Girl Meets Music Business

A qualitative research of how it is to be female in the Pop Culture off the twenty-first century.

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Introduction

Background for choosing this assignment:

The distribution of power in the music business has been a hot topic for several decades. From the riots in the 80s to the "girl power" slogan entering in the late 90s, the music business has been sort of a forefront for much of the gender battle.   The examples that's been stated by female musicians has no doubt been of serious consequences for the next generation growing up with these idols.

The year 2014 is often categorized as the year the feminism came back into the pop music. It was known by female artists dominating the hit lists and newsfeeds, but it was also the year where the girls in the music business did great things in the *spirit* of feminism. This was the first year where *all* top 5 songs on "Billboard 100s-list" where performed by female artists, and where the placement stood steady for six(!) weeks. In 1984 there were only 4 women on "Billboard 100" in a *whole* year, and that says quite a lot about the development over the past couple years.

Maybe one would think now that the equality in the music business is set, but this can be very much discussed. While there are now plenty of female singers, who are fighting their way on to the hit lists, the majority of the people working *behind* the scenes are still male (66%). Why is this?

In the last months of 2014 there were also more hidden "victories" amongst female artists, for example Taylor Swift`s magazine covers where she was portrayed without any kind of sexification but rather powerful and proud. The newspapers called this portraiture the portraiture often associated with *men*. Many people have argued and asked questions why the photos of female artists and the photos of male artists should be different. Aren`t they in the same profession, and to some extent sharing the same values?

Gender balance can only be achieved by education, and isn't it true that much of our education and knowledge, right or wrong, we perceive from the pop culture?

It is after all the things we perceive about our selves and others by looking on screens and miming texts on songs we love, and thereafter the standards for behavior we set based on these elements combined, that shapes us.

This paper enlighten the development of gender balance throughout the decades, and based on in-depth interviews tries to get a hold on what the situation is like today and with that discuss possible changes that should be made.

Even though there have been victories, one can clearly see that gender is still a hot topic in the cultural industries. When one read about it from media one can often get another impression, maybe even a "glossy" image of what the reality is. I therefore think it will be interesting to research on gender balance in the music industry, from the *inside.*

In this Master assignment I want to take a look at the distribution power inside the music business, along a gender dimension.

Questions I would like to research are amongst;

How does the music industry *really* relate to gender differences?
What importance does gender differences attribute in the music business, and what kind of consequences does it get?
How is the pop music able to unite the female part of the society, and strengthen their battle for gender equality?

Exploitation and Marxist theory

There is no doubt that there is a tendency in society to neglect the exploitation that goes on in the cultural labor, as well as the other labors of work. Examples of these beliefs are portrayed in the two books: *"The Politics of Cultural Work"* (Banks, 2007) and *"Nice Work If You Can Get It"* (Ross, 2009), where the word "exploitation" is hardly mentioned.

It is much due to Marxist theory that the word "exploitation" has been known. The classic Marxist view of exploitation is that it is a result of ownership by the capitalist class of the means of production.

They mean that the workers are compelled to labor too be able to survive, because they lack the means of production, and capitalists extract the leftover that they generate.

Karl Marx was in his time setting principles bound to govern the distribution of welfare under the socialism and communism, principles that saw distribution to each person according to their work and needs. Exploitation was then occurring when these two factors weren`t meeting, when the receiver was not receiving according to their work or needs.

An important issue when dealing with these issues is the question about how we can know capitalist exploitation when we see it? In other words, how do we differ exploitation from simple oppression?

"Erik Olin Wright has argued that exploitation in its Marxian sense is based on three principles. First, exploitation in its Marxist sense occurs when the material welfare of one class is causally dependent upon the material deprivation of another. The capitalist class in modern societies could not exist without the deprivations of the working classes. Second, such casual dependence depends in turn on the exclusion of workers from key productive resources, especially property. Third, the mechanism through which both these features (causal dependence and

exclusion) operate is appropriation of the labour of the exploited. "
(Hesmondhalgh, 2015, p4)

This means that if only the first *two* occurs it is simply oppression. For exploitation (according to Marxian theory) the third one also has to take place. This also works the other way around; if only the third occurs it is only oppression, because both causal dependence and exclusion must be present, as well as the appropriation.

A common way of thinking about exploitation is thinking about threatening of people`s autonomy. This can however be criticized. One of the reasons for this is that even the most socialist world, if it ever would exist such a thing, would sometimes need its citizens to do things they didn`t want to do, and to make sacrifices in the cause of the common good.

This way the case of autonomy provides a very *unstable* basis for the battle against exploitation.

"Instead, Cohen argues, capitalist labour exploitation is unjust primarily because it involves essentially forced and unreciprocated flows of products from workers to capitalists, which derive from the primary cause of an unjustly unequal distribution of resources, where some people (capitalists) own the means of production and others (workers) don`t. " (Hesmondhalgh, 2015, p5)

Cohen is here of great help in specifying Marxian exploitation, but he misses to *differentiate* the different degrees of exploitation that can exist. Rather he focuses more on the abstract principles.

Hesmondhalgh thinks that a *broader* conception, which also brings in the more everyday sense of unjust advantages, might help us further down the road of battle against exploitation. He writes in his article that exploitation is a word with *great* moral force, but must be handled with care;

"While the Marxian tradition offers important insights into the systemic basis of exploitation, it needs to be conjoined to a more ordinary notion of what really matters about people`s working lives: whether they contribute to our efforts to thrive, or prevent us from doing so." (Hesmondhalgh, 2015)

This idea leads us to exploitation as a *system of unjust advantage and suffering.* In his writing about exploitation in media work, Hesmondhalgh uses the "middle ground" definition of new media workers. On the narrow one is the "core" media workers who actively produces, and on the broad one is absolutely everyone involved in any way. The "middle ground" however, is defined in these words;

"A "middle ground" definition would embrace workers whose work is affected by the fact that it makes a significant contribution to products that are conventionally defined as "media" – communication products such as television programmes, films, newspapers, periodicals, books, musical recordings and so on. "
(Hesmondhalgh, 2015, p7)

The media industry has *always* depended upon the labor production of consumer products, and the production process has often taken place in poor conditions. Now that the electronic industry has *grown* hugely, been global spread, and the media itself has been to a larger degree computerized and digitalized, the media is even *more* depending on the labor production of the workers.

Along with the rise of profit opportunities for the investors in the sector, the already poor conditions in the production labor then seems to be getting worse. Foxconn`s suicide state has helped drawing attention to this problem. Foxconn is a Taiwanese company that produces components for media companies like for instance Apple and Microsoft.

On the homepage for CBS News it states: *"In 2010, 18 employees making iPhones and iPads at the Foxconn factory in China attempted suicide."* (Heffernan, 2013)

The news struck like lightening, and was given much focus in the press, especially centered in on the Apple`s part in all this. The employees was said to be driven to suicide because of the extremely poor conditions, and there was also rumors of a massive protest where several hundred Chinese workers gathered on the roof threatening to jump if their salary didn`t improve immediately.

The electronics industry responded to this by stepping up its efforts at auditing suppliers as part of "corporate social responsibility" initiatives. But their results were limited and there was a strong sense that these efforts were not so much driven by interest in the workers lives, as they were of public relations agendas.

"In an industry where practically all production is outsourced to suppliers, and the company whose name appears on the final product is mainly involved in design, marketing and branding, the name and location of supplier factories is almost never publicly revealed, making independent auditing and journalistic investigation extremely difficult. Working hours routinely flout flaws, regulations and outsourcing company guideline, and there is routine falsification of records to comply with codes of conduct. There is also a massive use of agencies, resulting in widespread precariousness, and the creation of armies of "perma temps". Workers are hardly integrated into inspection regimes at all." (Hesmondhalgh, 2015, p8)

Research shows that the poor working conditions are often also linked to the companies bad influence on the environment, whereas many workers has suffered severe health problems due to the exposure of toxic materials. Several reviews shows that a lot of the health risks taken by the workers are a result of the massive use of chemicals, that are made worse by the lack of safety standards and union protection at their working facilities.

The way that power inequalities takes place on multiple levels, is by social theorists refereed to as *Intersectionality.* Hesmondhalgh characterizes the persons that often suffers from these poor conditions as:

- Members of the peasantry
- Women

- Countries of the global south
- Based in factories in Europe and North America that uses "non-white" migrant labor.

However, there are of course both men, and white working-class people suffering the same.

Exploitation as *unjust advantage and suffering* in these kinds of circumstances seems undoubtedly clear. The capitalist owners not only gain advantage due to unequal resources (as in Cohen`s description), but also because the workers are in a situation where they have little or *no choice* but to keep on working in those conditions, either because they are unaware of the conditions before they start or because they are in lack to seek better work other places.

The Marxian concept of exploitation helps us understand how and why such an affair can exist. But what about workers that are *further down* the "value chain" – people that aren`t involved in fabrication but rather in symbolic and knowledge work, like for instance music?

