Boys and Girls Come Out to Play

Gender and Music-Making in Hamilton, New Zealand/Aotearoa

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[1] This article addresses gender and popular music-making in the city of Hamilton, New Zealand, a moderately prosperous provincial city (population 130,000) which services a large rural sector (the Waikato). Starting from the observation that few women enrol in tertiary commercial music courses in Hamilton, I aim to examine both the pedagogical experiences and perceptions of students relating to these courses, but also the background of beliefs and practices relating to gender and music in Hamilton, focusing on the live original music scene and its participants. My research question is 'what factors enable or disable women's participation in original popular music performance in Hamilton?' I have used mainly qualitative approaches (interviews with students, participants, participant observation at live music events) and some quantitative research (statistical analysis of gender participation in NZ tertiary education). Precedents include Lucy Green's Music Gender Education (1997) and Sara Cohen's Rock Culture in Liverpool (1991), which employed a mixed methodology to research similar issues in the UK. My theoretical approach starts from a position similar to Green: critical theory that aims to reveal and interpret ideological patterns of power within everyday experience, specifically in relation to ideologies of gender and music. However, while critical theory is excellent at identifying constraints, problems and contradictions, it's not always clear how it can set out a positive agenda, other than by addressing the problems it identifies. It doesn't always engage with how people dwell within and work with contradictions, rather than trying to 'solve' them. Some of the strategies I describe later that enable women's music-making could be interpreted as critical responses to social problems, but others do not work so much with or against dominant discourses but alongside them – that is, agents or groups develop effective strategies to make music 'on their own terms' but without necessarily defining themselves against someone else's terms. In the latter part of the essay I consider Gustav Holter's theory of public/private spheres and, briefly, Foucault's concept of resistance as alternatives to critical theory's emphasis on ideology.

Background

[2] This is the first study of gender participation in popular music-making in New Zealand. Both men and women were approached – however, mostly women responded, so by default (which certainly begs interpretation), it has become mostly a study of women's participation in music-making. I should also state here a personal agenda – as a popular musician who has played with both men and women (including some of the participants), I was interested in what factors encouraged or inhibited women's participation. I also teach media arts at one of the main research sites, Waikato Institute of Technology (Wintec). I have defined popular music-making as participating in the production of popular musical performances primarily in public spaces as musicians or sound engineers. My focus is on musicians who compose, sing or play, or facilitate that process. This connects the two sites of my research: in both cases 'playing, singing and producing self-written music' is the dominant mode of musical performance and production. The two main research sites are Wintec's Commercial Music programme and the local live original music scene. 'Original' designates performers who play mainly their own material, as opposed to covers bands. Typical performance settings include pubs, cafes, parties and the University of Waikato, whose student radio station (Contact FM) is probably the most active supporter of local live

original music, along with the Htown website (http://htown.co.nz), an online forum which advertises gigs and promotes discussion of music. However, these are both small operations, and do not offer equal coverage of all types of local music.

[3] The Hamilton live original music scene is small, fragmented and suffers from a lack of venues. It rarely attracts large audiences, and there isn't necessarily any connection between the Wintec programme and the scene I am describing. At any given time, however, there will be some musicians participating in both, at least attending live performances. Two significant annual live events are the Circle Jerk (in which bands cover songs by other Hamilton bands) and the Mammoth Band Experiments (a 'battle of the bands'). Mainly because of the range of performers involved, these events attracted (in 2008) audiences of 200-300. I participated in both (as performer in the first, as judge at the second, and as an audience member in both). The 'battle' featured a number of (male) performers from the Wintec music programme.

[4] The Wintec music programme has been running since 2004, and in the period I surveyed (five years) 126 students have enrolled, 99 males and 27 females, approximately 80% male. (Forty of the men dropped out (40%) without completing the degree, six of the women (22%).) Are these figures typical of NZ tertiary institutions that offer popular music degrees? Broadly, yes. First year intakes are mainly male, although the proportion is highest at Wintec and at institutions which only offer audio engineering courses. One exception was a songwriting degree at the University of Auckland which is typically 50/50.

[5] In the local live music scene, the proportion of female performers is even lower, even though audiences are pretty mixed. For example the 'battle of the bands' featured 16 bands or artists, about 70 people, of whom four were women. No acts with women reached the finals. At the 'Circle Jerk' (the name itself has highly masculine connotations) there were three woman performers out of perhaps 50. In my experience of New Zealand music scenes, men have always been prominent, but especially in Hamilton in 2008. Why is women's participation as performers so limited? To what degree is it specific to Hamilton, or New Zealand, or tertiary music programmes? To what degree does it respond to global discourses of gender representation in popular music?

Gender and popular music

[6] In some contemporary popular music genres - pop vocal, R&B, singer/songwriter – there are arguably more successful women than ever before: Madonna (a significant role model), Shania Twain, Celine Dion, Mary J Blige, Missy Elliott, TLC, Britney Spears, Destiny's Child, Beyonce, Christine Aguilera, Celine Dion, Jewel, Mariah Carey, Pink, the Dixie Chicks (US), Amy Winehouse, Enya, Lily Allen, Dido (British Isles), Kylie Minogue (Australia). In New Zealand a number of major female stars have emerged in the last ten years - Bic and Boh Runga, Brooke Fraser, Hayley Westenra, Anika Moa, Julia Deans, Ladyhawke, Gin Wigmore. In a typical current singles chart today, you'll see up to 50% female artists.

[7] However, irrespective of all the other work they do (playing instruments, producing, managing, writing songs) the dominant visual representation of woman musicians (say, in music videos) is as solo vocalists or sometimes singing groups. Women sing (and often dance). Rarely do they play an instrument (other than an acoustic guitar or piano). Even more rarely are

they seen in a band, either all female, or mixed, except as singers. The number of representations of women performing music has increased, but the range has not. Moreover, the genres in which women are most successful are perceived as the most 'commercial' and thus lack cultural capital. What counts as 'classic', ie canonized popular music, whether decided by media programmers or rock critics, tends to be by white men. In 2002 APRA polled its New Zealand songwriter members and released a list of the 'top' 30 NZ songs of all time, subsequently issued as a bestselling CD by Sony (Nature's Best). The list features six songs sung by women (Pixie Williams, Bic Runga, Shona Laing, Julia Deans of Fur Patrol and Jenny Morris of the Crocodiles, and four written by women ('Sway' and 'Drive' by Bic Runga, 'Lydia' by Julia Deans and 'Glad I'm not a Kennedy' by Shona Laing). Although the list covered 60 years of NZ music, the most successful woman has emerged only in the last decade (Bic Runga). Within the top 30, white males predominate.

