

NOT WHAT *ALMOST FAMOUS* MADE IT OUT TO BE: GENDERED HARASSMENT  
OF FEMALE MUSIC JOURNALISTS

Simone Carter

Thesis Prepared for the Degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

May 2022

APPROVED:

Tracy Everbach, Committee Chair  
Randy Loftis, Committee Member  
Sara Champlin, Committee Member  
James Mueller, Director of the Frank W.  
Mayborn Graduate Institute of  
Journalism  
Andrea Miller, Dean of the Frank W. and Sue  
Mayborn School of Journalism  
Tamara L. Brown, Executive Dean of the  
College of Liberal Arts and Social  
Sciences  
Victor Prybutok, Dean of the Toulouse  
Graduate School

Carter, Simone. *Not What “Almost Famous” Made It Out to Be: Gendered Harassment of Female Music Journalists*. Master of Arts (Journalism), May 2022, 104 pp., 2 tables, 2 appendices, references, 142 titles.

As with women journalists in other male-dominated fields, female music writers have long endured gendered harassment. In the newsroom, this sexist treatment is foisted upon female music journalists by their male editors and colleagues; in the outside world, it often occurs at the hands of male sources, readers, and online trolls. Unfortunately, the victims of such abuse are frequently left to cope with it alone, and many report that their mental health suffers in the process. Some may even ultimately decide to quit pursuing music journalism entirely. These women report wanting to feel more supported within their work environment, as well as through informal means, such as via a network of fellow female writers. Feminist media theory, utilitarianism, and ethics of care will serve as the study’s theoretical bases. This research, based on in-depth interviews with women music journalists, suggests that the vast majority of participants had faced sexism and/or gendered harassment during their time as a female music journalist, experiences that left many of them feeling frustrated and devalued. Based on the research, I offer recommendations on how to make the industry more inclusive for women writers.

Copyright 2022

by

Simone Carter

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to my thesis chair and mentor, Dr. Tracy Everbach, who has helped to steer me throughout this project, as well as committee members Professor Randy Loftis and Dr. Sara Champlin. In addition, I would like to thank my mother for guiding me through the rigors of academia, my father for passing down his love and knowledge of music and writing, and my husband for his unending support and encouragement. This thesis would not be possible without you all.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iii
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW .....	5
Internet Trolls.....	5
Sexism in the Newsroom .....	8
Gendered Harassment of Sports and Technology Journalists.....	12
Sexism in Music Journalism and Stereotyping of Female Musicians .....	14
CHAPTER 3. RELEVANT THEORETICAL POSITIONS .....	24
Feminist Media Theory .....	24
Ethics of Care.....	25
Utilitarianism .....	26
CHAPTER 4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....	28
CHAPTER 5. ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS .....	29
CHAPTER 6. QUESTION/PROBLEM TO BE ADDRESSED .....	33
CHAPTER 7. METHODOLOGY .....	34
Specific Questions .....	36
CHAPTER 8. RESULTS .....	40
Demographic Analysis.....	40
Sexism Within the Newsroom .....	43
Sexism Outside the Newsroom.....	54
Devaluing.....	60
Threats and Targeted Abuse .....	65
Responses.....	70
CHAPTER 9. DISCUSSION.....	79
CHAPTER 10. CONCLUSION .....	88

APPENDIX A. LIST OF QUESTIONS .....	89
APPENDIX B. DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS.....	91
REFERENCES .....	93

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Despite the rise of the #MeToo social movement, women frequently face sexism and gendered harassment in the newsroom (Adams, 2018; Eberspacher, 2019). Misogynistic attacks have long shaped women's lives in the physical realm, with women making decisions about where they can go and how they act in public based on the fear that they could be sexually harassed or assaulted (Sobieraj, 2018). Yet at the same time, gendered abuse has also begun to influence how women act in the virtual sphere, especially for those in public-facing careers such as journalism.

At the dawn of the Internet, some journalists and media scholars initially assigned the web's rise with the lofty claim that it would become a bastion for democracy and productive discourse. Here was an outlet that would provide minorities and outsiders with a megaphone to express their views. Such ideas would offer important feedback for media professionals, helping to suggest corrections and inspire future stories (Eberwein, 2019; Nadim & Fladmoe, 2019; Reader, 2012). While that has partly turned out to be true, online chat rooms and comments sections have also degenerated into a cesspool where women are harassed and attacked with greater frequency and vitriol than men (Eberspacher, 2019; Everbach, 2018; Miller & Lewis, 2020). This "gendertrolling" (Mantilla, 2013, p. 563) has also become a reality for female journalists, whose supervisors frequently pressure them to build a robust social media following to increase readership, and thus, revenue (Chen et al., 2020; Finneman et al., 2019).

Many female journalists report enduring gendered harassment in newsrooms, which often still operate under a patriarchal structure with relatively few women in leadership positions (Finneman et al., 2019; North, 2016; Steiner, 2012). Certain types of female journalists are

particularly prone to gendered harassment. Television reporters, for instance, are subjected to heightened scrutiny of their appearance because of the visual nature of their medium (Chen et al., 2020; Finneman et al., 2019). Other journalists who write about topics that are viewed as “masculine,” such as technology, sports, and automobiles, are also frequent fodder for bigoted web users (Adams, 2018; Antunovic, 2019; Chen et al., 2020; Eberspacher, 2019; Everbach, 2018; Mantilla, 2013; Sobieraj, 2018).

Meanwhile, the music industry is another field that is marked by male dominance: It both primarily markets to white heteronormative male fans and promotes male musicians, executives, and producers (Davies, 2001; Elafros, 2010). In 2020, the number of female songwriters and performers with hit songs tanked, with women making up a total of 2.6% of producers, 12.6% of writers, and 21.6% of musicians (Wang, 2021). Female artists, music journalists, and fans have frequently become targets of gendered harassment and stereotyping (Davies, 2001; Whipple & Coleman, 2021; Zimmerman, 2015), as have female concert photographers (Lough, 2020). An extreme example of gendered abuse in the music world is the ill-fated Woodstock ‘99 music festival, during which numerous female fans reported getting groped, molested, and sexually assaulted by male attendees (Hyden, 2019; Michel, 1999; Vanhorn, 1999).

Yet to date, little academic research has focused on uncovering whether female music reporters have been forced to endure similar gendered harassment to that experienced by women journalists in other male-dominated beats. So-called “toxic masculinity” is a term used to describe the adherence to exaggerated masculine traits and a general devaluation of women (Johnson, 2020). Since the concept plagues the music world in the same way it does the sports and technology arenas, it seems likely that music journalists would experience the same type of treatment. In addition to learning whether these writers face gendered harassment, this research

aims to investigate the extent to which such abuse jeopardizes their mental, physical, and fiscal well-being.

Throughout my time as a journalist, I have also faced various forms of sexism and gendered harassment. I work at a Dallas alt-weekly as a staff news writer, although I cut my teeth freelancing there for the music section. My boss is a cisgender, heterosexual white male in his early-60s who has commented on my appearance and clothing. At times when I'm not wearing much makeup, he might say I "look tired." Once, in the middle of a surge in coronavirus cases, he directed me to remove my face covering so that I could "smile" at him. (Suddenly forced into an awkward position, I unfortunately obliged.) Meanwhile, I have also received gendered harassment from online trolls; sometimes, male readers will remark on my appearance instead of the content of my articles. In emails, I have been called a "slut," a "bitch," a "cunt," and a "whore with daddy issues." To be sure, my male colleagues will also receive mean-spirited messages from upset readers. However, such emails are rarely, if ever, gendered in nature; the troll never brings up their looks or sexuality.