Exploitation in the Music Industry

"A considerable body of research has developed over the last fifteen years that provides evidence of such conditions via ethnography and other forms of sustained fieldwork among media, cultural and IT workers. Common themes are overwork and associated emotions of anxiety and powerlessness, and high levels of risk and uncertainty, often summarized as precariousness or "precarity"." (Hesmondhalgh, 2015, p 10)

An interesting fact is that many of the workers in symbolic industries are middle class and highly educated people. So how can they be categorized as *exploited* at the same level as the previously discussed? It can be clear to say that there is *less* exploitation going on here, than in the industry with productions and toxic materials, especially due to the fact that there are other things there are likely to be less suffering amongst on the part of symbol workers.

"Nevertheless, the research on (media, cultural and digital) symbolic and technical work (...) provides considerable evidence of problematic conditions that are systematically poor in advancing the well-being of most of those involved. There is real misery here, alongside better experiences, in a complex mesh of good and bad". (Hesmondhalgh, 2015, p11)

The music industry if often glorified by being about "sex, drugs and rock`n roll", and one can see how this from the outside must seem alluring. In comparison with other labors of work, this must seem highly cool, creative and fun.

However, the glossy image that teens have of the wanted "popstar-life" has proven to be not so accurate. In the article written by Rosalind Gill called *"Cool, creative and egalitarian? Exploring gender in project-based new media work in Europe" (Gill, 2002),* the following is being said about the media`s presentation of the cultural industry;

"The work itself is seen as creative and autonomous and working environments and relationships as relaxed and non-hierarchical. When new media businesses are shown on television the now standard tropes of representation include a trendy warehouse setting in the cultural quarter of a city, a group of young people coded as "diverse" (male, female, black, white, gay, straight) and as "creative" (untidy, chaotic, obsessive), who work long and unusual hours (e.g. getting up at lunchtime and working through the night) and relate to each other in a casual and informal manner." (Gill, 2002, p4)

This view on the cultural industry/music industry is shared among the general public, and new workers inside the business actually states the dynamism, informality and youth that was presented too them, were some of the main reasons they were attracted to the business.

But despite this image, the truth says otherwise, and can categorize the music industry as being stuck in old-fashioned patterns (especially when it comes to gender), low payments and insecurity.

The conditions in the music industry effects everyone working there, from the musician to the technician behind the scenes. With different roles also comes different needs and demands, and in a business where a lot of jobs are overlapping each other, the music industry seems to be hard to categorize and therefore problematic.

The prefiguring workers in the music business

Since the music business is highly connected to the technological developments, that has over the past few years spawned new fields of work and given birth to a whole new range of practitioners, it is given much attention. However, little attention has been given to the *working conditions* in the industry.

There are several reasons why this area is of such an importance to investigate. One reason is that a group of workers in a new industry and a rapidly changing technological environment can be seen as "the forefront" of the new economy.

"Most importantly, however is that they represent the future of work. As the notion of the "career" and even of stable, full-time employment, goes into decline, new media workers represent what Manuel Castells (1996;2000) calls "self-programmable labour", involved not in discrete jobs but in multiple projects. In the "brave new world of work", Beck (2000) argues, insecure, informal and discontinuous employment will become the norm, with more and more individuals encouraged to construct themselves as "me and company" selling their skills and services in the marketplace." (Gill, 2002, p6)

In other words, what new media worker`s experience *today,* will be the norm for what the rest of the workers experience *tomorrow.*

According to Fernando Flores and John Gray (Flores & Gray, 1999) there has developed two different forms of working life – a wired form and an entrepreneurial form. Many lives are however *both*, and the new media workers are a perfect example of this.

"Instead of making a lifelong commitment to the profession, vocation or mode of working, wired people simply run with any of their several talents or inspirations. They may do this serially or all at once as portfolio workers. In this ideal, they may spend seven years of their adult lives as engineers, then go to business school and become consultants for another seven years, then buy into a winery and turn their full-time attention to that, and so forth" (Flores & Gray, 1999, p22)

But rather than seeing this as some sort of "mini-careers", Flores and Gray means that the new model of work is based on the wish to express *several* talents, rather than offering a means of grounding ones identity.

Other names for the wired portfolio workers are "the Independents" However, there are some striking features when it comes to previous writings on these workers, and that is the very celebratory tone and the tendency of presenting the entrepreneurism as some kind of medicine for all ills.

This is however not the case, whereas this kind of writing fails to address the *problems* the project based life also brings with it.
"As Ulrich Beck (2000) has put it in a slightly different context, insecurity may be "discursively sweetened" by the rhetoric of independent entrepreneurial individualism, but it remains insecurity nonetheless." (Gill,2002, p9)

Independency or Insecurity:
The music industry may seem alluring with its flexible working hours, youth, and the connection between this work and other youth subcultures. There is no doubt that the workers love what they do, and enjoy enormous satisfaction from their work in an informal setting.

The independence is possibly a great factor in them selecting their profession, whereas they get to work in the way they want. But while independency often is positively loaded, insecurity (or an individualization of risk) tells the other part of the story;

"On the one hand, individuals must become entirely self governing and must beat the costs of all their training and professional development, of insurance, Social Security, sick pay, maternity leave, etc. They must also take responsibility for finding future work and for managing gaps between projects. " (Gill, 2002, p18)

The workers are surely taking huge insecurity risks in the business, which must lead to a lot of stress and anxiety. Anxieties about finding enough work, not knowing when or where the next contract will come from, stress about getting it wrong or only been giving one chance – all which they have to manage on their own in the spirit of self-governing.

In a work of field where the workers are to this big degree self-autonomous, one can quite frankly state that they are all highly technically literate and possess a lot of different skills. In fact, research shows that the workers in the new media sector are among the most highly educated workers in the western economies.

But despite the high level of educations, there are also stark differences in the *female* and the *male* experiences of the new media work.

Gender differences:
Gill means that there also seems to be stark differences in the male and female technological possibilities, starting from way back to the school-bench;

"The reported differences started at school, with women claiming much fewer opportunities to use computers, and describing situations in which boys "took over" the I.T. facilities, often intimidating female teachers (…) Inequalities persisted once women entered the field of new media – even when they had equivalent levels of I.T. skills to their male contemporaries. Women got significantly fewer of the work

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contracts, and those which they got were often for public sector or voluntary organizations rather than with commercial organizations (which went disproportionally to men)." (Gill, 2002, p19-20)

The idea of artists working through the night, may not be of *pure* love to their job, but rather on tight deadlines and the fact that they have to combine several projects at one time to be able to earn their living. When the women get to work on fewer projects than men, they also earn less money, and many women therefore find themselves becoming part-time workers in their field because they are simply obligated to seek earnings elsewhere as well.

"The low incomes most were earning from new media work meant that all but a few of the workers surveyed were supplementing their income with other kinds of work." (Gill, 2002, p16)

Exclusivity and Informality:
When there is a big absence of clear criteria's for evaluating work and securing new contacts, the process is often chained to the "old boys network". The informality then leads to that getting new contracts is determined more by *"who* you know" rather than *"what* you know".

"Even within the more mainstream, stable parts of high.tech industries contracts are increasingly offered to those who have informal connections to the company or who are recommended by an insider." (Gill, 2002, p19)

This challenges the meritocratic and egalitarian view of the new media industry, whereas job offers simply are given on the basis of informal connections rather than free competition.

If the employment- process is being judged from referrals over resumes, this is crucial, especially in companies where e.g. women are in a minor number in the higher positions. Of course it disadvantages many men as well as women, but women are often more likely to be effected due to clubby atmosphere.

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"Informality caused problems for some women across a range of experiences: working with men in male dominated teams e.g. inappropriate sexualized interactions, sexist assumptions, Laddish culture (cf. Tierney, 1995; Devine, 1992); the absence of clear criteria for evaluating work; and above all, in relation to finding and securing new contacts." (Gill, 2002, p20)

With all this in mind, the music business doesn`t seem cool, diverse and creative, but rather closed, exclusive and tradition-based.

"One woman summed this up graphically. Having been initially attracted by the informal and hierarchical nature of the field, she spoke wistfully and nostalgically to us about formal and rigidly hierarchical organizations in which the structures of status and authority are clear, and criteria for hiring and promotion are transparent and publicly available: "Give me a formal hierarchy anyday over the fake democracy and pseudo-equality of this work!"" (Gill, 2002, p21)

Flexibility

The flexibility of new media work may also not be as rose red as one would think. With flexibility one expects some control over when, where and how long one wants to work, but research shows that the flexibility is more controlled by the needs of the project itself.

"Many projects had extremely tight deadlines (which workers had to agree to meet in order to get the contract) and these necessitated intense round-the-clock working for a short period, which might then be followed by several weeks with no (new media) work at all. This pattern was the norm for workers in this study and has been described elsewhere as the "bulimic career" (Pratt 2000)" (Gill, 2002, p22)

Choosing *where* to work from, didn't either turn out to be as easy as one would think. While working from home can seem luxuriate, many contestants in Gill`s research (Gill, 2002) preferred to work in a studio or a workshop, both due to help keep a stronger separation between work and home, and also not to be isolated from people doing similar things.

