messages associated with rock bands. Because of this, the band felt they had to be overly sensitive to audience feedback, which left some people feeling devalued by the other members of the band. Although feeling devalued, judged, and scrutinized are not inherently female traits, they are gendered in this particular situation because they occurred as a result of the band feeling scrutinized as a group of women.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Review of the Study

Throughout history, women have participated in the creation of music. Women have played instruments, sang songs, and played supportive roles as music journalists, friends, and fans. The contributions women have made to the music scene are significant, and should in no way be devalued. However, women in music, specifically rock music, function as a muted group because they exist in a genre that was created by and for men as a part of a patriarchal society.

As rock musicians, women face unique challenges. To begin with, they are often discouraged from even learning to play music in the first place. For the women who do play in rock bands, many of them have experienced marginalization and have felt their voices were silenced by the dominant, male discourse. Women are socialized to be polite, to be elegant and graceful, and to be skilled at everything they do if they are to be sexually attractive to men and accepted by society (Hesse-Biber, 2007). This makes learning an instrument and playing in a rock and roll band difficult, because of the live performances required, and because the masculine posturing involved is not a part of the way women are taught to perform gender in a patriarchal society (Butler, 1990).

In Eugene, Oregon, there are hundreds of rock bands that play in bars and clubs all around the city. Eugene is a city known for its music scene, and yet at the beginning of this study there were only three all-women bands playing rock music anywhere in the Eugene area (now, after the Sirens' break up, there are only two). The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of one of those bands, Sirens of Mothra.

Using a triangulation of ethnography, in-depth interviews, and feminist critical discourse analysis, I explored the following questions: How do women in rock music, specifically the all-woman band Sirens of Mothra, function as a muted group? How does the band communicate and perform their gender through textual and nonverbal modes of communication? How do audiences receive those messages? And finally, how do Sirens of Mothra operate in relation to the dominant discourse, and what do their experiences signify about the experiences of women in the music scene in more general terms?

It is clear from the research that Sirens of Mothra are a muted group, and as such they are faced with two options; express themselves in ways that do not fit into the dominant discourse and risk ostracization, or tailor their message to fit into the dominant discourse and sacrifice some of their ability to express themselves. In this case, while the band was in existence, they chose a combination of the two. By dressing conservatively and downplaying their femininity in their physical appearance, the band was able to communicate messages of feminist social justice issues through their music in a way that might not have been accepted otherwise.

Of course, over the six-month period they were a band, the issues surrounding their gender and status as women rock musicians became too much for Sirens of Mothra,

and the band broke up. While this was unexpected from my standpoint as the researcher to say the least, it does suggest that all-woman bands are not always able to be successful, even if they do work collaboratively and give each band member an equal voice in the band. In fact, the results suggest that it is more difficult for all-woman bands to stay together and be successful, precisely because of their status as muted groups. This has also been the case historically, as very few all-woman rock bands have enjoyed any significant commercial success (Burns, 2002).

Limitations

As is the case with any study, my research has limitations. I worked with only one band, and perhaps the results I found were atypical. However, the experiences of, and messages conveyed, by one all-woman band are significant, and they provide insight into the experiences of other women in the rock scene, and in other areas where males shape the dominant discourse.

Typically, limitations in ethnographic case studies such as this one include time constraints, because every project has to end at some point. Fortunately in this case, I was able to spend time with Sirens of Mothra throughout their entire life cycle as a band, from prior to their first performance until after their break up. However, time did not permit me to attend every practice and songwriting session, something that might have been beneficial to this study.

In addition to the aforementioned limitations, I am not a musician or a musicologist myself. Although I consider my interpretations of meaning as a music fan

and a feminist to be adequate and valuable, I do not reach the same conclusions as a person informed by a background in technical musical instruction likely would.

As was previously discussed, qualitative methods such as those used in this study rely on the researcher as a recording instrument. While this can provide invaluable insight into certain situations, it also brings with it many limitations. As the researcher, I could not be everywhere at once, nor could I separate myself from my own biases and life experiences.

Suggestions for Future Research

The experiences of all-women rock bands could be explored in a variety of ways, and it is my hope that they will be. Future studies on this topic might include a discussion of feminist standpoint theory and the ways in which it relates to muted group theory and women's experiences. In addition, an ethnographic study might be conducted on women audience members, rock journalists, or employees in the music industry, in order to more fully explore the supporting roles held by women in the rock scene.

A critical discourse analysis could be conducted on a song by an all-male band in order to compare the ways gender is constructed by males and by females, which would be especially insightful if the songs were similar in their technical construction.

It is regrettable that time did not allow for a more in-depth look at the political economy of music and the experiences of professional female musicians in this study. I would like to encourage other researchers to explore these issues, as economic issues are certainly behind many women's experiences in the music industry.

In general, I encourage scholars to explore these issues. All-women musicians are not just a muted group in the rock music scene, but in scholarly research as well. Though there have been many articles written about gender and music, few of them explore the dynamics of all-woman bands or their unique experiences.