With this thesis, I wanted to learn whether other female music writers have endured similar gendered harassment, in part so that I could better understand my own experiences with the phenomenon. Although I would have preferred to be an outlier in this scenario, many of the women I spoke with had gone through far worse than me. This study seeks to examine what I had previously only assumed: The music industry was, and continues to be, hostile toward female journalists, musicians, and fans. I have used several theories to justify my research and bolster my claims. To begin, I interviewed participants using an ethics of care (Camponez, 2014; Held, 2014; Hossain & Aucoin, 2017), listening to and analyzing their responses with an emphasis on empathy. Feminist media theory (Lucht & Batschelet, 2019) has also helped me

understand how these female music journalists experience the male-dominated newsroom and cope with gendered harassment. Utilitarianism, which seeks to provide the greatest good for the most people (Johnson, 2008), has assisted in understanding why some editors may have failed to crack down on troll abuse.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Internet Trolls

When the Internet was still in its infancy, newsroom staff and leadership saw an opportunity: Here was a way to attract a wide readership that could provide prompt input on articles. This would offer newsrooms a type of free feedback, with Internet users suggesting corrections and even pitching ideas for future reporting (Eberwein, 2019; Nadim & Fladmoe, 2019; Reader, 2012). In addition, many believed that the Internet would serve as a type of town square, wherein marginalized groups could freely and openly express their views (Everbach, 2018). Yet the Internet would soon provide cover for some who were happy to take advantage of their online anonymity to unleash deep-seated vitriol and hate, virtually free from consequence (Chen et al., 2020; Reader, 2012). This would also ultimately serve to reinforce many of the same inequalities that the Internet's forebearers had hoped to upend (Sobieraj, 2018).

Although the rosier predictions proved to be true in many ways, some did not foresee the rise of the Internet "troll," who is a person who gets perverse satisfaction from posting hate-filled content online (Eberwein, 2019; Reader, 2012). Trolls can also sometimes take it to the extreme via harassment campaigns, leaving their victims afraid for their personal safety. The healthy online discourse that editors had initially envisioned often devolves into a cesspool of cheap personal insults and derogatory slurs. Although both men and women can become troll targets, young women are more likely to be stalked and sexually harassed in the virtual realm (Duggan, 2014). Female academics, politicians, and journalists have found themselves among trolls' favorite targets for this type of online abuse (Sobieraj, 2018). These women are often faced with attempts to discredit their work, with trolls relying on lazy but harmful gendered insults, such as

“whore,” “ditz,” and “bitch,” to chip away at the idea that their female victims can offer valid perspectives. In many cases, this abuse can be severely psychologically damaging and may even serve as the impetus for women to quit journalism (Chen et al., 2020; Ging & Siapera, 2018; North, 2016).

Before long, the term troll became synonymous with the types of sexism, bigotry, and racism that vulnerable groups were already used to dealing with offline in the “real world.” Trolls began transferring their disdain for women onto the online sphere, especially when those women worked in public-facing positions, such as academics and journalists (Sobieraj, 2018). On the Internet, harassment is relatively common partly due to the *online disinhibition effect*, a phenomenon that allows web users to feel emboldened to harass others because they are cloaked in anonymity (Chen et al., 2020; Everbach, 2018; Suler, 2004).

Researchers have found that some Internet users engage in behavior that they normally wouldn't humor offline, and the *online disinhibition effect* can manifest in two seemingly dichotomous ways. With *benign disinhibition*, some may exhibit “unusual acts of kindness and generosity” (Suler, 2004, p. 321). However, the online realm is also riddled with crime, pornography, and violence. As such, certain others may feel free to engage in *toxic disinhibition*, a form of “blind catharsis” wherein they act out in a more destructive way. At times, this form of disinhibition may manifest through language rooted in anger and hatred, and some may even hurl physical threats against their Internet targets. For this study's purposes, references to such a phenomenon will center around the latter case: *toxic disinhibition*.

In seemingly no time following the advent of the web, female reporters soon became favorite targets of trolls, facing harassment at a much higher rate than their male colleagues (Adams, 2018; Chen et al., 2020; Eberspacher, 2019; Mantilla, 2013). In fact, around 63% of

female journalists say they have been threatened or harassed online at some point during their careers; others have even received rape and death threats (International Women's Media Foundation, 2018). Some women writers also report they have received sexualized messages over social media messaging applications, including crude and explicit text messages and unwanted photographs of male readers' genitals (Miller & Lewis, 2020). As such, some women have had to block virtual harassers; others have chosen to avoid opening certain messages and may simply skip reading comments on their articles altogether (Adams, 2018; Everbach, 2018; Miller & Lewis, 2020). Some would argue that is a wise decision, considering that as many as 20% of comments are imbued with "incivility," including name-calling, insults, and profanity (Chen et al., 2020, p. 879).

While gendered harassment itself is a form of incivility, it differs from other forms because of its overtly sexualized and misogynistic nature. Such sexism can be benevolent or hostile, depending on the context of the insult (Chen et al., 2020; Glick & Fiske, 1996). The former works to perpetuate societal norms in a paternalistic way, such as the idea that women should be the primary caretakers in a family or that they will need to turn to a man for help when they are in trouble. This could help to explain the reason why studies have shown that male professionals tend to feel more threatened by bosses who are female than those who are male, as well as women who behave in a way that is more assertive (Netchaeva et al., 2015).

On the other hand, calling a female journalist "ugly and fat" would fall more in line with so-called "hostile sexism" because it is both negative and misogynistic in nature (Glick & Fiske, 1996, p. 491). By contrast, an example of an "uncivil" insult that would be considered more gender-neutral would be if a reader called a journalist an "idiot," since that term lacks a sexual connotation (Chen et al., 2020, p. 880). Thus, for the purposes of this thesis, I am careful to

differentiate instances of gendered harassment from the more gender-neutral incivility faced by study respondents.

Female journalists writing about certain beats frequently encounter virulent gendered abuse, often to their mental and potentially physical detriment (Eberspacher, 2019; Everbach, 2018; Sobieraj, 2018). These women may write about divisive “hard news” topics such as politics and race relations (Chen et al., 2020; Eberspacher, 2019), or they may cover other male-dominated arenas, such as technology (Adams, 2018; Mantilla, 2013) and sports (Antunovic, 2019; Everbach, 2018). Even though many victims of abuse are encouraged to develop a “thicker skin” (Chen et al., 2020; Finneman et al., 2019; North, 2016) and ignore gendered harassment, it is usually easier said than done. In some cases, female journalists even leave the field entirely (Adams, 2018; Chen et al., 2020; Lough, 2020; Mantilla, 2013).

Still, many news executives feel queasy at the prospect of introducing stricter online regulations. Some claim that they need to preserve comments in the interest of reader engagement, and others say they must safeguard readers’ “right” to dissent (Binns, 2012; Eberspacher, 2019; Reader, 2012). Yet to many of the journalists who are victims of gendered harassment campaigns, their bosses’ unwillingness to intervene may feel like a lack of support from an organization that they believe should strive to defend its employees. Without the proper communication, journalists may feel as though their editors’ inaction indicates a lack of caring (Everbach, 2018).

### Sexism in the Newsroom

Just as toxic patriarchal systems are present in organizations and institutions throughout Western culture, they can also be found in the newsroom (Adams, 2018; Eberspacher, 2019; Everbach, 2018; Finneman et al., 2019; North, 2016; Steiner, 2012). At once romanticized and

toxic, hegemonic masculinity is a form of heterosexual masculinity that works to ensure machismo men remain in positions of power (Messerschmidt, 2019). As in other professions, it is also present in journalism. Even though women are increasingly getting promoted to the upper echelon in other careers, female journalists still report it is comparatively difficult to climb the ladder (Finneman et al., 2019). Generally speaking, female professionals say they have to work harder to convince others of their competence. In one 2018 survey, almost a third of female professionals said they felt that way, compared with 16% of their male counterparts (Krivkovich et al., 2018). Women are also two times as likely as their male colleagues to be “mistaken for someone in a more junior position” (Krivkovich et al., 2018, p. 18).