[8] It could be objected that the commercial mainstream is not particularly relevant for the scenes I am examining. Indeed, given the perceived 'fragmentation' of music and other media in the last 20 years, is 'mainstream' still a relevant concept? Many musicians are disdainful of pop music (usually the men more than the women). However, are women then more prominent in 'alternative' or 'independent' music scenes? On the basis of the Hamilton scene, I'd say not. Certainly there may be more opportunities for experimentation, but within NZ independent scenes, women performers have always been in a minority, although rarely as much as in Hamilton. Also, for music students, most of whom are school-leaving age, the 'mainstream' (commercial radio and TV programming, popular music in films) still provides a set of expectations and possibilities. As we will see, most female students identify with the singer/songwriter role model. However, most women musicians in the local live scene are not singer/songwriters, which suggests a contradiction or impasse for women participating in local popular music that is not present for men. Mavis Bayton's work provides a generic overview of problems women musicians face: access to money, equipment, resources, transport, that 'public space' means men's space (pubs for example), pressure from peers and partners, male musicians who exclude them (347-354). Moreover, many women prioritise maintaining relationships over self-advancement. If they do finally make it on to the stage, they face a further set of problems, which I will discuss presently. However, women musicians can also evolve strategies to cope with these obstacles, a theme I will return to.

Gender in the local context

[9] Gender discourse in settler cultures like New Zealand may be a further challenge for women. In an earlier article (for this journal), I argued that in New Zealand, gender has functioned historically like class does in the colonizer, the UK (Bannister). It is a means of social stratification, producing a national iconography of tough, rural, anti-intellectual, working-class masculinity - the 'Kiwi bloke' - but no corresponding model of female national identity. More particularly, social stratification is also performed through gender segregation in education, leisure and social activities. These factors may affect women's participation in music-making. Although I did not explicitly address gender and national identity in my interviews, one respondent (Minette) argued that NZ social gatherings were more segregated than in her home country (France): 'it tends always for the women to be on one side and the men to be on one side, and me coming from Europe I'm used to genders mixing ... I've got into situations where the women would get angry at me because I was talking to the men.' She related this to education: 'In France all schools are mixed ... Single sex

schools do not teach you how to behave in society, if a girl doesn't know how to talk to a boy it may not help her in later life.' The idea of NZ as a 'gendered culture' has been developed in other studies (James and Saville-Smith).

[10] Within popular New Zealand discourse, Hamilton typifies conservative, 'redneck', 'heartland' New Zealand, a bit like the US Midwest, the kind of place ambitious or alternative young people tend to leave. Handsome Jeffery (sic), a Waikato all-woman band that won Rockquest - an NZ rock talent quest for schools – promptly moved to Auckland. Their lead singer, Anna Coddington, is now a rising solo star. Another band I interviewed (three women and one man), moved to Wellington at the start of 2008. In places where there are more 'flows' of people and ideas, there may be a degree of freedom to re-invent oneself. Of course, this argument works both ways - immigrants may in turn perceive New Zealand and the Waikato as 'liberating'. I interviewed two French women, Mary and Minette, both of whom had become popular musical performers since coming to NZ. Their perception was that French culture was judgmental: 'there girls criticize each other a lot ... Kiwis are more reserved, they never say anything bad, it's great... over there it's not very encouraging' (Mary). Minette stated:

I went to an art exhibition and there were some painters that were not great artists at all, quite simple stuff, and I was surprised that those people were exhibiting, because in France ... you will be judged ... if you call it an art exhibition, immediately there will be a higher expectation, because it's called art, in NZ people can more just do their thing ... It makes people less shy to express themselves, even if ... it's not that great.

Leaving aside the question of whether these NZ/France differences are real or a matter of perception, these women experienced a move into an unfamiliar environment as liberating, presumably in the same way that musicians from Hamilton might move elsewhere to avoid parochialism. But such mobility is also a function of social status (both women had university degrees).

[11] Wintec students come mostly from Hamilton and its rural hinterland – other institutions, especially universities, tend to have a larger catchment area. This may act to some degree as a conservative force. However, there are also more bohemian communities in the Waikato area, and a large Maori community. Finally, even locally prominent 'conservative' institutions, like fundamentalist and charismatic churches, are not unilaterally 'repressive'. A number of respondents reported church as an important influence - a site that offers support for women's musical performance in a relatively supportive communal context. We will return to this point.

Educational environment

[12] Polytechnics are generally perceived as less socially and culturally prestigious than universities – vocationally focused, less research-oriented, and with lower entrance standards. For example, students can be accepted into the music programme without formal qualifications, on the basis of ability alone. It is possible that polytechnics attract students of a lower social class than universities, and that they may be more conservative in terms of gender. Researching student enrolments across Wintec undergraduate schools (2005-8), I noted that programmes of study are strongly gender-differentiated. For example, health students are over 90% women, trades overwhelmingly male (85-90%), education is mainly women, information technology mainly men. Very few schools have even close to a 50/50 split.

Women favour programmes that involve working with people, men those that involve technology. Within Media Arts, most programmes have a majority of women (visual art, communication), with the exception of music. In Wintec as a whole, there is a majority of female students (roughly 60/40). Indeed, according to the most recent study, women form the majority of tertiary students in NZ ('Provider-based enrolments'). In some ways this makes their lack of participation in the music programme even more puzzling.

The study

[13] Two groups were interviewed: Wintec students and musicians participating in the local 'scene'. My choice of local musicians was based around my knowledge of the scene and relationships with participants. With Wintec students, I advertised within the music department for volunteers (gender not specified), as well as contacting former students. We conducted 11 student interviews: nine women, and two men, in age ranging between 19 and 43, but mostly in their 20s. Six women (Anita, Coral, Heather, Katie, Roz and Julie) identified mainly as singer/songwriters (vocals accompanied by piano or guitar), two as instrumentalists (Lauren, bass; Jane, violin), and one specifically as a sound engineer (Lola). Both the men (Stuart, Michael) identified as sound engineers, one as a DJ too (NB: pseudonyms have been used throughout). I also collated information from admission interviews, to identify levels of formal education for music students generally. Initially I had expected that schooling would be a significant influence, but in fact the linkage was pretty loose – some students were self-taught, some received private tuition, and some were mature students. However, those who had more formal education were more likely to complete the course, and women students were more represented in that group.