Final Thoughts

We as scholars and concerned citizens need to work toward the inclusion of women's voices in our culture. The female viewpoint is important, and yet women are growing up in this society without hearing their voices represented through music. A component of feminist criticism is activism through awareness, and it is my hope that this study sheds a light on the unique messages constructed by all-woman bands that will cause readers to act by supporting all-woman bands on local, national, and international levels. The fact that women are a muted group in rock music is problematic, but it does not have to be permanent. By encouraging women to express themselves through music, and encouraging consumers and media to pay attention to the messages of female musicians, we can begin to change the status of all-woman rock bands as a muted group.

CHAPTER VIII

AFTERWORD

Throughout my work with this study, many things became clear to me. First of all, I am a qualitative researcher through and through. I find that, after immersing myself in this data and these experiences (as well as the reading that accompanied them) for such a long while, I no longer have patience for “objective” academic work. I feel that reflexivity is key in any study, regardless of method.

I have also learned that life as a woman rock musician is far from glamorous. These women work hard and receive very little in return. I admire them only more as a result, and my desire to try to play music myself has increased. In fact, over the course of this study I even attempted to write a few songs.

Throughout this research, I saw myself and other women like me at every turn. When I read Clawson’s (2002) accounts of women feeling too self-conscious to play instruments in rock bands, I heard my own voice echoing the same sentiments. When Stacia described for me her experiences overcoming heroin addiction so she could write better music, I identified even though I have never tried heroin myself. When the band broke up, I was heartbroken right along with them. What I mean to say is, feminist research highlights the experiences that we all share as women in this culture, and I certainly felt those shared experiences while working on this project.

I know that my work with these topics is far from over. Every time I turn on the radio or enter a record store, I am struck with new questions about women's experiences in various music scenes. It is up to us, as women and scholars, to continue to ask important questions about gender and music, and to explore possible answers to those questions as best we can.

APPENDIX A

Interview Guide – Band Members

1. Please tell me your name, age, and a little bit of background information about yourself, including your educational background.
2. Describe for me how you got started playing music. What was it about music that appealed to you?
3. Please tell me a bit about your music career thus far (bands you have been in, types of music and instruments you have played, locations, etc.)
4. Describe for me how you came to join the band Sirens of Mothra, and your current role in the band.
5. One thing that stands out about Sirens of Mothra is that all of the band members are female. Tell me a little bit about that, and how it compares to other bands you have played with.
6. Describe for me as best you can the identity of Sirens of Mothra. When someone sees you perform live or hears your music, what impression would you like that person to have?
7. Tell me what it is like for you to be a female musician in an all-female band. What has the experience been like? How does it compare to other bands you have played with?
8. Another thing about Sirens of Mothra that stands out to audience members is the vocal harmonizing you do. Tell me about the ways in which voice plays a role in your band.
9. What do you think your voice communicates to audience members? To the other women in the band?
10. Tell me about the songs that Sirens of Mothra perform.

11. How deliberate of a message do you think you are sending with your songs? Do you think that Sirens of Mothra has a certain message? If so, what is it?
12. Describe for me the band's songwriting process, and your specific role in that process.
13. If there were a portion of a song that you didn't like and didn't want to perform, but the other members of the band did want to perform it, what would you do?
14. How do you prepare for a live performance?
15. Describe for me your live performances.
16. When you are performing, what thoughts are going through your mind?
17. How do you think others perceive you and the rest of the band when you are on stage?
18. We've talked a bit before about how clothing and appearance might affect audiences' perceptions of your band. Tell me about that.
19. What are some of the issues, in general terms, that you think female musicians face?
20. Do you feel that you have had to deal with those issues?
21. How do you think Sirens of Mothra, as an all-female band, communicates with its audience? How do you think that might change if you were a co-ed band, or an all-male band?
22. I heard that there is a chance that the show coming up on the 23rd is going to be your final performance. Could you tell me a little bit about that?
23. Is there anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX B

Interview Guide – Audience Members

1. Please tell me your name, age, gender, and some background information about yourself.
2. I am asking questions of you today because you recently attended a live performance of the band Sirens of Mothra. Please describe your impressions of that performance.
3. Was this the first time you had heard the band? How did you come to attend the show?
4. Tell me a bit about your music background (what types of bands you like, how often you attend live performances, if you yourself have ever played in a band, etc.)
5. Tell me what stood out to you the most about the Sirens of Mothra performance.
6. The band is obviously all female. How does that affect your impressions of them and their music?
7. Have you ever seen an all-female band in concert prior to this show? What bands?
8. Did you feel that Sirens of Mothra have a distinct message? If so, what is it?
9. Describe the band's music for me, as you heard it.
10. Describe the way the members of the band looked to you, and the look of the overall performance.
11. Could you hear any of the lyrics clearly? If so, what impressions did they have on you?
12. Did you like the band? If so, why? If not, why not?
13. Is there anything else you would like to add?

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