Many female writers are damned if they succeed in their profession, as they are accused of having received “special favors” on account of their sexuality or gender. Yet they are also damned if they make any mistakes, which are viewed as an indictment on all women (Chen et al., 2020, p. 884). In the male-dominated newsroom, female journalists often are expected to act like “one of the boys,” and they aspire to meet and exceed standards set by male editors, publishers, and colleagues (Steiner, 2012, p. 210). In fact, until around the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, some women took it as a compliment if someone dubbed their work “just like a man’s.”

Each year, newsrooms are increasingly realizing the importance of diversity, both in terms of journalistic output and as a business imperative (American Press Institute, n.d.). Yet publications have “failed spectacularly” at reaching such an ideal (Arana, 2018). Even though racial and ethnic minorities account for nearly 40% of the country’s population, they still only make up less than 17% of online and print staff. The numbers are even more abysmal for newspaper officials: Only 13% of newsroom leaders are minorities. Diversity in the newsroom is necessary for a healthy democracy. If female and minority reporters continue to leave the

industry, then readers cannot benefit from the unique perspectives those writers otherwise would have offered to the public discourse (Adams, 2018; Nadim & Fladmoe, 2019).

Even though sexual harassment is still frequently experienced by female journalists, patriarchal newsroom cultures discourage them from telling their superiors (Eberspacher, 2019; North, 2016) or law enforcement (Miller & Lewis, 2020). Many women avoid reporting such abuse because they believe it could be damaging to their career in the long run; they think that if they were to say anything negative about their co-workers and supervisors, it could potentially backfire and spoil their chances of climbing the work ladder in a meaningful way. They also do not want to be perceived as trivial, soft, or overly sensitive (North, 2016). Thus, some conclude that it is futile to say anything at all. Even when they do, they are often told they need to have a “thick skin” to get by in the journalism industry, which consistently dismisses and undermines women’s and minorities’ valid fears of mental and physical harm (Adams, 2018; Chen et al., 2020; Everbach, 2018; Finneman et al., 2019; Hardin & Shain, 2006; North, 2016).

Many female journalists who are more public-facing, such as broadcast news reporters, are regularly hit with gendered harassment that focuses on their appearance (Adams, 2018; Chen et al., 2020; Finneman et al., 2019). This differs from the harassment faced by male colleagues, who receive sexualized threats less often than female reporters, relatively speaking. In Flatow’s (1994) study of sexual harassment in Indiana newsrooms, more than two-thirds of female staff reported that at some point, they had been the victim of sexual harassment. Meanwhile, 22.4% of those female reporters said they had endured physical sexual harassment during their career, compared with just 6.6% of men saying the same.

A separate survey by Walsh-Childers et al. (1996) indicated that more than 60% of female news reporters in America think that sexual harassment is an issue for women reporters.

Decades have since passed, but the problem is still ever-present. In 2018, 58% of female journalists reported being harassed or threatened in person, with more than a quarter having been physically attacked at some point (International Women’s Media Foundation, 2018).

By and large, the industry has failed to adequately address issues of sexual harassment. Based on one Australian study, it is an issue far more rampant in newsrooms than in the general workforce: In that country, female journalists are twice as likely to experience gendered harassment than female non-journalists (North, 2016). Such treatment has led certain female journalists to remove themselves from their workplace’s social circle and to behave more conservatively than they normally would. Some also alter the way that they dress in order to avoid attracting the male gaze, in which a “woman is visually positioned as an ‘object’ of heterosexual male desire” (Loreck, 2016). Many survivors blame themselves for the sexual harassment they have endured. These women also sense an overall feeling of inadequacy; indeed, those who do push to expose such wrongdoings within their organization often report that they ultimately became devalued (North, 2016). In fact, some women say that sexual harassment has become virtually routine. They are seemingly resigned to the fact that they will fall victim to such behavior, both in the newsroom from male coworkers and outside it from male readers (Adams, 2018; North, 2016), especially if they are expected to engage with followers on social media (Chen et al., 2020).

With a lack of support from majority-male leadership and frequent attacks from vicious trolls, some female journalists begin to do whatever they can to preserve their mental well-being (Adams, 2018; Chen et al., 2020; Eberspacher, 2019; Finneman et al., 2019; Sobieraj, 2018). To avoid experiencing anxiety, panic attacks, and depression, some opt to become choosier in terms of the stories they pitch. Certain media scholars have decried the move as a devastating, albeit

understandable, form of self-censorship (Adams, 2018; Chen et al., 2020; Eberspacher, 2019; Finneman et al., 2019; Sobieraj, 2018). Since many have come to realize that divisive topics like feminism, race, and politics can attract an inordinate number of hate-filled emails, they may begin to avoid writing about such subjects. In one case, a journalist even hesitated to release a book she had already written because she was so worried about the reactions it would elicit, including that it would not be taken seriously because of her gender (Adams, 2018). This example is viewed by Adams (2018) as a form of retreat; I sought to avoid reprisal from a newsroom culture steeped in toxic masculinity.

### Gendered Harassment of Sports and Technology Journalists

As in the real world, toxic masculinity has run rampant in the online sphere, particularly among men who are avid video gamers (Nieborg & Foxman, 2018). In fact, Braithwaite (2016) has created a term for the trend: “geek masculinity” (p. 1). As in the sports world (Antunovic, 2019; Everbach, 2018), the only players in gaming culture who are viewed as being truly legitimate are men, a fact that ultimately provided fertile soil for the emergence of Gamergate in 2014 (Nieborg & Foxman, 2018). Female video gamers and, by extension, female game critics and developers, are consistently devalued and denigrated in the gaming realm, and pushes to diversify the industry have been met with fierce resistance. Gamergate “hooligans” (Mortensen, 2018, p. 787) believe that social justice warriors and women are fixated on taking away their current games so that they can replace them with ones that are more inclusive (Braithwaite, 2016). This has led certain misogynistic male gamers to lash out in disturbing ways.

The Gamergate movement had been brewing for some time, but scholars believe it formally launched after a bitter software developer sought revenge on his game-developer ex-girlfriend, Zoe Quinn. He posted hate-filled missives online and accused Quinn of sleeping with

a game critic who gave her latest effort a glowing review (Illing, 2017; Mortensen, 2018; Nieborg & Foxman, 2018). From there, hordes of anonymous misogynists joined in the effort to troll Quinn and other female video gamers, who at various times were doxed and stalked; some were even recipients of rape and death threats (Mantilla, 2013; Mortensen, 2018; Quinn, 2017). One particularly grueling case was that of Anita Sarkeesian, a game critic who spearheaded a fundraising campaign for a project that focused on exposing sexism in the gaming industry. However, this effort enraged bigoted trolls, and Sarkeesian's phone number and home address were posted online. She also received gruesome doctored images that depicted her being raped and beaten (Mantilla, 2013; Nieborg & Foxman, 2018). These harassers were attempting to convey the message that there is no room for women in the male-dominated gaming world, and that those females who did attempt to break barriers would be punished for it.

Perhaps even less surprisingly, sports journalism is another field that is riddled with accounts of gendered harassment (Antunovic, 2019; Everbach, 2018). Hegemonic masculinity runs rampant in this arena, which emphasizes the masculine over the feminine: brawn over brains, reason over emotion (Everbach, 2018; Kane & Disch, 1993). In a survey from nearly three decades ago, female journalists in sports news organizations reported feeling "invisible" within their particular department, and many said they had experienced gendered harassment, sexist treatment, and unequal job opportunities (Miller & Miller, 1995). One study learned that nearly half of female sports journalists (48%) said they had been sexually harassed, typically in locker rooms by their sources (Hardin & Shain, 2006). Other surveys indicate that these professionals often endure sexist discrimination from male athletes, peers, coaches, administrators, and other sports professionals (Miloch et al., 2005; Pedersen et al., 2009). However, it is ultimately the perceived lack of upward mobility that pushes some female sports

journalists to leave the field, thereby perpetuating hegemonic masculinity (Hardin & Shain, 2006; Smucker et al., 2003).