[14] I also interviewed 11 non-student musicians associated with Hamilton's live original music scene, ten women (Mary, Minette, June, Amber, Wanda, Helen, Caroline, Betty, Pat, Natalie) and one man (Gene). They had a broad range of degrees of engagement and commercial success – some experienced, some just starting out, only one (Natalie) close to being a fulltime musician, and this is not unusual – most popular music-making is amateur (Finnegan). Unlike the students, only one identified herself as a solo singer-songwriter (Helen). Most played in bands, though usually in supporting roles rather than as main songwriters. The median age of respondents was older than the students, and some had children, which limited in some cases their ability to 'do music'. But they also had a long history of musical involvement, and had usually played a range of roles in different genres and settings. In terms of background, about half had formal training (Amber, June, Mary, Wanda, Caroline). Most had been tertiary students, suggesting that women participating in local live original music tended to come from relatively privileged backgrounds.

Femininity as disruption

[15] Lucy Green states that the feminine is typically perceived as a disruption to musical performance (22-26). Although she discusses mainly classical music, this disruption also appears in popular music. Only one (female) student thought it was an advantage to be a woman: 'You can get what you want ... I think some of the other girls found it hard though.' This respondent, Coral, discussing the course, but by implication also the wider world of popular music, suggested:

you've got to create your own path, and you've got to be a survivor and, y'know a lot of females, I guess the ones that were on the course, didn't

have that built into them so much ... I'm not just a flaky girl that's all talk, and girls do talk a lot.

The language used here suggests that the music business is 'tough', for both men and women. However, its individualistic tone suggests that women have to be 'like men' to succeed. Most female students also talked about a sense of alienation within the (Wintec) music environment, but in different terms:

... 80% of people seem to love death metal... You can't really have ... a musical conversation with them ... 'cos they're just so different ... they don't really know much about the music I like, luckily I used to be into hardcore so I can kind of ... understand what they're on about (Anita).

It just seems to be heaps of fucking heavy metal boys there (Michael).

One female student (Lauren), the only one who played metal, had more specific instances of alienation within the metal scene:

at shows I used to get asked ... whether I was paying to get in, when I was actually playing. But a lot of the time people wouldn't believe me ... and also there's ... stuff like getting asked if you're someone's girlfriend ... the other weekend ... my partner plays in a band as well, and I was ... approached by this dude at one of his shows and I got called a groupie, which pissed me off quite a bit because he had no idea that I actually play myself.

Heavy metal is very popular with teenage boys in Hamilton, and is often identified as a masculine genre, in terms of its personnel, subject matter, approach and general connotations. The most internationally successful Waikato group of recent times, The Datsuns, while not precisely metal, are generally regarded as 'hard rock', that is 'heavy', bluesy, guitar-dominated music, stylistically similar to 'classic' 70s metal, as opposed to recent subgenres like nu-metal, extreme, black or speed metal. Despite the diversity of metal subgenres, metallers do share modes of dress, behavior and beliefs, which women often find alienating, and in turn they are seen as an intrusion, as a male student (Stuart) put it:

If you had a metal band, I think a male singer would be taken more seriously than a female singer ... I've only listened to one metal band that had a female singer [Kittie, actually an all-female band] and ... a lot of their lyrics ... had quite feminist views and stuff... the timbral qualities of their voice, weren't what I would expect from the genre. And so it sounded kind of strange to me.

The music doesn't sound right, and its lyrics are anomalous with the genre.

[16] More broadly, metal is often identified as typifying 'rock' as opposed to 'pop' values (Leach). This binary works within popular culture to distinguish not only gender roles, but also relative value, as Lauren illustrates:

Like a lot of the um, female stuff out there's just crap, like, complete crap and, and ... just doesn't get taken seriously ... all woman bands like The Donnas ... it's like you've got to ... be in an all girl band ... that are just playing really crap stuff, or um, just be a solo artist .

She also states that 'feminine' genres (pop 'girl bands') are less prestigious:

I think that the genres that females can become famous in, a) they focus

quite a lot on looks and appearance and dancing and stuff like that, the pop look, and b) they're ... not really serious genres like if you look at it in terms of musical ... or .... songwriting ability.

The women students see themselves as broader in their tastes than the men; Anita states that because she likes hardcore, she can 'sort of understand' the metallers; Lauren actually plays metal (although not exclusively). But they find it hard to imagine metallers being similarly willing to listen to 'their' music.

[17] Most non-student respondents also acknowledged that women playing music were perceived as unusual, especially in Hamilton. Pat, who has played in bands in Wellington and Auckland, stated that the Hamilton scene was 'worse than average' in terms of gender, which she mainly attributed to the fact that 'anyone with talent leaves'. Other respondents (June, Amber) had experience of playing in rock bands in the past, but felt marginal within the rock world. Although initially inspired by the growth of local independent music in the 1980s, they no longer played rock music. Amber initially performed bluegrass and folk on violin but found the NZ folk scene restrictive, so she formed a rock band with her boyfriend. However, the addition of a male drummer made it more of a 'boy's club'. She then moved from violin to bass, partly because she felt it was a more 'rock' instrument, and she would be more central to the band. However, this raised fresh problems, in that she felt that she was more likely to be compared to others. She also resented being told what to play. Overall, she did not feel that rock music was welcoming to women: 'Being in a band as a woman is like being in drag. It's hard to be there and be seen as a woman.' ('Being seen' here means being recognized within the band, as opposed to being seen by the audience.) June and Amber felt uncomfortable with the volume of rock music – noting the difficulty of amplifying violin over drums, for example. Feelings of isolation were common. Amber viewed rock as a male world: 'I spent years trying to fit into a male world, but there's no negotiability in the other direction.' As a result, both have investigated more interactive, low-key acoustic modes of music-making. Natalie, a fulltime bass player in a relatively successful roots reggae band, supplied a different perspective. She felt that gender was basically a personal self-confidence issue - 'my own stuff' - and that as her band has become more successful, it has mattered less. Some women (especially those starting out) might use it as a 'crutch'. However, she did acknowledge that audiences might expect a higher musical standard from a woman performer, and that there is still prejudice within the industry 'mainly from sound engineers and roadies', especially those from a 'rock' background. She also cited her experience backing a well-known Jamaican reggae singer (a Rastafari) who was 'surprised' to have a female bass player, but eventually he gave her 'respect'. She has two children and takes a nanny 'on the road', but still feels responsible for 'picking up after them' (the men and the children), which is 'not how I would do things'. Notably, the women who downplayed gender issues the most, Natalie and Coral, were the closest to being fulltime musicians, suggesting that 'making it' in the music business requires women to 'masculinise' themselves to a degree.