However, the workspace was sometimes never really a *choice;*

"But because they had fewer new media contracts and earned less, women were significantly less likely than men to be able to afford this potion. Working from home, therefore, was rarely a <u>choice</u> for women; almost always a necessity. It impeded (though did not prevent) networking opportunities and also sent a signal about their relative lack of success in their chosen field." (Gill, 2002, p22)

Gill also found that many women chose to not have children when working in the new media industry. There can be several reasons for this, but there is no doubt that it can be hard to combine child caring with the bulimic patterns of this work.

The post-feminism problem:

Gill found that a striking thing when talking about the discrimination, in especially the hiring processes, was the women`s reluctance of understanding that this had something to do with gender.

"Even though in some situations both women and men "know" that they are not operating in a meritocratic system – contracts are not allocated on performance or experience but on connections, for example – there is a profound reluctance to jettison or even question this discourse among most respondents." (Gill, 2002, p23)

Exploitation is known by two main components:
- a sense of unfair advantage
- a sense that significant suffering results from this

However, many women takes their experiences as personal experiences rather than a basis for collective action.

"When individualistic understandings dominate over sociological ones in this way disappointing (and even discriminatory) experiences are understood as personal failures or as random events" (Gill, 2002, p24)

Maybe there has to be more openness about the conditions in the music industry?. Because what is hard to understand is why the *majority* of the women not at all deploys a discourse like this.

In conclusion, the music industry (or new media work in general) is more complex than what meets the eye, and there are a lot of bumps hidden under the apparently smooth surface. These bumps must be handled, especially if new media work really *is* "the forefront" of the new economy.

Contextualizing my work:

A wise woman once said*; "One is not born a woman, but becomes one".* Her name was Simone de Beauvoir and in her lifetime from 1908 to 1986 she worked as a French existential philosopher, feminist, politician and writer. Her statement here was that although gender is stated by birth, children are indoctrinated from very early on into rigid gender positions made by the society.

To contextualize my work it is important that I find literature *already* made inside the field. Out of possible similar works I found the book *"Music, Gender, Education"* (Green, 1997) It takes focus on the same cultural aspect, and writes about the educational roles in relation to music and gender. The author uses ethnographical method in the school classroom like a some sort of micro-cosmos for the society, and researches on the music educations role in the continually production and reproduction of gender based on musical practice and meaning.

The book is quite old, and therefore I think that it could be of great interests to look at how the development has been *since* 1970`s, and also to other aspects of the music industry, then just the classroom. However, it is very interesting that despite appearances, the school plays a big part in reproducing the pre-existing musical gender divisions, through their reinforcing of discursive constructions about gender, musical practices and music itself.

Green defines terms to explain how the society differs between men and women. While the term "sex" refers to the biologically characteristics that is pointless to

discuss doesn`t exist, the term "gender" refers to <u>culturally acquired</u> characteristics that tend to be associated with masculinity versus femininity. For example the reproductive organs are a function of ones "sex", while wearing a skirt and shaving ones legs are functions of "gender". There is therefore not really a connection between "sex" and "gender" at all, but through history, a conceptual congruence of femininity with women and masculinity with men was developed, such that they are to a large degree *expected* to behave in the ways that correspond with that idea.

"Not only that, but certain qualities and attributes have come to be accepted as characterizing features of masculinity and femininity. In a nutshell, and polarized into extremes, masculinity is understood to characterize a person who is active, productive, rational, inventive, experimental, scientific, technological, cerebral and creative; femininity suggests one who is passive, reproductive, caring, subject to the body, emotional and diligent. (Green, 2010, p140)

Whereas the social context of the music production or reception often becomes a part of its defining meaning, one could clearly suggest that the gender of a performer, amongst others contextualizing factors, becomes a part of their music`s delineations.

Another book I found interesting was *"Girl Groups, Girl Culture"* (Warwick, 2007), which takes on the cultural history of the girls in the music business in the 1960s, and their role in women`s culture and the feminist movement.

"She Bop" (O`Brien, 1995) tells it like it is, or at least like it *was* in the women's world of pop, rock and soul. O`Brien brings a feminist perspective to her detailed knowledge of the girls and their music, and also includes a bunch of personal interviews where she explains their stories and their struggle for acceptance and recognition. The book focuses on the early years of ragtime and the jazz age up to the early 90`s.

"Girl Power – The Nineties Revolution in Music" (Meltzer, 2010) is about the underground movement in the nineties up to today, that made women pick up instruments, create fanzines, and become politically engaged. Though girl power has been strongly criticized as soulless and hypersexual, Marisa Meltzer argues that its this movement that made way for today`s generation of confident girls, and charted the path for the future of women in rock.

As one can see, there has been a great focus on this issue over the decades, but a thing about books is that they are usually written *after* its decade. Therefore I still find it interesting to see how the music industry relates to gender and equality *today* (in 2017), whereas the world always keeps on moving, and what was true 7 years ago is not necessarily true today.

However, I will also bring in knowledge about how the balance has developed through the time.

Girls and Music (from the 1960`s – 2016)

I will now soon start the main part of analyzing data from my research. My hope is that trough my qualitative work I will get the chance to:

-   Go into the depth of the subject
-   Go into the depth of individual cases to describe a phenomenon
-   Possibilities for generalize knowledge trough the development of concepts/themes.

At first I thought it would be of interest to see how women`s role in music has developed through the decades. In the 60`s and 70´s a lot of fierce female artists used their songs as expressions of lady experience – both positive and negative – that was far more expressively than the music before. Janis Joplin, Joni Mitchell, Carly Simon and Stevie Nicks are some important names from this era.

On the other side of the "girl riot" was the women`s liberation bands, that were collectives founded across the US and wrote songs with content of abortion, marriage and girl power.

Regardless the rise of popularity these two directions in the 70`s had, they did not get the benefit of being stated as mainstream rock. *"Rock was about virtuosity and, unless you`re a diva, virtuosity has always been associated with being male"* (Meltzer, 2010, p.6) Even when glam rock entered, which gave men a lot of space to play with their sexuality, they still left no room for women.

Punk was a movement that gave generation of boys and girls a new "start". It rejected technical virtuosity and instead focused on a do-it-yourself aesthetic, iconoclasm and amateurishness. It also led to a leveling of the playing field and started encouraging young women to join bands, get onstage, and learn to play as they went in front of the public.

"During the late seventies, the women of punk were creating a new female archetype, borrowing notions of collective community responsibility from the women`s liberation movement and, at the same time, taking the outmost pride not just in individuality but in being an outcast." (Meltzer, 2010, p6-7)

However, punk didn`t *solve* all of the undergoing issues still experienced by women artists. Ana da Silva (founding member of The Raincoats) found great frustration in that her band always was being *compared* to another band called The Slits – in the definition their only similarity was that they were all women.

"Gender benders" where a nickname of those women who openly stood out in magazines saying they were not *traditional* women and were going to create in ways that women weren`t encouraged to.

The rise of the punk rock music was happening at the same time as the "second wave" of American feminism; social and legal rights for both genders (like for example the legalization of abortion and equally payment). Other great

revolutions at that time were the approval of the birth control pill in 1960, the 1968`s demonstration against Miss America pageants, the formation of the National Organization for Women in 1966, and the first women`s studies courses being taught at Cornell University.

While punk could be liberative for some women, many of the female artists avoided on creating a "sisterhood" or stating themselves as "feminists". *"There were only a few token women in punk, and to identify themselves as feminists would only make their non-maleness more central – it was hard enough just being accepted as a musician"* (Meltzer, 2010, p8)

Many female artists also felt sexual harassment while performing. The "second wave" of feminism helped create awareness of this problem. The harasser's behavior would be all from men in the audience whistle and shouting at the women to take of their clothes, to comments like "you are good for a girl to be"

By 1991 Jen Smith, along with other girls, started punk bands of their own. By then many female artists had given up on the long battle of being the lonely female drummer or guitarist. They were tired of suppressing their equality needs, and thought that rather than *waiting* for the playing field to become level, they could rather start their *own* league;

"One of the ideas we were working with in Bikini Kill was that if girls started bands, it would transform culture – and not just empower them as individuals, but change society. As a young girl who was frustrated by a lack of women in music who called themselves feminists, I saw a need to change that." (Meltzer, 2010, p11)

What is called the "third wave" of feminism is what took place from hereafter, when the generation of the women from the previous wave were coming of age. It is often seen as both resuscitation and a reaction to it. With the "third wave" the female artists wanted to get a bigger focus on the *individuals*, and understanding that feminism was not always a single force but could rather be different for everyone.

In the following years there was a great deal of updated literature, which struck huge chords for young women wanting to define their own terms of feminism. The revolution started, like a lot of them do, in the underground and thereafter broke through to the mainstream.