Men in sports journalism frequently feel threatened by the female journalists who dare to carve out a space for themselves in the stadium (Everbach, 2018). The presence of these women challenges the control and power that has long been exercised solely by heteronormative men. Kane and Disch (1993) note that female sports journalists must walk a proverbial tightrope to make it out of the locker room unscathed; one directive these women must follow is to keep their eyes trained to the floor. In addition, these female reporters cannot be perceived as getting too friendly with any of the players they cover; otherwise, they could face allegations that they have had, or want to have, sex with the athletes (Kane & Disch, 1993). One especially egregious example of gendered harassment in sports journalism comes from a September day in 1990, when sportswriter Lisa Olson entered the New England Patriots locker room after the team had finished a practice session. During an interview with a key player, naked male athletes “paraded past her” on their way to the showers, with one man showing off his genitals in a sexually suggestive way and others similarly “modeling” their penises (Kane & Disch, 1993, p. 332). Olson reported feeling demeaned and humiliated, later labeling the incident as “mind rape.” Adding insult to injury, after news of the ordeal broke, the team’s owner responded by allegedly calling Olson a “classic bitch.”

### Sexism in Music Journalism and Stereotyping of Female Musicians

For decades, men have largely controlled the domain of “hard news,” such as breaking news and stories on politics, business, and international affairs (Irvin, 2013; North, 2016). Women journalists are frequently relegated to cover what’s known as “soft news,” which is composed of entertainment, celebrity, lifestyle, and human-interest pieces (Everbach, 2018;

Irvin, 2013; North, 2016; Paul et al., 2021). Since these stories often lack timeliness when compared with breaking news, it also means that women are less likely to achieve the coveted front-page byline (Paul et al., 2021). Yet even though music journalism is a form of soft news, it is another genre of journalism that is primarily governed by men (Davies, 2001; Whipple & Coleman, 2021). This phenomenon makes sense, however, when one considers the sexist, bigoted, and misogynistic history of the music industry. By the same token, female experts are frequently underrepresented in hard news stories (Armstrong, 2004; Paul et al., 2021). However, female reporters are much more prone than their male colleagues to cite women experts in their articles (Armstrong, 2004), suggesting a subtle sexist undercurrent in the way that male journalists craft their pieces.

#### Sexism, Misogyny, and Gendered Harassment Faced by Female Artists, Songwriters, and Producers

In 2016, the pop music industry generated roughly \$5.5 billion and was largely driven by female stars. However, men still accounted for nearly 68% of all jobs, as well as the great majority of leadership roles and other positions of power (*Marie Claire*, 2019). Often, women in the music industry report feeling like their bodies are exploited for monetary gain and that they are viewed as little more than sex objects. Many female artists say it is difficult for them to get the same recognition as their male colleagues (Moore, 2021; Pentreath, 2021; Saunders, 2020); in one recent study, 81% of female music-creator respondents agreed with that statement (Kahlert & Das, 2021).

At the same time, some female pop artists report feeling as though their success is intimidating to men (*Marie Claire*, 2019). In an interview with *Vogue* in 2019, one of the biggest names in pop music, Taylor Swift, admitted that the older she got, the more she realized that the music industry is sexist (Aguirre, 2019). As Swift entered womanhood, she said she felt as

though men's attitudes toward her also changed. Rather than being a teen who could very well be their niece or daughter, Swift was now a powerful, independent woman with a wildly successful career. In an interview with *Vogue*, Swift explained this phenomenon:

It's fine to infantilize a girl's success and say, "How cute that she's having some hit songs." But the second it becomes formidable? As soon as I started playing stadiums — when I started to look like a woman — that wasn't as cool anymore. (quoted in Aguirre, 2019)

Another global pop sensation, Ariana Grande, echoed that sentiment in a 2018 interview with *Billboard*: "It's just so male-dominated. It's so easy for them," Grande said of the music industry at the time (Weiner, 2018). "There are so many unbelievable female artists out there that try so much harder. I feel like there are certain standards that pop women are held to that men aren't."

At the same time that female professionals are becoming more common and gaining agency, reports of sexism in the music world have continued to rear their ugly heads. Male producers still dominate the industry, countering the rise of female empowerment in historically misogynistic genres, such as R&B and hip-hop (Chandler & Gordon, 2019; Hecht, 2021; Johnston, 2021). In fact, only 2% of music-industry producers are women (Hecht, 2021), and females also account for just 12% of songwriters and around 21% of artists (Smith et al., 2019). Like working women in general (Krivkovich et al., 2018), around 43% of female songwriters and producers say they feel as though their skills are frequently underestimated or discounted, while 39% report having been sexualized or stereotyped (Smith et al., 2019). Also, 83% have endured some form of discomfort within the studio, stemming from occurrences such as being the only female in the room or objectification.

### Groupies and Teenyboppers

In the male-dominated music journalism realm, female fans are often viewed as groupies who pick their favorite bands based on the musicians to whom they are the most sexually

attracted (Davies, 2001). To the masculine music press, these fans are incapable of understanding “serious” music, so their tastes and preferences are frequently ignored or even derided. Young female fans are also sometimes dismissed by music journalists as so-called “teenyboppers,” a term used to describe listeners who purportedly lack understanding of cerebral music and therefore are incapable of authentically enjoying songs that do not appear at the top of the pops (Buckingham, n.d.; Davies, 2001). Bands that get dubbed as teenybopper favorites, such as One Direction and Backstreet Boys, are similarly not taken seriously in the music press by extension, in large part because of their devoted fanbases (Buckingham, n.d.; Davies, 2001; Trast, 2016). However, men are rarely, if ever, considered teenyboppers; it is a feminized term that trivializes the tastes and preferences of young female fans as both shallow and superficial (Buckingham, n.d.; Davies, 2001).

The music press has also ridiculed these fans’ enthusiasm as “hysteria” (Buckingham, n.d.; Davies, 2001), a historically sexist term used to dismiss the feelings and emotions of women as part of a gender-based mental disorder (Cohut, 2020; Elster, 2019; Michaels, 2016). Unfortunately, this lack of respect for female fans has carried over into the real world, where female music lovers are targeted by sexual harassment and abuse. One example is what transpired during the aforementioned Woodstock ‘99 fiasco (Hyden, 2019; Michel, 1999; Vanhorn, 1999). At that music festival, at least four rapes were reported to have occurred. Male fans even harassed one of the festival’s few female artists, Sheryl Crow, screaming at her to demand that she show them her breasts (Powers, 1999). At the time, one of rock’s preeminent female critics slammed the disastrous event as a sort of crude wake-up call:

Sexy fun is one thing, but this was an orgy of lewdness tinged with hate. If only this were an isolated phenomenon arising from the primal state that concertgoers entered after three days in the dust and the garbage. Sadly, though, boneheaded sexism is on the rise throughout the rock scene. (Powers, 1999)

## Riot Grrrl Movement

In the 1990s, the burgeoning third-wave feminist movement explored themes of intersectionality, a term used to describe the way that gender, race, class, and other traits overlap with one another (Coaston, 2019). Whereas the previous two waves were focused on suffrage and reproductive rights, third-wave feminism homed in on the inclusion of historically oppressed races, genders, and sexualities (Grady, 2018; Johnston, 2021; Lupton, 2018). Before long, a new wave within the music world sprung from this wellspring of ideas about equality and acceptance: the riot grrrl movement. Echoing the third-wave feminist themes of safety and inclusivity, the riot grrrl scene forged a safe space for musicians other than white, heterosexual, cisgender men (Johnston, 2021). Still, critics say that the movement could have done more in terms of inclusivity, as it was not entirely accessible to non-white fans and listeners (Dunn & Farnsworth, 2012; Nguyen, 2012; Tatevosian, 2020).