Performance – the gaze

[18] Green notes how the musical performer is always displaying him/herself and becoming the object of a gaze, a looking/being-looked-at dichotomy historically constructed as gendered male/female (Mulvey, 20; Green, 22-26). The female musician is particularly prone to this gaze, and is viewed as body, rather than musician:

It is absolutely paramount for women that they fit societal expectations of how they should look, in terms of beauty and physical appearance. It doesn't seem to apply to men ... They can certainly achieve quite highly and become quite wealthy out of music, even if they don't fit ... there's also stereotypes about being ... feminine in behavior ... being soft, or cute ... And then there's the other side ... [being] very provocative and ... bolshie in your sexuality, but you're not allowed to be ... in-between (Caroline, non-student).

Female respondents felt that no matter what they did, they would be judged primarily in terms of their perceived sexuality. This doesn't mean they felt totally victimized however, because they can use strategies to affect how they are perceived:

... I used to have blonde hair ... now I've got dark hair and ... since I've changed my hair colour ... generally I've been taken more seriously ... there's a blonde woman in one of my classes this year, um, I've noticed the way she's treated sometimes, which is quite interesting because she's actually a really intelligent person as well (Lauren, student).

The female/body connection is reinforced through the association of women and voice. Voice is gendered (it's easy to tell sex from a voice) and is also heard as a 'natural', bodily rather than learned ability. Voice is also individualizing – the vocal performer in an otherwise instrumental ensemble is usually the focus of the gaze. Singing is thus often characterized as feminine: 'I found it a bit difficult to sing in front of everybody ... coming from an all boys school' (Stuart, student). A female student, Heather, suggested:

Woman musicians that are doing really well are often perceived as just the front man, just a face, d'ya know? They'll make them look real pretty and sell their CDs and it's not really necessarily any chick talent behind it.

Thus the female musician is often highlighted as a solo performer, in contradistinction to the 'band'. Rock is a male collectivity, while pop creates 'stars', who are female, or effeminate: 'the notion of the band or group is central to rock music . . . in contrast to pop music, with its focus on the vocalist, backed by anonymous studio musicians' (Clawson 101).

Singer/songwriters

[19] A possible middle road between being a vocalist or soloist and being 'one of the band' and thus between pop and rock is the singer/songwriter. For female music students, this is a popular option: 'the stereotype of the female in the music industry is a singer/songwriter. I think that's the most obvious track ... as a big generalisation of what girls do in the music industry' (Katie). Singer/songwriters write their own material and play an instrument, and within rock discourse these traits connote autonomy and hence 'authenticity'. They suggest that the performer is in control and 'not just a pretty face'. In terms of the gaze: 'The woman player is clearly capable of at least attempting to control an alienated man-made object . . . The interruptive power of the instrument seriously detracts from the fullness of the intention to display . . . the sex-life of the woman instrumentalist is less suspect, and her display less susceptible to interpretation as a sexual invitation' (Green, 53). Non-student Helen confirmed this analysis by a negative example:

I've heard stories about people like Sharon O'Neill [popular NZ female singer] for example, having huge pressure put on her to not play an instrument ... in her music video because ... they just wanted to see a pretty

girl in a dress, and they don't want that impeded with an instrument in front of her.

The singer/songwriter genre also has a number of potentially negative connotations. For example, it is a predominantly acoustic genre. Acoustic instruments are seen as less technological, more 'natural' and therefore more acceptable for women (all of the female singer-songwriters played piano or acoustic guitar, and many of the female instrumentalists played violin). They are also less powerful and more difficult to amplify satisfactorily. Although acoustic instrumentation signals intimacy and folk sincerity, and thus a distance from pop triviality, the genre is often associated with confessional and emotional themes, which can be problematic: 'for a female singer/songwriter it would be, I think more OK for them to be expressing themselves emotionally, whereas some people might view a male singer/songwriter ... as being like a fag...'(Stuart, student). At Contact FM, the playlist has a genre category 'girly singer/songwriter' – there is no parallel category for men. The singer/songwriter is thus often identified with an emotional, confessional and hence feminine position (Echard, 48). Rock critics/historians often marginalize singer/songwriters, for example, 70s US West Coast 'soft rock', a genre in which female performers were prominent (Robins, 154; Gillett, 411).

[20] Female student singer/songwriters also reported practical difficulties, for example, communicating with male musicians:

The boys kind of band together when it's comfortable for them, like if there's something to ah, discuss they'll talk to one of the guys about it rather than talking to me, even though I'm in charge... I have to kind of go, hey, I'm in charge, what did you say sorry? And then we'll discuss it properly and then we'll get to add something cool to the music or something, and it's just beep (sic) y'know, they're people with good musical ideas, it's just that they automatically seem to find it more comfortable to start discussing it with a boy (Anita).

The perception of femininity as disruptive produces communication difficulties in musical practice, and women have to intervene in order to be 'heard'. Anita reported that when collaborating with male musicians, she got asked on a date, 'which was not part of the plan!' another instance of how women musicians get differential treatment. Another possibility is that male musicians resent being told what to do by a woman. In practice, the singer/songwriter role is complex. Women in control may be perceived as domineering and one female student, Roz, ironically affirms this: 'I'm too much of a diva to be in a band.' Broadly this suggests a peculiar pressure on women to 'go it alone' and the corresponding normality of male collectivity (ie the band) in musical performance. Moreover, in work situations such as touring, a band can offer a degree of support and companionship, whereas solo performers have to work in comparative isolation. And in performance the singer/songwriter also stands alone, thus still confirming the 'object' stereotype, although her instrument deflects the gaze to a degree.

Playing with men in bands

[21] Interviewer: Do you reckon music is a male bonding activity? Sort of similar to sport?

Michael: Yep. Definitely. I used to surf with a whole lot of guys and, we'd jump in the van with our surfboards and we'd go to Raglan [local beach] and we'd all jump out there and ... you'd be individual but you'd be ... sharing it

with your mates. As a DJ, five of us would go and play a gig, ah, an open air, something, um, be it Soundsplash in Raglan or a bonfire in Tauranga, we'd all jump in a van, instead of having surfboards we'd have crates of records ...