In Meltzer`s book (Meltzer, 2010) it`s stated that the event that probably had some of the hugest impact at this time were the one that took place with the magazine called "Riot Grrrl". It was a self-published magazine from the underground-movement with the same name, and had its early beginning in Washington DC and Pacific Northwest in 1990. The movement had a lot of political actions and held continually meetings where issues like gender discrimination, rape and sexuality were discussed.

The movement wanted women to start *challenging* the norms and ideas of feminism set by the society, and rather start making music, art and culture on their *own* terms.

In their manifest from 1991 it among others says:

"Riot Grrrl is:
BECAUSE we know that life is much more than physical survival and are patently aware that the punk rock "you can do anything" idea is crucial to the coming angry grrrl rock revolution which seeks to save the psychic and cultural lives of girls and women everywhere, according to their own terms, not ours.

BECAUSE we are angry at a society that tells us Girl = Dumb, Girl = Bad, Girl = Weak.

BECAUSE we don't wanna assimilate to someone else`s (boy) standards of what is or isn`t.

BECAUSE I believe with my wholeheartmindbody that girls constitute a
revolutionary soul force that can, and will, change the world for real."
(Bikini Kill Zine, 1991)

The bands that were the main interests behind "Riot Grrl" were Bratmobile, Bikini Kill, Huggy Bear, Sleater-Kinney and Heavens to Betsy. The band members often wrote words like "slut" and "dyke" on their bodies to redefine the language.

The movement was one of the last youth movements before the Internet allowed for easy connection to other like-minded. In the end of the 90`s the movement slowly died as a result of the ending to some of the bands. However, a lot of musicians was inspired and kept on distributing the messages.

"Riot Grrl" had an important role not only for the already grown-up women but also for the girl in the start of her life. When girls are little they are true to their beliefs. There is a saying that goes like this; Of kids and drunk people comes the truth. The little girl is confident, curious, proud of being different and happy to resist authority were she see fit.

However, there is a crisis that takes place at puberty, where girls self-esteem often collapses and never truly recovers. A lot of this due to the pressure and ideas of the society, but with the movement of the "Riot Grrl" this can change. The singer Liz Phair said the following, about the act of watching a *woman* rock out onstage and the effect on teenage girls, in an interview to New York Magazine in 1996:

"like having someone in a movie that you can follow. It`s like having a character
you can live through. And for so long, they didn`t. You go to a rock show because
you want the guy to stare at you. You want to be noticed and singled out as an
object. And this time, they are watching someone and pretending they are her. And
that`s a very good experience, I think, for the self-esteem of the young American
girl."
(France,1996, p40)

"Riot Grrl" wasn`t the only angry women in rock in the early 90`s. There were a lot of artists lumped into this category, which ironically was put their by men, no less – making the female rage seem "cliché" and a little trivial.

In 2001 the Oxford English Dictornary had "riot grrl" as a word to be defined. *"Another phrase added that year was "girl power", which was described as "a self-reliant attitude among girls and young women manifested in ambition, assertiveness and individualism"* (Meltzer, 2010, p71)

The word "girl power" can be seen as a newer version of the "Riot Grrl"`s slogan: Revolution Girl-Style Now, and a lot of the reason for the success of this catchphrase were due to Spice Girls, a girl band from England. Their original name was Touch but in 1996 they changed their name to Spice Girls.

They became one the most successful bands in pop, and sold more than 80 million records before their break-up in 2001. Even on their reunion tour in 2008, Spice Girls managed to gather thousands of girls together, to celebrate the "state of being a girl":

"I can see how pining for the Spice Girls of all things seems like nostalgia at its worst, but their concert felt like one night where girls could be strong and frivolous and free to wear lip gloss and bare their midriffs and no one was overthinking it. It surely wasn`t feminism in action – there were certainly no political agendas being pushed or community organizing being done, and I`m sure Posh`s spindly thighs were doing nothing for anyone`s body issues – but it was thousands of girls in one place simply celebrating the state of being a girl." (Meltzer, 2010, p141)

The fact that there were just as many young girls, as there were women in their early twenties, proves that the movement of girl power sent shock-waves that were evergreen. Even though the "Riot grrl" movement was over, it still survived like a catalyst for turning women into creators.

The "Riot grrl" message lived on, from the Spice Girls, Christina Aguilera, Avril Lavigne and Britney Spears – to Miley Cyrus, Meghan Trainor, Taylor Swift and Beyoncè. In the end, even performers who where once dismissed as harmful to the cause of women, were also seen as helpful whereas their stories lay bare some of the manipulation and tribulations that women often experience.

"Girl Power recognizes that not everything is pure: it delights in ambiguous gray areas. It`s not just about testing out your own relationship to feminism, but about finding your identity in the world." (Meltzer, 2010, p144)

What is important is to keep in mind that girl power is not an **endpoint**, but rather a way station and a gateway, which will hopefully help open up to a more profound equality of the sexes.

That`s girl power`s *true* legacy.

Method and Methical choices:

In this Master assignment I am planning on using qualitative research. Qualitative research is one of the two main paradigms when one talk about how to generate information about society and thereafter to analyze it. In opposition to *quantitative* research, it opens up for more depth full interviews, and understanding above explanation.

According to Aksel Tjora in his book about qualitative research (Tjora, 2012) qualitative research is characterized of much sensitivity towards it`s context. In opposition to quantitative research where one for instance hand out a form for thousands of people to fill out, qualitative research takes place in a intimate setting where one is either having a private interview with someone or where the contestants are participating in situations that is being observed.

The intensity and proximity that occurs in such researches, often makes the qualitative research process exiting and hard to predict. One must for instance be aware that there may have to be done some changes regarding ones research

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project, actions and ideas. This often happens if, for instance, the conditions in the research-place isn`t as one had imagined it to be.

As a result of these challenges, it will be smart of the researcher to do data generating already relatively early in the process, to be able to change and adjust the use of theory and perspectives to what seems interesting in the empirical analysis.

As mentioned earlier, the qualitative researches and the quantitative researches are the two main paradigms in researching, and the debate on which one is the *best* tool has been referred to as the *positivism-battle*. The researchers in the two "camps" have often been lacking respect for the other one`s research, but nonetheless most of the society researchers recognizes that both of the paradigms are necessary for a broad research, and that different research-questions or issues demands different methodical approaches.

To get a hand on what the characteristics for the paradigms are, it is usual to focus on what separates the one paradigm from the other.

Qualitative research is characterized by;
- Understanding, rather than explanation
- Proximity to the researched objects, rather than distance
- Data in the form of texts, rather in the form of numbers
- Inductive method (exploring and empirical-driven), rather than deductive method (theory and hypothesis – driven)

In addition to theese characteristics, Tjora (Tjora, 2012) states that the qualitative research is also known by that it is a interpretation paradigm, that often focuses on the experiences and opinions of the informant, and what kind of consequences meanings have.

Even though the characteristics of the research method are quite clear, the qualitative researches can nonetheless be diverse. It is driven by empathy and creativity, but also of structure and systematics.

When one is to argue on behalf of what kind of method one chooses to use for ones research, one often have the tendency of *only* summarizing the characteristics and neglecting the more *significant* differences between the researching - methods. As mentioned earlier, both "camps" have recognized that *both* researching-methods are necessary to an extent, whereas it often is different *aspects* of the same phenomenon that one is trying to explain with quantitative method than those with qualitative ones.

In other words, one formulates the questions differently! However, a general notion on the characteristics of qualitative and quantitative research-methods can easily hide a bigger complexity and a diversity of data gathering-technics and analysis methods inside both traditions. The society-research will have much to gain on reducing the sharp separation between the different paradigms.

Tjora (Tjora, 2012) states however that the qualitative researches often get wrongly the rumor of being more *subjective* than the quantitative research. The truth is that *both* of the research-approaches within society-research is mainly interested in the individuals point of view. However, the mathematical *analysis-methods* within quantitative research is not affected of whoever is performing it. If two analytics performs the same task, they will end up with the same answer (if they do it mathematically correct). The interpretation of the results however, will depend on what kind of theory and perspectives the researcher uses.

An advantage with the quantitative research is furthermore that one can investigate, for instance, the degree of agreement on the assertion and how this assertion is systematically agreed upon within demographical variables (gender, age, town), political orientation, education and work etc. etc. In a qualitative research one can however get a *broader* perspective on how the informants justifies their assertions, and with that, what is contributing too make them.

The qualitative research will also open up for themes and topics that were not necessarily on the research-list to begin with, but that can be of high interest to the case. The informants can begin talking about conditions, as different personal experiences, which they relate to their attitudes, but that makes personal-dependent aspects which the researcher had no possibility of having knowledge about pre-interview.

The qualitative depth-interviews is depending upon a good dialogue between the researcher and the informant to be able to get these kinds of aspects, and the situation is then referred to as *intersubjective.* A crucial point in these kinds of situations is that one is aware of how the interview as a *social setting* can influence what is being said. The results of the research should be evaluated on, among other factors, such setting-based influence. A good thing about qualitative interviews is then that the researcher has to some degree a proximity to the informants, and this means that this influence can easily be explained.