The riot grrrl movement began to sweep certain parts of the country in the early '90s, with female-fronted bands such as Bikini Kill, Bratmobile, and Babes in Toyland taking center stage (Hunt, 2019; Tatevosian, 2020). In a 1992 zine by one of riot grrrl's foremothers, Erika Reinstein, she explained that the movement was driven, in part, by the media's misrepresentation of female artists: "...in every form of media I see us/myself slapped, decapitated, laughed at, trivialized, pushed, ignored, stereotyped, kicked, scorned, molested, silenced, invalidated, knifed, shot, choked, and killed" (quoted in Dunn & Farnsworth, 2012, p. 141). Yet despite its far-reaching impact on future female musicians, the riot grrrl movement did not last long; by the end of the decade, it had largely sputtered out. Riot grrrl's core message of "girl power" had been co-opted by more mainstream groups such as The Spice Girls, and its founders were also fed up with the way that the media continued to misrepresent the scene and its members (Davies, 2001;

Dunn & Farnsworth, 2012; Hunt, 2019; Tatevosian, 2020). Often, coverage failed to capture nuances within the movement, and some complained that the analysis was surface-level (Buckingham, n.d.). The feminist politics of riot grrrl were trivialized and, at times, even ridiculed, and the movement was lumped in with other musical genres, including grunge.

During the 1990s, women in the riot grrrl music scene explored a sort of artistic catharsis, penning lyrics about problems such as racism, sexuality, rape, incest, domestic violence, the patriarchy, and female empowerment (Davies, 2001; Downes, 2012; Dunn & Farnsworth, 2012; Nguyen, 2012). They also adopted much of the aesthetic of the punk subculture, creating and circulating zines and a do-it-yourself approach to the male-dominated music industry. These women were tired of being excluded from the scene and history at large, and through their music, they worked to reclaim their image and autonomy.

#### #MeToo Movement

More than a decade ago, activist Tarana Burke created a movement, which she dubbed Me Too, to help survivors of sexual misconduct know that they were not alone. Then in 2017, actress Alyssa Milano popularized the saying through the viral hashtag #MeToo, and it quickly turned into a global movement (North, 2019; Pflum, 2018; Sayej, 2017). With #MeToo, people began to better understand the scope of the sexual harassment problem within certain circles, namely in the Hollywood entertainment industry (Gordon, 2020). From there, the movement swept over other sectors, but it took time before it began to creep into music scene in the same way it had already rocked the film world (Arthur, 2020; Humphries, 2019; Lee, 2020).

Eventually, iconic music industry figures were slammed with allegations of sexual impropriety and abuse. These household names came from nearly every musical genre, including pop, rock, R&B, and hip-hop. Music titans such as Michael Jackson, Ryan Adams, Marilyn

Manson, R. Kelly, Kodak Black, and Russell Simmons were effectively toppled by such claims (Arthur, 2020; Humphries, 2019; Lee, 2020; Ryan, 2021). Certain bands also dissolved if one of their members had faced credible accusations of assault or harassment. Two of the primary examples are Matthew Mondanile of Ducktails (formerly the guitarist of the indie band Real Estate) and Matthew Johnson, the lead singer of the United Kingdom-based psychedelic band Hookworms, who were accused of sexual abuse and inappropriate treatment of women (Cush, 2017; Humphries, 2019; Snapes, 2018).

Many women have accused music industry bigwigs of working to shield harassers, either by covering up abuse, siding with the accused, or looking the other way (Domanick, 2018; Humphries, 2019; Lee, 2020). One female music journalist told *Vice* that it is even trickier for a freelance music writer to know what to do following an instance in which they were sexually harassed. Should they look for help? Where? "There's a lot of confusion over what is the boundary and with whom," the freelancer said (quoted in Domanick, 2018). "If I go out to [a drink meeting] with a publicist or a manager and he sexually harasses me, who do I tell?" In the case of Ducktails' Mondanile, one woman described his history of mistreating women as "one of the biggest open secrets in music" (Cush, 2017). Yet gradually, an increasing number of these survivors have come forward to speak their truth, a change that is hitting at a time when the music industry is evolving and the public is more receptive to listening to claims of gendered abuse (Humphries, 2019).

Meanwhile, female musicians have also begun to emerge in solidarity with #MeToo, with some telling their own sordid tales of gendered abuse. These women artists work in virtually every genre, including country (Moss, 2018; Yahr, 2018), rock 'n' roll (Coscarelli & Ryzik, 2019), metal (Kelly, 2018), pop (Maino, 2020; Mapes, 2019), hip-hop (Hobson, 2020), R&B

(Closson, 2021), and classical music (Fetters et al., 2020). Recently, singer-songwriter Alanis Morissette explained that she had channeled much of the “female rage” present in the current #MeToo movement into her breakthrough album, 1995’s *Jagged Little Pill* (Shafer, 2020). Morissette pointed to the culture of rock ‘n’ roll as working to paint a perfect backdrop for the perpetuation of bad behavior. She also argued that the issue of sexual harassment and assault present in the film industry and recently exposed by national media is even more prevalent inside the music world:

Almost every woman in the music industry has been assaulted, harassed, raped. It’s ubiquitous — more in music, even, than film. What, sex, drugs and rock’n’roll? By definition it’s crass, sweaty, and aggressive. But it’s only a matter of time before it has its own explosion of stories. (quoted in Shafer, 2020)

Still, women’s advocates have taken certain steps toward ensuring a more hospitable environment in the music realm. In the United Kingdom, for instance, activists launched a coordinated campaign, Girls Night In, in 2021 to improve women’s safety at shows (Johnston, 2021). UN Women UK, a global organization that seeks to attain gender equality, had released a survey that learned that more than four-fifths of female respondents ages 18–24 had endured sexual harassment (Topping, 2021). In addition, incidents of drink spiking had also been on a steep incline (Johnston, 2021). Girls Night In spearheaded an effort to temporarily boycott music venues and nightclubs throughout the United Kingdom, illustrating how integral women are to the music scene (Johnston, 2021; Wilkinson, 2022).

Other groups have cropped up in an effort to shield music-industry women against gendered harassment, including organizations like Here For The Music in the United States (Abou-Sabe, 2019) and the United Kingdom-based Strut Safe and Girls Against (Johnston, 2021; Owen, 2021; Thraves, 2022). These organizations emphasize the importance of cultivating a sort of network wherein survivors of gendered abuse can share their trauma and experiences on the

path toward healing. Even though the music industry has a long way to go toward securing the just and equitable treatment of women, glimmers of hope can be seen in such strides.

### Sexism Against Female Artists in Coverage

As previously mentioned, the music industry has long remained under the thumb of male artists, producers, and fans, especially those who are white and heterosexual (Davies, 2001; Elafros, 2010). Female musicians are often harassed by male music fans, and they are similarly devalued in coverage written by male music journalists (Whipple & Coleman, 2021; Zimmerman, 2015). When writing about female musicians in features, breaking news, and reviews, many music writers' outdated sexist stances color their copy. Music journalists are much more prone to mention a female artist's appearance, love life, or sexuality when compared with male musicians (Davies, 2001; Whipple & Coleman, 2021). Manda Rin, a Scottish singer who fronts the group Bis, reported that she's angry with the way that she and other women musicians have been treated by the music press. "I'm fed up of articles on girls in bands being purely descriptive of their looks rather than their attitude" (quoted in Davies, 2001, p. 311).