Although there were few male respondents to the survey, the above quote demonstrates the investment men can have in certain types of group music-making activity. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has theorized such male relationships as 'homosociality': a structure in which male-male relations are affirmed indirectly through pursuit of a common goal, such as work, playing sport or music (Sedgwick, 1-2). Such male collectivities are normative in the public domain. Accordingly, most women interviewed found playing in bands with men difficult. Reasons included communication problems (above), and a need to be 'better' to be accepted: 'It's almost like you have to kinda prove yourself a bit stronger beforehand' (Betty):

You definitely have to prove yourself a lot more ... playing in a metal band ... This year some of the ... other students actually saw our band play, and then after that I [got] a lot of offers to play on different people's recordings ... when they needed a bass player ... They obviously realised that I wasn't completely crap (Lauren)

A sense of being abnormal:

if you're in a band ... that's not normally classed as a feminine, thing to do I guess. So if you're trying to be like a rock, a rock musician as a girl, it doesn't often come across well in terms of what people would expect a girl to be like (Katie).

Women often complained that they didn't get a lot of feedback – it was a case of 'sink or swim': 'it's frustrating with men, you don't really get ... much recognition' (Lauren, student).

[22] A male perspective on women in bands is supplied by a non-student participant, Gene, who describes his four-piece band as indie/twee pop, a genre more likely to feature females than other rock genres. This respondent 'likes the sound of female vocals' and has recruited female members (usually playing keyboards). However, his most successful musical relationships with women have been as contributors rather than full members, for example, a classically trained pianist and vocalist (who could also play rock) but who is committed to her career as a concert pianist, and a local singer, who subsequently signed a record contract and moved to Australia. At one point the band had two female members, but this was not successful. Why? Neither had been in a band before, but more specifically, there were communication problems between male and female members. Gene sees himself as the band leader, (songwriter, main vocalist) and tends to discuss 'the band' in pragmatic terms, ie as necessary for the kind of sound he wants to make ('I've fired drummers'). He tends to communicate more fully with the long-time (male) members and decisions would often be made in a way that the women members felt excluded – they wanted more consultation. Gene reported that the women were reticent – 'What should I play?' was a frequent refrain. They 'lacked confidence' in their own abilities. 'A lot of approval was required to get anything done ... They were unwilling to take a risk.' He drew a contrast with what he regards as a more male approach of 'just doing stuff and perhaps checking afterwards if it was okay'. The ideal musician, in his view, was someone for whom 'no direction is required'. But the women expected feedback as a matter of course. When it didn't happen, they lost interest and gradually drifted away.

All-women bands

[23] Given the problems that women face with men making music, why don't they form all-women bands? Notably none of the female students had formed all-female bands, but some non-student women had. Pat observed that while many male bands have 'ego' problems, that is, an ongoing struggle for power between band members, attempts at female musical collectivities were hamstrung by 'the opposite of ego'. There was a lack of collective will, either to play music in the first place (a common statement was 'we looked for female members, but couldn't find any') or to do it systematically. Some women reported agreeing in principle but in practice 'people just didn't turn up' (Pat). That is, women routinely prioritized other activities over playing music. Of course, some women are caregivers, which means music-making has to be fitted around other commitments. Some women bands make it as far as the practice room, but never perform live. They fear that they will be found wanting, for their musicianship, or just for being women, and here the 'disruption' of female performance, located in the spectacle of their perceived sexuality, is a significant factor. A local all-women band (Handsome Jeffery, mentioned above) were judged as 'naff' and 'too pop' (Pat) by their peer group (they moved to Auckland). Pat suggested that women 'judge themselves by others' standards' and 'are used to deferring to others' impressions'. Another non-student respondent, June, started an all-woman group, but 'every decision was made communally and it drove me crazy ... In groups of men there will tend to be one person directing - the songwriter'. Of course, this assumes that songs are written by individuals, which is not always the case. Making popular music is usually collaborative – and involves other aspects than playing or writing, such as audio engineering.

Behind the desk – production and engineering

[24] Most popular music courses include a production component, that is, learning to record and mix music in the studio and/or live. Sound mixing is integral to popular music, and producers and engineers have a huge influence on the music. It is also an area of popular music where women have made few inroads. As Michael notes:

Any of the male influences that as a young male I might relate to, they always had photos of them working in the studio. Elton John. Pictures in the studio... Any of the female artists ... it's just a pretty picture of them on the front, maybe with an acoustic guitar. You'll never see a photo of them sitting behind a big desk.

Representations of women artists in the studio or behind the mixing desk are rare. The second problem is the normativity of men/technology link already discussed in relation to performing with electronic instruments. Clearly, the importance of technology is even greater in the engineer/producer's role, which is thus imagined as even more masculine. For many female students, studio technology/production was one area where they felt they could not compete:

I guess that the engineering, recording side, I don't know of any girls personally that have gone down that track ... it doesn't seem like there's a lot of interest from females in general in that area (Katie).

Males have a generally more technical mind than females (Lola).

Most of the girls ... go for more the songwriting side of things ... I guess that

was one area guys were better or more dominant in. ... they'd get mad if you had the rooms booked out ... Like they'd be a bit of a room hog, y'know (Julie).

The last response suggests that men not only thought they were better, but that they had more right to the studio. Julie also remarked:

I actually did quite well in the production classes and would get the highest marks ... I think the guys were worried that I would win the 'scholarship' where you get to use the studio after you finished the degree to record.

Another student stated:

When we started um, our course, and ... all the basics of the computers and recording on to y'know certain programs, most of the guys already had like a handle on it. And I don't know where they got that experience from or they might just be more that way inclined, to ask about mechanical kind of things like that. But I noticed all the girls had no idea and we had to learn from scratch... (Heather)

As such, a female sound engineer is an even more unusual sight than a female musician: 'A few tough musicians ... didn't like the fact that I was female ... a lot of the bands that I've met, they've never, never had a female sound engineer' (Lola). Helen, a singer/songwriter, reported being treated patronizingly by sound engineers:

I get the feeling that they expect me to be completely ignorant about technical matters and I'm not ... Sometimes I've felt that it's harder to get engineers to give me a really ballsy sound on my guitar, because they expect that I will just be plucking away at it. Often I think too that they mix the voice and the guitar differently because they don't understand ... or they expect me just to do twinkly ballads.

So sound engineers can also impose their expectations of what a woman performer should sound like. Some women students felt they were able to 'master' studio engineering, however, and their reasons are interesting:

I think within the production classes I actually did quite well because I'd do my assignments ... exactly how they were supposed to be done, whereas the guys were a bit more experimental with working on other things of their own (Julie).

These remarks lead us towards a consideration of learning styles and gender.