The theory`s part in the researching-methods varies greatly, both within the qualitative and the quantitative research. A main rule could be that the quantitative research focuses on one or several hypothesis that one seeks to confirm or disprove, and these hypotheses comes from theory and previous researches. Qualitative research, on the other hand, focuses on one or several theoretical traditions to define the framework of what are interesting issues within ones fieldwork. But according to Tjora (Tjora, 2012, p26) also here are there great differences within. Therefore we often move on to the "rougher" main-rule, which includes the characteristics mentioned earlier: the inductive method versus the deductive method.

The qualitative research is mostly based upon the inductive method. This means that one assume (or develop) some *general contexts* from observing of singular cases. The quantitative research is mostly based on the deductive method, and therefore goes the other way around; one goes from a general rule to explaining singular cases. The *abductive* approach, that starts from the empirical (as

induction) but where theory and perspectives plays a part forehand or during the research-process is also of great importance.

The highly developed research-tradition called *Grounded Theory* (or GT) has the ideal of a theory-free starting point for qualitative research, with a strategy where theory development is based on a systematic circular movement between data gathering and development of concepts. Based on this tradition, much qualitative research tries to reduce the theoretical shaping of their investigations. But with greater weight on the reflexive aspects within research and the importance of abduction there has to be mentioned that *all* scientific investigations are linked to one or several areas of expertise.

Most research, both qualitative and quantitative, is being made within a defined area of expertise or within a defined theme. These areas of expertise or defined themes will to a high degree define what topics are relevant, what questions are relevant, how we ask these questions, and especially define what explanations and ways are the most likely and legitimate to understand the world.
In some cases, an anchor like this could also be based on previous research. However, the inspiration is often diverse rather than explicit. In other words, the researchers theoretical belonging helps make a kind of accentuation of what is interesting research.

"We can say that we through a qualitative analysis within our area of expertise develop a way of understanding the reality, that in different ways reflects our anchor perspective-wise." (Tjora, 2012, p29)

The sociologists has their own understanding on the basis of theories, perspectives, method knowledge and interests when they perform their research, and it is therefore wise in observation studies to reflect upon how ones own reality perception influences how we can see certain aspects, but are blind for other aspects.

Theory is, in other words, always present in empirical research, regardless of this being formulated or not. Within the qualitative research the theory often influence how one formulate the questions in an interview-guide, or in what way, and in what situations one finds it expedient to perform the observations.

Often the researcher tries to design the empirical investigations with a theoretical openness. Theories and perspectives are still defining what one focuses on in the analysis. Ones own area of expertise will *always* impact what kind of phenomena one is interested by, and how one researches them.

I have chosen to concentrate on **qualitative interviews** in my research. At first the idea was to combine it with fieldwork, but after some thinking and advice I chose to rather focus on the interviews only, whereas the research-time already was limited as it was. One of the great questions regarding research in general is how one is supposed to *limit* the empirical work. In qualitative research, one often goes into the depths with relatively few strategic chosen units. The limitations one sets have to be justified.

Since I wanted to interview people with different backgrounds and from different places I chose to use e-mail for the interviews. This way I could also reach people from other countries or people who were on tour. All my informants were well known and interested in the topic, and since we had an email-dialogue I didn`t have to do the time-consuming task of transcribing and could rather focus on analyzing my data.

The development of the Internet and the enormous rise of different forms of electronically devices have given researchers a new arena for research. The Internet gives us possibilities for research that wasn`t there before, especially since it makes contact throughout time and space possible from ones own home-desk. What is important is that I am aware of the influence it can give my interaction: It could be shorter and more explicit because it is in a text-based and partly anonymous world, or it can be more out filling and thought through. This

is one of the reasons why I though e-mail interviews would be better than simple chat-sites.

Of course the answers from my informants varied some in volume, but since I had carefully handpicked the informants myself, the answers were mostly complementary and all relevant, which allowed me to get a great view despite.

In other words, I limited the empirical work by *selecting* my contestants on the basis of some criteria's. The goal for this "sample" was to *optimize* the informants' contributions and ability to answer, so that my data had the best empirical balance between relevant and non-relevant information.

As mentioned earlier, it is of great importance that the interview takes on as different people as possible, but there were certain skills that I though described my key-informants:

- The informant had a role that made him/her often target to the information the research wanted
- Was cooperative, and motivated to tell
- Had the ability to share
- Had a *certain* degree of impersonal relationship to the setting

I planned that my interview guide would have some main topics and prepared follow-up questions – alternative questions that could be used in relation to the answers on the main topic. The guide would however not be used like a final destination, but rather I also wanted to *improvise* questions to encourage the informants to excel on their answers. My goal was that the interview would be as much as a natural conversation as possible.

My key-informants criteria's decided whom I should interview, but *inside* this boundary I also found it important that I interviewed as *different* people as possible. That way I collected data that was wide and could give a broad perspective.

My goal with the research is to gather knowledge on key patterns in a specific environment – the music business. In qualitative research I have the opportunity to observe the social relations and get a direct image of what happens in the environment, much more than if I made a survey directed towards individuals whom I would have no other contact with. I want to learn about the attitudes, meanings and experiences, which in other words is the *"life seen from the eyes of the informant".* The interviews are not *about* the informants, but can rather be used to understand the context beyond these individuals.

Since I myself am a girl in the music industry, it is important that I don`t influence my informants to a high degree. I therefore have my questions as open as possible, to make sure that there are no hidden "assumptions" that they can catch up upon. It is also important that I am aware of the expectations that could exist between myself and the informant;

"Often the informant has expectations that the researcher will guide the conversation, with concrete questions, that the informant then will reply too with short answers. Both the informant and the researcher will also have some expectations regarding who the other person is, and this will also bring an effect on the communication during the interview. For example, an informant could expect that the same gender, age or status of the researcher would imply similar experiences or meanings. If these experiences are a topic for the research, the researcher has to consciously take on a neutral position" (Tjora, 2012)

Other ethical considerations within qualitative research are of course words like trust, confidentiality, respect and mutuality. How I behave among people will influence the communication, regardless if I am writing an academically research on them or not. This way there automatically occurs an expectation that one gives something back to "the ones you research", regardless of this being written in guidelines. Since the qualitative research is being performed by direct contact with the informants, general courtesy is a good basis for good ethical research.

However, research also has to have higher demands than those of regular social interaction, whereas one is brutally barging in on other peoples arenas and nonetheless because the result will be publicly available.

Regardless of the preparation, research, to some extent, is often about how one deal with unpredicted events. To be a good researcher takes specific skills and knowledge, but also improvisation and intuition, which develop through routine.

Presenting the research-field:

I am interviewing some managers, cultural workers and artists, some of them well known at the feministic radar. We will have empirical conversations that are relevant for uncovering implicitly attitudes of females, gender and music. It will be focused on narrative interviews inspired by Pål Repstad`s template for qualitative research. (Repstad, 2007)

It think that in addition to the artists it will also be interesting to be in contact with AKKS (an idealistic music organization who works for balance in *all* links of the music industry), and the girls at LOUD Girl Camp who each summer joins a camp where music-loving girls in the age from 11 to 17 works with all aspects of the music industry for one week; from microphone plugging, drum and guitar playing to recording a song in a professional studio.

Presenting my informants

I started with contacting some female artists and girls who work in the music industry in general which all had agreed to be interviewed and state their opinions in the cause of my master assignment. They have all either been working for bettering of equality in the music industry, or simply been interested in the subject. I will now give the final attributers a short presentation;

Informant 1 – Sofie Søndervik Sæther is a bass player in the band "Level and Tyson". She also is the project leader for LOUD Bandcamp and works with organizing international music projects for kids and youth in JM Norway.

Informant 2 – Ida Collett Belle is the leader of AKKS Stavanger, and has worked over 20 years in the music industry. She has her background all from record labeling to being an artist in the band Sassy Kraimspri.

Informant 3 – Hanne Sørvaag is an artist, composer and songwriter. She has given out 6 soloalbums, and had her biggest hit with *Cover Me* that became Top Ten charted in Norway in 2011. Internationally she is most known for her composing, and she has written hits that have sold up to 5 million in 70 countries.

Informant 4 – Andy Inglis is an artist manager, tour manager, and lecturer in the live music industry, both around the UK and mainland Europe.

Informant 5 – Razika is a band from Bergen that consists of 4 girls. They have had massive success since their debut album "Program 91" that was released in 2011.

Informant 6 - Ida Charlotte Bratteberg Jakobsen is the guitarist and vocalist of the band "Intetkjønn" and works with LNU which is the Norwegian committee for kids and youth-organisations.

In addition, I have interviewed some girls between 14-17 years old, who have all multiple times participated on the Loud BandCamp, and included a statement made at ByLarm in November 2016 via their live broadcasting online.