However, analyses of music news articles indicate that female authors are just as likely as men to infuse their stories with certain chauvinistic themes and tropes (Davies, 2001; Whipple & Coleman, 2021). The phenomenon indicates that women writers have internalized the masculine worldview valued by their male coworkers and have adopted a "manly" writing style, which they view as necessary for their success. It is likely that these female journalists do not even realize that they are perpetuating sexist stereotypes. Historically speaking, women are often kicked to the least important parts of the music newsroom (Davies, 2001), an unfortunate trend that may ultimately discourage some would-be music journalists from attempting to break into the industry.

As Whipple and Coleman (2021) found in their study, those who do manage to secure a job in the highly competitive field may unconsciously seek to blend in with the boys. One female music writer for *The Wire*, Frances Morgan, reported that women have near-equal representation in her newsroom (Geesing, 2017). However, she said male journalists still do not view women as their competition but rather as members of a sort of lesser league. In addition, female music journalists' skills and expertise are not as trusted and valued as that of their male counterparts; the same can be said of the work of female musicians. Such a devaluation is also witnessed in Hollywood portrayals of female music journalists; films frequently depict them as elevated "groupies" who use their femininity as a way to secure stories or to sleep with male rock stars. In 2012's *Rock of Ages*, for instance, a rock star seduces a female journalist during his rendition of the song "Wanted Dead or Alive" (Herman, 2019). In another case, a female journalism student competing on *College Jeopardy* said the film *Almost Famous* inspired her to pursue a career in music writing. Host Alex Trebek humiliated her by telling the audience that the only reason she aspired to a career in rock journalism was because she "want[ed] to be a groupie" (Stiernberg, 2020).

Davies (2001) said it best in her groundbreaking research on sexism in the British music press:

It is particularly offensive that women should be sexualised in this way, having to prove that they like male artists for the "right" reasons, whilst male journalists are able to focus completely on the appearance of female artists and to admit to liking them for the "wrong" reasons. (p. 316)

## CHAPTER 3

### RELEVANT THEORETICAL POSITIONS

#### Feminist Media Theory

Men in the newsroom have long maintained hegemony, be it in the traditional “hard news” world or in the “soft news” of music journalism (Davies, 2001; Elafros, 2010; Whipple & Coleman, 2021). Yet under this patriarchal approach, female reporters have complained of gendered treatment and sexual harassment, manifesting in ways such as wage gaps and limited career advancement (Finneman et al., 2019). Even though women make up roughly half of the population, they still have a long way to climb for equitable representation in newsrooms. In 2021, the Reuters Institute reported that just 40% of working journalists were women, out of the 12 markets examined (Robertson et al., 2021).

The numbers are even worse for women in leadership roles, who only make up 22% of top editor positions (Robertson et al., 2021). Meanwhile, women comprise more than two-thirds of graduates with journalism or communications degrees, but as of 2017, men still accounted for 62% of bylines and 84% of Pulitzer Prizes (York, 2017). When taking into account an entire century, women journalists still just took home 14% of Pulitzer Prizes (Women’s Media Center, 2017). Gendered wage gaps also remain, with female reporters at Dow Jones publications like the *Wall Street Journal* earning less than 85% of what their male counterparts make (Funke, 2017).

Feminist media theory highlights the intersectional nature of gender, culture, and power to understand how those aspects mold media workers’ experiences. It also underscores the way that stories are produced, as well as the effects of media representations (Lucht & Batschelet, 2019). Using the framework of feminist media theory, this study will investigate how female

music journalists process and make sense of their workplace experiences, in addition to how they cope with gendered harassment. As previously explained, female journalists already face sexism in the newsroom and beyond, manifesting in phenomena such as employment, promotion, and pay inequities. Feminist media theory allows me to synthesize participants' experiences in a way that avoids perpetuating patriarchal societal mores. Although this method could be labeled by critics as "activist" in nature, it is clear that attempts to address the gendered harassment issue under the current approaches have thus far remained unsuccessful.

### Ethics of Care

Many female journalists say they feel unsupported by their superiors when they do report instances of gendered harassment. In some cases, they perceive that their organization does not take this abuse seriously and they refrain from sharing such occurrences (Chen et al., 2020; Eberspacher, 2019). Not only do they believe that reporting sexual harassment would be pointless, but some women say doing so could be damaging to their careers. They do not want to appear overly sensitive or weak in the male-dominated newsroom (North, 2016). Rather than implementing structural changes to shield valued employees from vitriol that could endanger their mental health and, potentially, their physical safety (Sobieraj, 2018), editors may simply tell their employees to "brush it off" and refrain from reading mean emails. This treatment runs counter to Carol Gilligan's ethics of care theory. Rooted firmly in feminism, the ethics of care dictates that stakeholders must protect the most vulnerable among them (Camponoz, 2014; Held, 2014; Hossain & Aucoin, 2017).

Those who operate under an ethics of care in journalism would insist on the transformation of the newsroom from an unfeeling patriarchal organization to one of caring, with the goal of seeking the "kind of justice caring calls for" (Held, 2014, p. 108). Journalists who

work this way always strive to safeguard their sources' well-being. Similarly, editors adopting this approach would consider the mental and physical health and safety of their journalists as paramount, and they would take claims of gendered harassment seriously. Plus, if journalists feel heard and validated by their bosses, it could potentially aid in employee retention since some are being driven from the field to avoid harassment (Adams, 2018; Eberspacher, 2019; Everbach, 2018; Finneman et al., 2019). The music journalism world is already a hostile place for women (Davies, 2001; Elafros, 2010; Whipple & Coleman, 2021), and listening to female reporters' experiences of gendered abuse will help to make it better. Thus, this research will apply an ethics of care approach to interviewing participants and analyzing their responses.

### Utilitarianism

When approached by female news staff who complain of troll-based gendered harassment, many editors ignore, downplay, or normalize such abuse (Chen et al., 2020; Eberspacher, 2019; Miller & Lewis, 2020; North, 2016; Sobieraj, 2018). However, rather than merely being uncaring or callous, these leaders may simply feel overwhelmed by the enormity of monitoring the web to prevent or rein in troll attacks (Binns, 2012). For some, "censoring" reader feedback, no matter how vile, could be viewed as editorial overreach by an institution built on press freedom. Some editors believe that trolls should merely be ignored, both because of their ubiquity and because of a sense of duty to uphold readers' ability to "dissent" (Binns, 2012; Reader, 2012). They argue that even crudely worded criticisms could contain valuable insight, thereby strengthening future reporting.

Leadership operating under this utilitarian way of thinking holds that ethical stakeholders must operate in ways that offer the most people the greatest good (Johnson, 2008). While victims of troll abuse would argue in favor of rolling out more newsroom protections, such as by

blocking bad actors or hiring social media moderators, utilitarianism would demand that trolls largely be left alone. Proponents of the so-called “counterspeech doctrine” would agree that the best way for one to combat speech they disagree with is by adding more speech into the mix (Hudson, 2017). In fact, some media scholars have claimed that John Stuart Mill, the 19th-century philosopher who helped to popularize utilitarianism, would have argued against restrictions on both pornography (McGlynn & Ward, 2014) and hate speech (Delgado & Stefancic, 2009).

Many editors and other newsroom leadership believe that cracking down on trolls’ speech could ultimately harm the greatest number of readers; many take Mills’ interpretation to mean that even harmful speech should generally remain unrestricted (Cohen-Almagor, 2017; Delgado & Stefancic, 2009). Indeed, the mere perception of virtual censorship could discourage others to weigh in with their own points and suppress a healthy and productive public discourse (Hartman-Caverly, 2020). Although this study’s author will not use the utilitarian method when interviewing participants and analyzing their responses, utilitarianism still bears mentioning because it may help readers to better understand editors’ perceived inaction.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Up to now, little or no research has been centered on whether female music journalists experience gendered harassment. However, given the prevalence of the phenomenon within other male-dominated beats, the chances that it does occur appear relatively high. In addition to understanding whether gendered harassment plagues women music writers, this study will uncover whether interviewees have undergone such treatment. It will also highlight how it affects them. If gendered harassment inhibits music journalists' ability to write effectively and efficiently, it could lead them to avoid covering certain topics (Adams, 2018; Chen et al., 2020; Eberspacher, 2019; Finneman et al., 2019; Sobieraj, 2018).