Learning styles

[25] Green also reports on teachers' perceptions of gendered differences in abilities and learning styles. Girls excel in areas like notation and classwork (198). Boys are seen as more confident with technology, because of its 'hands-on' approach. However, the female student above suggests that this did not necessarily lead to better grades, because the men failed to follow the brief. The women preferred a more formal style:

The doing stuff and kind of learning from watching, um, suited them (the men), whereas some of us girls were kind of ... we ... did well at school, most of us, and, um I think we learn better from that kind of ... studying and books

and stuff like that ... The guys just jump in and um, just learn from their mistakes, which I find really frustrating 'cos I like to plan stuff ... I think girls tend to be a little bit more um, organized (Roz).

In Green's study, boys' failure to do well in formal learning situations was interpreted as being due to laziness or carelessness, hence identifying the possibility that they 'couldn't be bothered' (198, 213). Some boys stated that their failure was their own choice, because they were tested (in their view) on the 'wrong' music (that is, not the music they were interested in) (212). At Wintec, many students (mostly male) drop out of the course because they fail music theory.

Most of the males I know have sort of been tutored outside of high school, or taught themselves. And then when they ... decide to be in the music industry, they need to get those music qualifications or those skills (Michael).

In contrast, women students excelled in a more formal and structured environment. They were more likely to have learned music formally; for example, to have classical training. Green writes that women musicians often find classical music more accommodating (185). Classical music degrees in NZ have more female students.

I've just recently met a girl who's done the Wintec course, she's a solo mother of two, and she is now studying at University doing a classical course up there, or orchestral course or something like that, ah and she's a music teacher now (Michael).

... if you're still into music by the time you finish high school, as a chick I think you go to, you know you go to ... classical school (Roz).

[26] Women students at Wintec are also more likely to complete the course than men, but the consensus was that teaching was the most likely career path for them. Whether this means they are more likely to participate in popular music performance subsequently seems uncertain, although it should be noted that many non-student women playing music in the Hamilton live scene are likely to have higher education, and often formal training. Is this because such formal qualifications are useful for popular music performers? I would question whether the ability to read and write music is particularly relevant in a domain that mainly relies on and values oral, improvisatory, mnemonic and technological skills, rather than following written scores. Academic studies have questioned the relevance of formal musical training and analysis to popular music (McClary and Walser). But perhaps qualifications may reassure women that they have won the 'right' to perform, whereas for men this right is taken for granted. It also suggests that working-class women are unlikely to perform original music.

[27] Almost all students were positive about studying music at Wintec, although some felt that the course would be improved by having female tutors (at present there are none). There was only one example of explicit sexism by a tutor:

[a music] theory tutor once ... asked me why I wasn't doing dishes (laughs) that why was I making up riffs when I should be in the kitchen (Lauren).

Some said that a female tutor might be more understanding of female students. One had an interesting summary of the overall relevance of learning to 'real life':

The impression that I've got so far from commercial music courses so far anyway, is that they tend to be focused on the creative and developmental and technical side of things, rather than your appearance as a performer, or how sexual or non-sexual you are on stage and things like that, so I personally haven't seen evidence that courses do attend to those kind of issues (Caroline).

Looking back it would've been really nice to take a course on, a paper on you know, female, females in the music industry or, new feminism or something like that (Roz).

On the one hand, this suggests that such courses shelter students from issues around gender and performance, which might be good insofar as it allows them to develop certain kinds of abilities, but there is also the underlying suggestion that 'out there' these issues might become more important. I would interpret this as suggesting that the music course could include more contextual material – becoming a musician is not simply (as one music tutor suggested to me informally) 'learning a trade'.

Disabling factors

[28] Applying Lucy Green's critical theory model to a case study confirms her analysis in many respects. Femininity is perceived as disruptive to musical performance in a number of ways. Women perceive themselves and are perceived as 'out of place' in popular music courses, performing onstage especially in rock bands, and in many genres of popular music. And as a minority amongst popular musicians, they are seen as exceptional, both in the sense of being unusual, but also in the sense that they have to 'prove' themselves to their male peers. Woman's musical performances, and representations of the same, are judged by different standards to men. The female performer, subject to the gaze, is judged on her appearance and perceived sexuality rather than her musical ability. Her body 'gets in between' the audience and the music. And the more sexually attractive she is, the more her musical ability is called into question. A binary opposition associates woman with body, voice, sex and nature, and man with mind, instrument and technology. The dissociation of masculinity from the body makes it impersonal or gender neutral, and hence normative in relation to music: 'music being played' as opposed to 'women playing music'. The gaze also acts to restrict the range of female musical performance and consequently the genres with which women are identified. Women musicians are caught between the world of pop, with its emphasis on appearance and perceived lack of 'seriousness', and rock, which has more artistic credibility, but is also fiercely guarded as a bastion of male supremacy (one reason perhaps why so few males volunteered). The singer/songwriter role negotiates between these two extremes, and is a possible compromise, although in practice 'going solo' means foregoing the companionship and support that a band may supply.

[29] One could argue that if women have issues with performance and the gaze, they might be better off in 'behind-the scenes' roles such as sound engineering and production. However, few women are attracted to these roles, which suggests that the gaze is only part of the story. Attitudes to technology are also significant. I have already suggested that representations of gender tend to associate men with technical mastery and women with voice and body, but the question remains as to why this should be so, or how it plays out in practice. Learning styles provide one example – women seemed to be more at ease in formal learning situations, whereas men preferred hands-on, or practical learning. More specifically, experimenting or tinkering, with a novel technology for example, is seen as a

male domain. Green makes a parallel point about classroom situations where boys 'break the rules', citing the view that 'it is *because* boys play wrong notes that they achieve pleasing results' (200). Male transgression is justified, but 'this ... harnessing of misbehaviour to creativity is denied to girls' (190-91). Green's point is that masculine deviance confirms hegemony. Another way of interpreting this, however, is that the women are more 'careful' than the men, more sensitive to the possibility that something might go wrong or get broken. Again this might be because, as a minority, women feel that they are 'on trial'. But it could also be linked to a more general sensitivity about how interaction with people or things colours or affects the environment, a contrast between an instrumental ('what can I get this technology to do?') and a more circumspect approach ('what are the possible consequences of my actions?').

If there is a drum kit in the room a woman will sit there tapping quietly for a while, then once she's comfortable will start playing them but ... a man will come along and kick her off before she can have a good go, and proceed to smash the shit out of them (Betty, non-student).

Men tend to do what they want and they take more risks whereas women seem to be more worried or frightened of taking risks and they have family commitments (Mary, non-student).