LOUD Girl Camp is a Norwegian camp grounded on the alliance called "Girl Rock Camp Alliance" which has camps all over the world. Girls Rock Camp (or GRC) was founded in Oregon in 2007. As the first all-girl rock camp it quickly became an inspiration and the source for other similar initiatives worldwide.

Loud BandCamp`s vision is to stop the girls from just entering the established gender patterns where girls are mostly singers, and give them a chance to explore *all* sides of music in a safe environment with guidance of musicians and music teachers.

On their website their goal is clearly described; *"Girls Rock Camp Alliance member organizations each share a desire to achieve a reality where gender and culture do not decide whether a person can play music. Until we reach that goal, girls rock camp is a way to provide a space for girls where they can identify as musicians. At girls rock camp we use methods to encourage the camper`s creativity, provide a variety of different musicians and mentors as role models, and a curriculum that is a broad introduction to the world of music."*
(GirlsRockCampAlliance, 2016, 12.11)

(Group Picture, Loud, 2014)

Girl Meets Music Business (in 2017)

I will now analyze and contextualize the data that I gathered through my interviews. The basic-questions were as following, followed up by extras if necessary:

1) What is your view on the gender balance in the current music industry?

2) Do you have any histories/experiences that you think are prominent attitudes in the industry? (in relation to gender attitudes)

3) If you mean that the gender balance in the industry is bad, in which areas is it bad and in what ways?

If you mean that the gender balance in the industry is good, in which areas is it good and in what ways?

4) How do you relate to gender equality in your own work?

5) Is the music industry where it should be, according to equality and gender balance? If not, what is missing?

I will analyze my data and split them into themes/topics. Additionally I also bring in stories that are similar from the rest of the world, and literatures that cover the issues.

"Good for a girl"

"The attitude that girls aren`t able to do just as good a job as boys still exists. We often experience people saying: "this is actually really good, this is not what I thought", or "you are pretty good for a girl", and many of them are quite surprised when we tell them that we wrote our own music." (Razika, interview, 28. March 2017)

My research shows that there still exists a bigoted opinion that girls aren`t *able* to do as good a job as guys. When interviewing Razika they told me about these comments they had received after the end of an concert.

However, Razika states that what strikes them the most frustrating is that it seems like the people saying these comments are *surprised* by the fact that what

Razika do is actually possible; *"We understand that these comments (mostly) aren`t meant to be overbearing but rather positive. Historically speaking it`s not that weird that people get surprised, but within the industry this should now be old news"* (Razika, Interview 21.March 2017)

Ida Collett Belle recounts herself experiencing a similar thing;
I played on a big industry-festival in Stord two weeks ago and mostly got the comment that it was amazing seeing girls playing guitar and bass, and singing, like we do in our band." (Ida Collett Belle, Interview 15.March 2017)

This is a really big problem, for if people in addition to being used to girls as *being* only vocalists, also thinks that they *can`t* be anything else, to be able to change that trend is becoming even more difficult.
Hanne Sørvaag thinks it seem like women has to play on other parts to be able to get attention, or that there are different attitudes towards women not being able to becoming successful *only* on the base of their talent alone;
*"We are not gender balanced in todays music industry, this is being shown in a lot of areas, everything from many more men on the festivalposters, many more men being nominated to awards or being played on the radio, to the extreme where Nicki Minaj went from being a hardcore rap artist with strong opinions to perform in a kind of soft-porn video with her "Anaconda" –music video. I don`t know whether the women are adviced to do this by people in the business or if its some kind of pressure they give into. I only know that male artists rarely have to use theese kinds of means. "(*Hanne Sørvaag, Interview 13.March 2017)

If men are rather to be hired than women, and there is an idea that women are`nt as good as men and has to "make up for it" in other ways, then men sure has an unfair advantage which gives women significant suffering. According to Gill (Gill, 2002) exploitation is categorized by exactly these two components.

Sofie Søndervik Sæther points to that the reason why a gender imbalance still exists is that there is still some *acceptance* for it. *"It is still accepted in many circles to book events with (more or less) only men. It is to a big degree*

*(apparently) the groups that are underrepresented who works against the discrimination" (*Sofie Søndervik Sæther, Interview 13.March 2017)

Andy Inglis is surprised that many men "accept" this imbalance, and enlighten this with a story from when he co-owned a live music venue in London: *"I used to co-own a live music venue in London. My assistants were women. I sometimes saw Tour Managers and crew treat them one way, and me another way. I never saw this with the male staff. "* (Andy Inglis, Interview 15.March 2017)

Ida Collett Belle thinks that one of the solutions would be that more men should join in on the battle, whereas an imbalance in the industry will in the end effect *everybody* negatively, and we will all benefit from a much more exiting culture if many more take up some space.

One of the main problems is that women see themselves to having little or no choice but to except their "suffering", and Ida also says that if they complain on being threatened differently they sometimes get the feedback that they are complaining on something "that just is".

If women however just accept the exploitation and stops speaking up for themselves, then the "trend" will unlikely end:
Razika states; *"We are of the opinion that the most important thing we can do for the gender balance is to keep on playing concerts for both young and old, but perhaps mostly for the young. There needs to be more female role models for those growing up today, and we take that job seriously"* (Razika, Interview 28.March 2017)

Loud Bandcamp is, as previous mentioned, an all girl camp for girls in the age 11-17 years old. Almost all the contestants I talked too, when asked about what was the best about the camp, responded that it was to play music and meet other girls with the same interests as their own. The role-modeling as Razika talks about, is in other words of *crucial* importance.

"The best thing about Loud Camp is that I get to play music and have fun with other girls with the same interests as me. I love music. I sing everyday and play some instruments. I sing, play drums and a little guitar. Music can help me if I´m sad or help me express myself. I usually always get happy when listening to music. "
("Thea" interview 31.January 2017)

Another issue that got a lot focus on some of my interviews, and is closely linked to the idea that girls has to use other "means" to be able to succeed, was society and the medias ability to focus on all other things than the music itself, when writing about *female* singers. My informants agrees that the biggest problem with these media-headlines is the **neglecting** of the females actual profession; the music! Why isn`t that enough?

Even in these so-called modern decades we still witness these kinds of articles online and in magazines. Hanne Sørvaag, has had this experience several times. There have been head-lines from "That`s why she`s single", "Got his heart crushed by Hanne Sørvaag" to "We are not a couple" (last one referring to her lesbian rumors with the athlete Vibeke Skofterud)

(photo from VG and Dagbladet articles)

 At least it can seem like, the *princes* of pop however, for example Sondre Lerche or Sondre Justad, gets annoyingly enough a much bigger focus on the *music* itself, which many of the male artists today joins in on.

Theory shows that even back in the early nineties, female musicians had similar problems: *"Despite a solid musical reputation Mitchell didn`t escape continual speculation on her private life and a series of broken relationships. After Rolling Stone magazine published a diagram of her alleged love affair`s, giving her an award as "Old Lady of the Year", she didn`t speak to the magazine for eight years."* (O`Brien, 1995, p180)

Together with the idea that girl`s aren`t good enough, is the idea that the only thing they *can* be good at, is singing. This statement gets a lot clearer when you start to think about the number of *men* who has vocal as their main instrument, in opposition to women.

"If you think about the number of men who has vocal as their main instrument there is a very crookedly balance to female advantage. And vice versa for e.g. female drummers, producers or managers." (Ida Collett Belle, Interview 31.January 2017)

But why is this? Some explanations to this phenomenon, that O`Brien discussed already in 1995, is that women perhaps often take on simple instrumentation as their resource whereas not having to negotiate the male network of band politics, and this tradition has lived on since;

"Women excel at singer/songwriting for the same reason that they are good novelists, because it is an easily accessible medium. In folk music all a female songwriter needed was an acoustic guitar (if that) and a voice. The lullabies and ballads women sang to woo babies to sleep became a part of folk history, as did the songs they sang at work, brewing, baking, seamstressing, weaving, fish-gutting – music created by "ordinary" people with songs and trades that had been handed down throughout generations." (O`Brien, 1995, p175-176)

Razika means that there is a clear imbalance on where boys and where girls "work"; *"It has to be more normalized with girls on the stage as instrumentalists and technicians. Festicals, management, record companies and booking should all*

become more aware of gender balance and have a goal of being 50/50 girls and boys" (Razika, Interview 28.March 2017)

Girls can often feel *obligated* to do vocals instead of, for instance drumming or guitar, but even little boys can feel the same way regarding singing; Ida Collett tells me about a boy who thought he wasn`t "allowed" to sing, because he thought it was a "girl thing"; *"That is just as sad as the other way around" (Ida Collett Belle, Interview 31.January 2017)*

If we draw in some Marxian theory this could be seen as material deprivation and exclusion. No, the music business doesn`t take instruments and only give them to certain people, but society has made a "norm" of what kind of materials (instruments) girls can use and what kind of materials (instruments) boys can use, and isn`t that to some extent keeping a separation like the one mentioned in history between the workers and the owners?