Some writers who have experienced such treatment have developed a system of coping mechanisms to get through the day, such as blocking certain commenters or adopting a humorous attitude to downplay the abuse (Adams, 2018; Chen et al., 2020). Since gendered harassment has driven many female reporters away from the news profession entirely, it is likely that such abuse may worsen music journalists' mental health (Adams, 2018; Chen et al., 2020; Eberspacher, 2019; Finneman et al., 2019). This devastating trend has been experienced by female reporters in other male-dominated beats, and some have grappled with severe anxiety and depression. Therefore, this research asks:

*RQ1.* To what extent do female music journalists face gendered harassment from readers, coworkers, superiors, and sources?

*RQ2.* What strategies have female music writers developed to cope with such harassment?

*RQ3.* How does gendered harassment affect female music journalists' mental health and career prospects?

*RQ4.* How do female music journalists decide whether to report gendered harassment to their superiors? How do they feel about the way their complaint was handled?

## CHAPTER 5

### ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

This research relies on several assumptions, including the very definition of the term “female music journalist.” For this study’s purposes, “female” is understood to mean anyone who currently or previously identified as a woman during the time they worked as a music writer. This may include those who were assigned female at birth, as well as those who were assigned male at birth but later came out as transgender. In addition, this research was open to writers of all races and sexualities. Minority journalists, such as writers of color and LGBTQ+ writers, have added an element of intersectionality and served to deepen my understanding of this phenomenon. Prior research has uncovered that minority journalists experience abuse that is worse than that faced by their white, straight, CIS-gendered counterparts (Eberspacher, 2019; Sobieraj, 2018).

The term “journalist” is assumed to cover a wide range of jobs, including staff writer, reporter, editor, blogger, and freelancer. Although I had considered adding the term “photojournalist” to this list, I ultimately did not have to because of the large number of music-writer respondents. The definition of “journalist” is purposefully flexible here: The journalism industry was marred by layoffs in 2018 (Davies, 2019), and since the pandemic began in 2020, more than 90 newsrooms have permanently shuttered (Hare, 2021). In recent years, multiple music outlets, such as *Groove*, *Paste*, and *NME*, have either been forced to close completely or cut whole sections (Davies, 2019). As such, this research was open to both current and former music journalists. It did not matter whether they have held a job in an official capacity, such as a staff writer, or in an informal way, such as a freelancer or blogger. In addition, critics such as concert and album reviewers and music-feature writers were included under this blanket term.

To a large degree, the very premise of this research was also reliant on the assumption that female music journalists would report having had experiences with gendered harassment. Based on the treatment of women reporters in other fields, as well as that of female musicians and fans, this assumption was a reasonable one. However, such a notion could have still been classified as speculative given that little or no previous research has investigated this highly specific topic.

If there are official trade websites that list industry demographics, this researcher could not find them. However, based on the aggregate career website Zippia (2021), men currently make up more than half (51.3%) of all music journalists, with women clocking in at 41.8%; another 6.9% was classified as “unknown.” In recent years, great strides have been made toward workplace gender equality for music journalists. At one British outlet two decades ago, men outnumbered female music journalists by more than two to one (Davies, 2001). In fact, female writers comprised around half of the office staff at *The Wire* as of 2017, although men still accounted for the majority of the print editorial team (Geesing, 2017). Zippia (2021) only counts fewer than 300 music journalists in the United States, though, so this researcher feared that she may have trouble enlisting the help of an adequate number of interviewees. As with the Chen et al. study (2020), which found that 73 of 75 female reporters have faced gendered harassment, this research operated under the assumption that the vast majority of female music writers will have endured similar treatment at some point.

This study undoubtedly had several limitations, some of which were out of my control. To recruit interview participants, the study relied on non-probability sampling, such as snowball and convenience, meaning that respondents’ answers should not be taken as representative of the entire female music journalist population (Hesse-Biber, 2017; Wimmer & Dominick, 2014).

Many of the respondents were recommended to me by another interviewee. The research also depended on more than a dozen participants and in no way can be generalizable. However, as Chen et al. (2020) mentioned in their study on virtual gendered harassment of female reporters worldwide, the goal of this research was not to come to conclusions that can be generalizable, but rather to make deeper meanings from participants' various responses.

Although this study was open to female music journalists from all geographical backgrounds, most respondents have called the Dallas-Fort Worth region home. This study's author has many ties to both the music and journalism scenes in North Texas, and she has also made connections with other female music writers in the area. My snowball and convenience sampling likely played a role in this regard. However, since the study also depended on social media and publicly available email addresses for recruitment, it also opened the respondent pool to those living outside of the region and state. In addition, many musicians reside in metropolitan areas. Since female music journalists must write concert reviews and interact with musicians for their work, many respondents inhabited cities and the surrounding suburbs as opposed to more rural towns.

With most respondents living in the North Texas region, it could have meant that they have all had similar encounters with notorious harassers and abusers, such as certain sources or bosses. Some music scenes within the United States may be more hostile toward female musicians and writers than others. So, this research should not be used as a sort of crystal ball for future related studies in other cities nationwide. In addition, because of my age and use of convenience and snowball samplings, there was a relatively high likelihood that respondents would be somewhat young. Thus, this study's results could have skewed in one of two directions.

There was a chance that given its probable younger sample group, this study would have found that most respondents have not experienced gendered harassment in the workplace. Decades ago, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1991, giving employees more protections in suing their employers for harassment (Fenton, 2018); older women may have faced a higher likelihood of experiencing gendered harassment in the workplace than their younger counterparts. On the other hand, however, this study could have skewed heavily in the other direction. With a larger representation of younger respondents, the vast majority might have reported having experiences with gendered harassment because younger people are more likely to have encountered troll abuse online (Gray et al., 2013; Sobieraj, 2018).

Future research would certainly benefit from a longer time frame so that more interviews could be conducted. In addition, greater fiscal resources would allow me to broaden her scope to recruit female music journalists in other countries. Interviews of non-English speakers would need to be translated before they could be transcribed. Valuable information could be gleaned from a more international sampling, which would reveal how cultural differences affect the music journalism world. Moving forward, it would also be wise to conduct a quantitative study so that future researchers can better understand just how pervasive gendered harassment is within music journalism, as well as the ways that it alters writers' mental health, productivity, and career arcs.

## CHAPTER 6

### QUESTION/PROBLEM TO BE ADDRESSED

This research attempts to uncover whether female music journalists experience gendered harassment. It also lays out the ways that such treatment affects victims' mental and physical health, as well as their workdays and career choices. Addressing this problem will help to fill a gap in knowledge: Plenty of research has outlined the gendered harassment of female musicians and women writers in other male-dominated beats, but so far, no one has investigated whether female music journalists face the same treatment.

## CHAPTER 7

### METHODOLOGY

Given that the goal of this research is to better understand female music journalists' experiences with gendered harassment, a qualitative approach is ideal. This thesis includes in-depth interviews with more than a dozen female music journalists to help uncover the ways that baked-in gender relations manifest inside and outside the newsroom. Study participants could have been current or former music journalists, and they may have worked in a variety of publications, including magazines, weeklies, and newspapers; they also could have been bloggers or freelancers. While my own encounters with gendered harassment lend a certain amount of credibility to this project, she was careful to avoid letting these experiences influence others' responses. For instance, I did not share my own experiences with gendered abuse and refrained from being overly empathetic during interviews.