These ideas are also relevant to more general considerations about gendered styles of interaction. Men are quick to condemn what they see as 'female passivity' whereas women highlight issues of communication and responsiveness – we could say that men tend towards an 'act first, ask questions later' model, whereas for women the reverse holds.

[30] Women viewed themselves as more concerned about preserving and looking after things, whereas they saw men as both 'looser' (more experimental) and more driven. The women argued that they were more sensitive to the environment they were operating in, including emotional atmosphere:

When they (the men) have a problem they um, they might get moody about it and stop talking about it ... And ... they kinda like change the atmosphere of the room. And you notice the girls will get quite affected by the atmosphere changing, and the boys notice but they just shut up... And you notice that the girls probably get over it a little bit slower than the guys ... [Men are] not quite as affected by the relationship aspect of that and they're not quite affected by the emotional aspect a lot of the time (Anita).

The women pick up on the environmental affect more readily than the men. Although this is useful knowledge, it is not necessarily valued in the world of commercial popular music production, where a goal-oriented, task-specific mentality tends to prevail. To the extent that the band is a normatively homosocial setting, acknowledgement of emotion is weakness. Male collectivities are often hierarchically organised, and in such a context, leadership tends to be associated with the ability to achieve a result by whatever means necessary, not through 'caring' about participants. But at the same time, public endeavours such as (male) rock bands depend ultimately on support networks of caregivers and other agents (usually female) who remain largely invisible.

[31] Gender theory based around the gaze envisions gender as essentially a public performance. It emphasises the ways that femininity is defined by the gaze, and the ways that men avoid or control it. This has led some (eg

Lacan) to theorise that femininity is essentially a masquerade, or an effect of a symbolic system (Rose, 43). But if there is a public sphere, there is also a private sphere. Or to put it another way, femininity is not exhausted by its public manifestations. It may be that aspects of femininity are not fully recognizable in the public sphere, but that does not mean they do not exist. There is something that exists 'beyond the gaze'. At the very least, the gaze is too monolithic a theory to cover all situations and experiences. Another point here is that critical theory identifies problems, but cannot always suggest an alternative, other than addressing the problem. For example, the association of technology with men can be seen as a source of male power which excludes women. But it is also possible to 'reverse the discourse', as Foucault would say, and view women's renunciation of technology as powerful. Similarly female 'passivity' can be re-envisioned as a source of strength. We will see examples of this.

Enabling factors

[32] Student responses to this question tended to focus on issues of teaching and publicity for the course. Some students stated that female tutors would be helpful. Reasons included role-modelling and the idea that a female tutor might be more sympathetic. Some students from girls' schools stated that little attempt was made to promote Wintec music courses there. Within the course itself, the focus on technical skills and industry training could be usefully supplemented with more contextual material that encourages students to look at music-making from a broader perspective, including approaches like gender (I have recently introduced a new paper, Popular Music Culture, which addresses such issues). Most women respondents identified home and family environmental factors as important to their interest in music. Commonly cited was a parent, usually the mother, as providing encouragement or role modeling. At least half the respondents mentioned church. Most had some formal music education, whereas male students were less likely to have had such training. The few male respondents tended to cite other factors such as peer group, musical preference and public rather than private role models – ie 'rock stars'. The rock band represents a kind of male collectivity that is normative in the public arena, goal-oriented and instrumental. For women the goal may be less important and they may be more attentive to the state of relations between members. 'Women experience that they are something for themselves by being something for others, while men experience that they are something for others by being something for themselves' (Borchgrevink and Holter, 7-8, 1-16). The suggestion is that for women 'taking care' of relationships may be important, and that women may understand agency in a way that is related less to public life and more to a 'family situation' (Holter). This may seem essentialist, but Holter's point is not that men and women are different, but rather that each sphere has different modes of practice. Of course there is a power imbalance between them, but at the same time, following Foucault, power does not operate unilaterally.

[33] Gustav Holter discusses how modernity has engendered a 'split' between private and public spheres, which relates to:

gender as expression of the whole relationship between the spheres of production and reproduction. Industrial capitalism itself 'engendered' its opposite, the world of domesticity as against the world of wage work, and women as the other of men. Modern gender ... emerges as a highly abstract system, a value system, yet posited as value's opposite (102).

Gender produces and is produced by the public/private distinction. Critical theory tends to view the bourgeois family and associated gender discourses

as produced by capitalism, but Holter, describing being invited into a home to look at the family photo album, emphasises rather how the domestic family scene invokes a different epistemology to the public sphere: 'As I look at the album I am aware that ... My way of thinking should be different from how I think at work, in a sense non-modernistic, and not bureaucratic, market-oriented or scientific' (106) but rather 'a centripetal process, a movement towards a centre. I may think of lines moving into, and out of this centre. The movement may also be termed "*prismatic*"' (110). What this family centre consists of, he suggests, is a kind of collective identity to which all the 'I's' contribute – 'the whole relationship between the us and the I's is connective ... the I's are not positions defined by themselves, isolated and opposed, as in exchange relations where the one reflects the value of the other. Rather each refracts the whole and thereby expresses and extends the whole' (110).

[34] Popular music, although apparently operating in a public sphere, nevertheless draws much of its power from its potential to create a private shared space of collectivity, an intimacy between performers and audience, ideally erasing the distinction altogether (Frith, 28). At the same time, normative discourses around rock practice can tend to emphasise a 'job-like', realistic and individualistic mode of engagement. There seems to be a contradiction between this kind of 'realistic' rhetoric and the utopian goal of collectivity, which is thus relegated to the realms of mysticism and magic (Toynbee, x-xiii, 37). But there is nothing mystical about the creation of collectivity; it only seems that way because of the gendered division of public and private spaces. Women's association with the private sphere may give them greater investment and practical accomplishment in the production of 'togetherness'. The metaphor of 'refraction' is relevant in the sense that it could describe not a 'reflective' looking at or looking through, but a looking around and looking after other participants. In the following I consider how women musicians participating in local scenes have developed alternative strategies that draw on or extend models of collective musical identity.

Alternative strategies

[35] Women respondents had a range of strategies for participating in music, which include alternative forms of participation (ie not just playing music, but creating or perpetuating the scene in other ways). For example, Pat is not only a musician, but also a photographer of music events, and has been running an image-based local live music website for several years. At the 'battle of the bands' there were a number of women photographers, including her, taking photos of the (all-male) acts. Given that it is usually the female form that is objectified, it could be argued that female photographers are taking back a measure of power by objectifying men. However, it can also be argued that the website creates local music as a community, by providing a forum in which individuals, bands and audience members can see themselves recognized as contributors to a collective identity.