"These ways of thinking are so sad and so unfair that gender, gender roles, culture and adolescence should impact such a big difference on what people think they can and cannot do" (Ida Collett Belle, interview 31.January 2017)

The tendency and attitudes shown above, are not at all a local thing, but rather one can see examples of this "neglecting of talent" everywhere. If you, for instance, search the Internet and go to Billboard`s official website (www.billboard.com) there is an article called "Taylor Swift`s Boyfriend Timeline: 10 Relationships and their songs", which was written in 2014. Taylor Swift found herself often in the media`s spotlight due to her "swiftly" changes in relationships.

Selena Gomez, an American singer, actress, model and designer, still get`s referred to as "Justin Bieber`s ex" after their on-and-off relationship in 2009-2015. However, there is almost never such an angle on media`s article when regarding *male* popstars. Anyone ever heard Justin Bieber being referred to as "*Selena Gomez`s* ex"?

Ariana Grande, another female singer and personal friend of Selena Gomez, said this in an interview with Hollywoodlife.com;

"I`ll never be able to swallow the fact that people feel the need to attach a successful woman to a man when they say her name. I saw a headline – draw your own conclusions because it`ll be so much drama that I don`t want – they called someone another someone`s ex, and that pissed me off. This person has had so many great records in the last year, and she hasn`t been dating him forever. Call her by her name!" (Avery Thompson, 2016)

Affirmative Action and working conditions?

The section about vocal as a girl thing should maybe get one thinking that whereas there are so many female artists, the music awards should be over-flowing with women winning. That is however, not the case.

Sofie Sæther gave me a heads-up on an article posted on "Bransjekunst"`s facebook-page. "Bransjekunst", which is a Norwegian union of 45 different music organisations who work for a balanced and diverse music-life, posted some weeks ago an article from "Dagbladet" (Norwegian newspaper) stating that there has only been 3 female winners of the Norwegian Grammy in 32 years! (Lindblad, 2017)
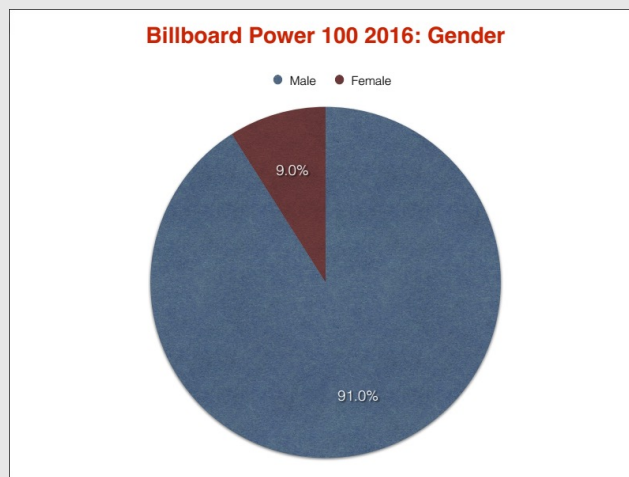
The article states that the last time there was a *female* winner of the main award was in 2003 when Silje Negraard (jazz musician) won. Since then there has been 13 awards given out to all male.

How is this even possible, when there are so many female singers? Of course, instrumentalists can also win those prices, but still the imbalance between male and female is strange.

Similar imbalance is often found in the employment- process of the industry; where people often are judged from referrals over resumes. This is crucial, especially in companies where e.g. women are in a minor number in the higher

positions. Of course it disadvantages many men as well as women, but women are often more likely to be effected due to clubby atmosphere.

Andy Inglis said in his interview (Andy Inglis, Interview 15.March 2017) that this is not at all just a Norwegian tendency. He gave me a link to the website which shows "Billboard 100s list", and made me aware of the figure showing the latest power 100 list of hits, from 2016, which shows that the females comprise only 9% of the entire list;

Billboard Power 100 2016: Gender

● Male   ● Female

9.0%

91.0%

(https://www.musicbusinessworldwide.com/the-billboard-power-100-shames-the-music-biz-and-should-worry-us-all/)

This figure also shows the *Intersectionality* that Hesmondhalgh talked about, in real life figure. There *is* a clear difference between women and men in the music business, and women *do* suffer from power inequalities. The remaining question is of course: why?

When I asked Andy Inglis about his view on the gender balance in the current music industry, his answer was of no mistake; *"It`s the same across all areas of society; heavily weighted toward men"* (Andy Inglis, Interview 15. March 2017)

Andy Inglis points to that there is much unfairness in the industry, and that much is governed by "the old white men". When asked about he had any stories/experiences that he thought was prominent attitudes in the industry (in relation to gender attitudes) he said: *"Thousands, but I'm a middle-aged white man so I don't have any personal experience of being belittled or treated*

disrespectfully because of it. But I've observed many women around me being treated differently because of their sex." (Andy Inglis, Interview 15.March 2017)

Hanne Sørvaag says: *"I feel like I experience little discrimination in my business, but some of the discrimination is due to that men more often get choosen to do tings, maybe its kind of a "boyclub" in the booking- and event-area, and people are not really used to women being just as good"* (Hanne Sørvaag, Interview 13.March 2017)

Andy Inglis tries himself to help the gender balance in the industry, by just hiring women. Hanne Sørvaag is running affirmative action on her own, bringing a self-imposed quota act:

"I usually always try to work with female producers, musicians and help other female artists. When they are just as good as the boys, I think I am running kind of a affirmative action to even out the differences. It`s not long till the girls are taking over." (Hanne Sørvaag, Interview 13.March 2017)

One of the main questions is: Should the Norwegian Grammy Award also start with such kinds of affirmative actions? Could this be the solution for their low margins of female winners? It is at least very difficult to believe that the only reason someone is winning is due to their talent and nothing else, when the statistics shows what it does.

Sigrid Hvidsten, the cultural editor in Dagbladet, says however in an interview with the magazine, the following about the choosing-process of the committee: *"Sometimes it is obvious who should win, other times it needs to be discussed. But the jury never thinks female or male. They only think artist. That is the short answer. The price is not higher for nor male or female, the jury pays no attention to gender." (Lindblad, 2017)*

The question regarding affirmative actions have been getting mixed responses when its been discussed earlier. The board of the Norwegian Grammy Awards

committee has stated that they are aware of the issue, but that its *complicated.* They have also been *negative* to performing affirmative actions, whereas they don't think the female artists would like winning because of such laws.

Reality shows nonetheless that affirmative actions work, something that both Hanne and Andy agrees upon. When arguing that females wouldn`t like winning awards due to inclusion laws, why not just solve this with having *two* awards-one for male and one for female? All problems solved.

In USA the Billboard Music Awards have both "Top Male Artist" and "Top Female Artist" as categories, while the Norwegian Grammy only operates categories like blues, country, pop, folk song, jazz, classical, urban etc.

(picture from Taylor Swift getting her Billboard Award for 2015)

Some debating…….
One can sincerely ask the question if it is "nagging" to debate or raise questions regarding to gender preparation in the media. Many writers feel that their choice of words are rapidly being judged by social media like Twitter etc., and that the social media therefore acts like some kind of limit-setter for what is appropriate.

On the one hand, social media statements are often "sure" in their case for what the writer meant with his/her words, which makes it difficult if the writer just was a bit unfortunate and therefore gets a quite different reputation than what was intended. On the other hand, however, the rapid social media statements

help the writers of being more *conscious* and making them more *aware* of their language, which is a positive thing.

Many writers must however also be better at admitting "defeat" when their language is misunderstood, and rather than storming out on the people stating this in social media, they should be better at simply apologizing.

The thing about neglecting the focus on, for instance, music recommendations to be more about looks other aspects is a two-edged sword. Like mentioned earlier, it is clearly wrong to minimalize the female artists work to those measurements whereas the media likes to categorize and see women in relation to men. The media almost never writes about the atmosphere and clothing of the male artists, so there is a great difference in preparation here when it comes to gender.

On the other hand, many artists *explicitly* use their body as a part of their artistic expression. Is it then all right to comment on their bodies? I think that the word *autonomy* could be brought into this debate. According to the dictionary *autonomy* means "independence or freedom, as of the will or one`s actions." Is it right to criticize the female artists who we think "clearly plays the sex-card"? What right do we have to criticize their choices?

It is one thing if Nicki Minaj, like Hanne Sørvaag mentioned in her interview (Hanne Sørvaag, Interview 13.March 2017), dances around in little clothing in her music video because she was *forced* to do this by her management whereas otherwise she wouldn`t be popular, but a whole other aspect is if she *chose herself* to use her body as a part of her artistic expression.

People have a tendency of criticizing the female artists much more than the male artists, when it comes to this aspect. A man dancing bare torso is fine, but a female dancing in short skirt is "playing on sex". Haven`t we in our society gotten further then to be locked up in the biblical idea of the female body as a temptation and sin? The comment of the "sex-card" is very discriminating, a body is a body, regardless of it is male or female.

Writers and music reporters has to stop being "80-year olds" who thinks that all change is bad and talk about both female and male expressions with *respect!* Don`t slaughter an artist based on other aspects than the music, it is after all the *music* they are supposed to report.

In addition to that writers should be aware of their words, is the fact that women has to set limits earlier, and speak up for themselves at a early stage if something is discriminating. When reporters get criticized for being discriminating in their report they sometimes just excuse themselves by that it was misunderstood by the audience and that the audience who complaints are "whining feminists".

Some men have even gotten so far as to call Norway "The Vagina State", whereas they feel it is only women who are allowed to speak up for their rights and fight against discrimination, while the men gets forgotten. They feel that the gender battle has been equal for quite some time now, and that the women are just being greedy. The numbers in several researches showing percentage of women in for instance high positions and award nominees, shows however clearly otherwise. This is a real danger, because if people think that the gender fight is *over* and *done with*, and that there is nothing more to fight about, the awareness will diminish and we may be moving backwards.

The fact is that, even though it can be argued about why we should lift forward the *female* artists a little more than we do the male artists, reality shows that this is still necessary whereas we are simply not there yet where an action like this is completely of no use.

Advice to young girls or women in the music business is to step up and *take* place. The trend where women are silent when discriminated because of their gender has to stop. Also, men should join the battle, whereas it is often just those who actually *are* discriminated who work against the discrimination. Andy Inglis stated when attending at ByLarm in November 2016 the following;

"Men aren`t naturally better at running record labels or booking bands, or being sound engineers. Men aren`t naturally smarter than women at anything. The Civil Rights Movement didn`t come about naturally. It didn`t wait for old and middle aged white men. The end of Apartheid didn`t come about naturally, because South Africa waited for old and middle aged white men to decide it was time. It would help if the white men around me stood up and demanded gender equality. Called out their sexist colleagues, got them sacked. Supported women who suffers sexism and misogyny. And don`t give me that crap about having "the right person" for the job! We don`t hire the right person for the job, we hire the man for the job. And if that`s not true, how the fuck did we get to a situation where 91% of the most influential people in the industry are men? White men! Are you really trying to tell me that in almost all roles men are just naturally better than women?" (Andy Inglis, ByLarm 2016)

Although the feminist wave is including and is supposed to gather girls in a united sisterhood, it could still be better at also embracing the differences *inside* the feminist wave. Ida Charlotte Bratteberg Jakobsen, guitarist and vocalist of the band "Intetkjønn", thinks that however uniting the feminist wave has a tendency of being too much hetero normatively.

She thinks that there this way could be a kind of a double standard where on the one hand, the feminist wave is a fight against the society, but on the other hand it makes a kind of cult;

"I grew up in a very nice and safe home. Only weird thing about me was that I was gay. When I went to study music at High School I got familiar with the "Blitz" environment in Oslo, but I never really became a real "Blitzer". I don't know, maybe I didn`t feel like I actually belonged there. I think I felt like there was no room for me there, I wasn`t tough enough, I wasn`t edgy enough. When I joined 10 years ago, it was really cool to be at a punk concert at "Blitzern", I loved it, and I felt that all the irony about the place also was really good. But I also felt that there was kind of a double standard there; that one was supposed to be open and including, but at the same time I, who came in with a lot of the same values, could feel so alone and

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as a outcast because I for instance had a blue jacket instead of a leather jacket."
*(*Ida B. Jakobsen, Interview 08.May.2017)

It is, in other words, important to be aware that a female also can have more than *one* social category, and that the feminist wave should always work to keep being as open as possible. No one can decide how you as a girl or a feminist should behave. However, it is a lot of strength in standing together in the fight for equality, and a lot of strength comes from watching others also daring to raise their voice to discrimination.

One could ask oneself why one in 2017 still read terms like "girlband" in the paper, and why media finds it necessary to categorize like that. However, is it okay to use the term boyband? Ida Jakobsen thinks that it is;
"The thing about the term "girlband" is that it is written independent on what kind of genre the music is, while "boyband" is a own kind of genre." (Ida B. Jakobsen, Interview 08.May. 2017)

This is also supported if you do a google search on "boyband" , whereas you then get a Wikipedia site describing the genre, while on "girlband" you only get specific examples on bands that were all girls. While on the one hand, we can think that it is wise to have two separate music-awards on "Spellemann", due to it helps lift female artists up into the light and give young girls role models too reach after, this is also a kind of separation and categorization. One must therefore be gentle with categorizing, and the categories like "female literatures" and "female music" is then a two edged sword – both suggesting equality but also *amplifying* differences.

The same thing could be said about AKKS. While they do a really great job for including girls in the music business, they also *amplify* that this is today not the norm, and some artists have therefore seen AKKS as more of an arena where you focus more on that you are a *girl* than that you want to *play.* However, when something is supposed to challenge today's norm there has to be taken actions, and AKKS has really been doing crucial actions in this area. AKKS is a good

mentor for those with great potential but still has something blocking them from entering the music industry, whether it is societies and/or their own limitations.

While there are general rules that should be the norm for media when it comes too artist preparation, (like for instance; be professional, don't use weird categorization, be gentle, don`t victimize the artist, don`t think that using skin only means one thing), there should also be a general education going on around the public. One has to question why "feminine" things are suggested negative, while "masculine" things are suggested positive.

For example the statement; "You throw like a girl" is suggested negative, and the phrase: "You got balls" (which physically only men possess) is suggested positive. These are limited frames that to a big degree affects how, for instance, kids look at gender and the categorizations here could turn out to be very dangerous.

Conclusion

The music industry has a long way to go!
Even thought there have been improvements in statistics over the years, the music business is *still* characterized by differences in power positions. I would now like to draw lines from the questions I asked in my introduction.

One of the interests with the research was to gain knowledge of how the music industry had dealt with gender balance over the development of time.
My research shows that gender *still* attributed differences in the music business, especially regarding how females gets characterized by society and media, versus how male gets characterized, and how females get neglected by the expectation that they aren`t as good as men are.

Media this way seems to be obsessed with gender, and are obviously too unconscious regarding their own preparation of female artists, especially with their use of words like "girlband" instead of the general "band", and the need to categorize female artists based on relationship status. Razika pointed several

times out, that the stupidest question they got in interviews was: "How is it like to be a girl in a band?"

When female musicians like Razika get comments by surprised audiences, reality shows that the old-fashioned pattern is still existing, even though one would think that by now, the fact that a girl can do just as many things as boys can, would be "old news".

One of the reasons that this attitude still exists is the acceptance for it. Gender differences gets mixed differences; at one hand there is acceptance, otherwise it wouldn`t still be an issue, and on the other hand there are a lot of work being done with organizations just like Loud and "Bransjekunst".

It is no doubt that these organizations are doing a great job to enlighten the gender imbalance in the music industry, and even though Norway is in a position of being one of the world`s most equal countries, those kind of organizations are still needed. If they had lost their purpose, they wouldn`t exist today, it is as simple as that.

Just like girl power riot in the nineties, the organizations themselves are not endpoints but rather gateways which will hopefully eventually have helped open up to a *more* profound equality of the sexes, and become of no use.

On the question how pop music is able to unite the female part of the society, and strengthen their battle for gender equality I think the Loud campers I interviewed pretty much summed that up;

"Last year I was a vocalist in one of the bands at the camp. It was really scary, because I had never been singing in front of others before and I was terrified of singing! But I got so much support and learned so much both from the leaders and the other participants that I eventually made it. Now I am even a vocalist in a band back at home, thanks too Loud." ("Rachel" interview 12 June 2015)

There have been, and always will be, a strength in being more. Not just a girl alone in her bedroom singing to the radio, but rather girls who come together.

One of the things I found interesting with the young girls views regarding to the stereotypical attitudes that I discovered during my research was their innocence in relation to the feminist idea. It struck me that a lot of the girls didn`t have a clear opinion on the state of todays music industry, whereas when asked if they thought gender balance in the music industry was good or bad, their response was; *"I don`t know",* which got me thinking that it is *our* responsibility to keep it this way.

If a camp focuses on girls doing everything inside the industry; from drums, guitars, vocals to vocal engineering and sound machines, this is what their views will become. This way we will have a generation growing up *without* the restrictions that maybe has prevented the older one from these professions. The key is in other words to focus on the **music**, and not the abnormality we are trying to change.

As adults we may have a certain view on what we think is wrong with the equality in the industry today, but what is important is that we encourage the change rather than transferring these views on to the young girls. There is a saying that kids are free and it's the world that transfer the limitations to it, and I think this is also the case in working with young girls and music.

This assignment proves that there is definitely some kind of exploiting going on in the music business today, especially regarding to gender. Of course, as mentioned in Marxian theory it is not the same kind of exploitation for symbol workers that it is for people working on the floor, but nonetheless it is unfair advantage going on. The attitude towards gender that still exists is showing us that society as a *whole* has an imbalance problem. But we have to start *somewhere,* and if the cultural industry really is **"the forefront"** of the new economy, why not start here?

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