[36] A second method is to challenge the dominant modes of performance, for example the normativity of technological mediation (using amplification). June got back into music (after playing violin in a rock band) through her association with theatre, and now leads two bands, both instrumental ensembles comprising only acoustic instruments – bass, guitar and violins – playing folk and jazz. She feels that amplification is a barrier and values interactivity or 'synergy' between audience and performer. 'I'm always after that thing which happens when the band feels joined and the audience is... on the same tangent. ... I've never felt comfortable with amplifiers, sound desks ... they're a dilution.' Accordingly she is also suspicious of recording: 'I don't like the way that one version gets stuck in time because of my focus on

the live aspect.' Many of the women instrumentalists interviewed played violin. This may reflect the classical background of a lot of women players. Ideologically, the violin is a 'suitable' instrument for women – it is small and light, usually acoustic and its generic associations (in the popular realm) are generally with folk or country. It might be said then to be 'marginal' to popular music, but this marginality can also be utilized discursively as a strategy to produce music that presents an implicit challenge to modern technological modes of making and listening.

[37] Although we have discussed the problems that women face in forming and participating in bands, some (non-student participants) do play in mainly female groups that seem to be successful collaborations. The essential difference seems to be that in these (two) cases, the participants were friends before they started a band. Wanda: 'We were a group of friends and all have that background of singing in church and none of us were involved anymore, we used to like the fact that we were in a group singing together.' Minette formed a band with a French friend: 'She is like my sister ... I know her well.' Both reported that in their bands, members had equal status. 'No one feels so accomplished that they would bring a whole song' (Wanda). Different members had different strengths: 'some are better at lyrics ... they think of musical ideas but they can't really translate it to an instrument, so me and [male band member] do that' (Wanda). Of course, bands of men may draw on existing friendships as well, but it is hardly a precondition for their formation.

[38] Another factor is the role of the church, or more particularly non-traditional charismatic churches in which bands, microphones and amplification on the one hand, and audience participation on the other, are normal (a number of students also mentioned church as a formative influence):

Music is part of church culture ... as a singer you gain confidence ... people not involved in churches don't get those opportunities ... Now I look back at it, I was learning a lot of performance skills (Wanda).

I learnt a lot through church 'cause there's bands where they play a lot of rock music and soft rock and ... you can learn a lot of the skills through practically doing that (Anita).

The role of religious worship in popular music has been discussed extensively in relation to African-American culture, but here it empowers women performers (Werner, 11-15). The communal aspect of church performance is emphasised – it's not just about performing to an audience (with the concomitant connotations of gaze, judgment etc.): 'because of the context (of worship) you have this attitude of learning songs but of then being open to things happening, listening to what's happening in a dynamic' (Wanda). So it's also about learning to participate in a larger musical ensemble, and some have suggested that it is the creation and management of such 'participatory discrepancies' in collective situations which supplies popular musical performance with much of its meaning and power (Keil and Feld, 96).

[39] In modern society, communal music-making opportunities are rare – music is mainly consumed as a commodity rather than made by a community. This is not to say that consumption cannot be creative or communal, but commodification has undoubtedly resulted in musical production being regarded as a specialized skill, rather than an everyday form of interaction and communication (a tendency that tertiary courses in

popular music do nothing to dispel). Obviously popular culture does provide opportunities for consumers to become producers, as in subcultures. But subcultural discourse has frequently been criticized for the way that it tends to highlight masculine, public performance (McRobbie). The significance of church is that it provides a kind of intermediary space between the private and public spheres, and this is important for marginalized social groups. Such spaces are arguably at a premium in modern society.

Conclusion

[40] There are many discursive similarities between the experiences of students and non-students in the ways that they seem to construct masculinity and femininity as 'essentially' different. In part, this was driven by the kinds of questions we asked and the initial theoretical perspective of the study. However, this perspective began to change when we discovered how non-students, being older and arguably wiser, found various ways of negotiating and working with these perceived differences. Both groups identify problems, but the non-students have evolved more strategies to deal with them. In this they exemplify Foucault's dictum that to 'to resist is not simply a negation but a creative process' (Halperin 60). For the students, understandably, the key issue is how to 'make it' in a male-dominated world, but for the non-students, notions of commercial success are subordinate to the question of how to continue making music, which becomes an end in itself, rather than a means.

[41] These considerations revealed another flaw in my initial premises, the emphasis on public performance, which does not take into account all forms of music-making. Women's musical performance can be enabled by the creation or use of intermediary spaces between private and public spheres, or by situations in which private sphere values can be enacted or employed as an implicit challenge to ideas of masculine 'public performance'. These practices have consequences both for existing theoretical descriptions of how musical agents engage with popular music on the one hand and normative notions of industry commercial success on the other, both of which focus on individuals (Toynbee, ix-xii, 34-42). In contrast, a key theme in the non-student's accounts is communal participation. 'Musical community' can be articulated in various ways – within the performing group, between performers and audience (or challenging that distinction itself) or in terms of a broader sense of solidarity with a community or shared culture. Within performing groups, many women emphasized the quality of relationships between participants as a key enabling factor – in plain language, they played music with their friends. They had a pre-existing relationship with other participants, and music-making was by implication a shared expression of that common bond. They didn't become friends through playing music – they played music through being friends. This might seem a commonplace idea, that music is an expression of friendship or solidarity, but the women gave it a different twist by making the quality of relationship prior to and a precondition for music, rather than the other way round.

[42] Other non-students argued that playing acoustic music was a way of attempting to abolish the performer/audience distinction, a kind of 'folk' discourse that attempts to minimize mediation, and thus escapes normative definitions of musical performance. Of course, many media scholars would argue that all musical performance is mediated, and that it's at most a matter of degree (an acoustic instrument or a voice is a medium just like electronic amplification or a recording). But to what degree does talk of music as a medium presume the very alienation of performer and listener that participation could subvert – ie what happens when 'everybody sings along'? What about the bodily or emotional interactions that could occur in

communal musical participation? The suggestion here is that women's music-making can challenge existing ideas about music as a medium, mediating between a subject and an object, or a performer and audience. Another response might be that men need to take more responsibility for recognizing the importance of communal context, through becoming more emotionally literate and aware of the ways that public endeavour is always based on an 'invisible' background of (private) support networks. The question then changes from one of how women's participation in musical performance can be increased to one of how it can be more effectively recognized.

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