Participants were asked about whether they've faced gendered harassment in their capacity as a female music journalist, as well as whether it hampered their ability to work and if they have created any coping mechanisms. Each subject was informed that their participation is entirely voluntary, and they signed an informed consent form prior to the interview. They were also notified that their participation is under the approval and guidance of thesis chair Dr. Tracy Everbach and the Institutional Review Board.

Since I work at an alt-weekly that has a music and culture section, I used convenience sampling to ask my publication's current and former female music and culture editors to participate in this study (Hesse-Biber, 2017; Wimmer & Dominick, 2014). Some may believe that this amounts to a conflict of interest; however, I am not in a coercive relationship with any potential interviewee. Readers are assured that extra care was taken to avoid biased results.

Snowball sampling was also used, in part because of the sensitive and niche nature of the study (Hesse-Biber, 2017). I asked interviewees whether they knew of anyone else who may have been interested in participating. Each respondent had a pseudonym assigned to them so as to avoid identification; the name of their publication was also withheld. This allowed them greater freedom to divulge their experiences with gendered harassment.

Female music journalists were recruited through email, phone, and direct messages on social media. Phone numbers and email addresses used were publicly available or were provided by another respondent. There was a possibility that female musicians and/or music photographers would be asked to participate, particularly if finding enough writers had proven to be difficult. However, this step was not necessary.

As previously mentioned, participants ranged in age, but they were required to be over the age of 18. Although geography does not matter for this study, many were based in the Dallas-Fort Worth area because of the study's convenience and snowball sampling. Interviewees also came from a variety of racial, ethnic, and sexual backgrounds. In fact, this study has benefited greatly from diversity among respondents, especially given that female LGBTQ+ writers and journalists of color are even more likely than their white counterparts to experience gendered harassment (Eberspacher, 2019; Sobieraj, 2018).

After obtaining informed consent, interviews were conducted by phone and Zoom, and each conversation was recorded. Face-to-face interviews were not recommended because of the coronavirus pandemic and were avoided to reduce the chance of further COVID-19 transmission. Participants were asked a series of open-ended questions about their experiences with gendered harassment, or lack thereof. In addition, they were asked to explain whether such treatment

inhibits their workflow and/or quality, and whether they have developed any suitable mechanisms for coping.

The interviews were semi-structured, but participants were asked follow-up questions for clarity or so that they could expand on an interesting point. Following the interviews' completion, each conversation was transcribed and analyzed so that themes and other trends in responses could be identified (Hesse-Biber, 2017; Wimmer & Dominick, 2014). From there, the in-depth interviews allowed for rich and robust descriptions of participants' experiences. During the transcription process, I realized that I had forgotten to ask an important question about whether these female music journalists had ever reported gendered harassment to their bosses or editors and if so, how they responded. The follow-up question was subsequently sent via email, to which several participants responded.

### Specific Questions

Given the novel nature of this research, interviewees were asked numerous open-ended questions so as to best understand their experiences with gendered harassment. To begin, respondents answered several easy questions as a way to “warm up” to the more sensitive topics ahead. Information such as age and location has further helped me to understand my sample's background. Knowing a respondent's race/ethnicity, gender (be it CIS or trans), and sexual orientation also provided valuable insight into the severity of abuse for certain demographics.

In addition, respondents were asked for their name/pen name. Although they have remained anonymous in this study, the knowledge that a certain journalist writes under a pen name could provide insight as to whether they chose to do so for a reason related to gendered harassment (Adams, 2018). Some female writers adopt pseudonyms and “masculine” pen names

so that they can fly under trolls' radars. (However, if it turns out that a respondent does use a pen name, I waited until later in the interview to ask for the person's reasoning.)

Next, participants were asked how they got into music journalism and to detail some of their previous jobs, if any. They were also asked to answer questions about their current job title and workplace, although the study does not reveal any publications' names to avoid potential identification. For instance, if someone were to work at *Central Track*, the outlet might be described as a Dallas-based music and culture blog.

From there, respondents answered several more difficult questions. I asked how or whether their experiences as a female music journalist differ from what they know of their male colleagues' experiences. If they answer affirmatively, they were asked to elaborate on the differences. Do they receive more frequent and vile emails from people in the publication's audience? Are male colleagues held to a lower standard? This naturally leads to the next question: Have they ever encountered gendered harassment in the workplace? If so, from whom? How often? What was it like? Some respondents attempted to downplay or even excuse gendered harassment by laughing it off or claiming that it was not a big deal (Adams, 2018; Chen et al., 2020). However, I was attuned to nuances behind each response and flagged them accordingly in my analysis.

Respondents were also asked how the gendered harassment made them feel, such as whether it made them fear for their physical health and safety (Eberspacher, 2019; Everbach, 2018; Miller & Lewis, 2020). At times, aggressors will attempt to intimidate their target by threatening them physically with rape or other violence (Sobieraj, 2018). These threats have even appeared in the physical realm with tactics such as "SWATting," whereby harassers report a writer's address as being the location of a possible bomb threat or hostage situation (Adams,

2018; Sobieraj, 2018). Certain participants were also asked whether gendered harassment has led them to doubt themselves and lose self-confidence.

Although they may have alluded to this with the previous question, participants were next asked whether gendered harassment has affected their mental health at all. This differs slightly from the previous question; someone could report that encountering gendered harassment puts them in a bad mood, but that it doesn't weigh on their overall mental health. For many, however, such abuse could lead them to experience anxiety and depression or inspire them to seek out another career (Adams, 2018; Chen et al., 2020; Eberspacher, 2019; Finneman et al., 2019; North, 2016; Sobieraj, 2018). A lack of diversity in the journalism realm could ultimately have major implications for the freedom of the press and democracy itself (Adams, 2018; Nadim & Fladmoe, 2019). Some journalists also decide to refrain from writing about specific subjects to avoid gendered abuse, and such self-censorship may also obstruct women's career advancement path, as well as their standing in certain beats (Adams, 2018; Chen et al., 2020; Finneman et al., 2019; Sobieraj, 2018).

In addition, respondents were asked whether gendered harassment hampers their work productivity. For some, getting a nasty email from a sexist reader could distract from the task at hand. For others, it could derail their entire day, particularly if it sparks a panic attack (Adams, 2018).

I also asked respondents whether they have brainstormed any sort of coping mechanisms and strategies in order to process this abuse (Chen et al., 2020). Examples could include blocking certain social media users, making the decision to stop reading comments, or even taking a few minutes to breathe and get grounded. Detailing such methods could ultimately help other female writers who are facing similar abuse. In addition, respondents were asked to explain whether

they had ever reported their experiences with gendered harassment to their boss or superior, such as an editor. If the participant answered “no,” they were asked to explain their reasoning. If they answered affirmatively, they were asked to explain the response they received and how that made them feel. Finally, interviewees were asked to divulge any other thoughts, ideas, or feelings that occur to them that they had not previously outlined during the interview.

## CHAPTER 8

### RESULTS

#### Demographic Analysis

Respondents for this study were a wide range in age, with the youngest being 24 and the oldest being 65, as seen in Table 1. The mean age was 41.67, the mode was 33, and the median was 36. This broad range was somewhat surprising given my own age of 31. Using snowball sampling and beginning with colleagues who were within the same decade of age, it was assumed that the study would primarily attract participants below 40. However, this generational gap has certainly served to strengthen these findings because it offers a more cohesive perspective of music journalists' plight over the decades. Although they may have experienced gendered harassment when they were young, multiple respondents over 40 noted that their age may help to serve as a sort of buffer from them facing gendered harassment at this point in their career. Some believe that it is the younger journalists who must primarily deal with that sort of treatment.

Although I sought to secure only 10 respondents, 15 were ultimately interviewed. Each was assigned a first-name pseudonym. The methods of snowball and convenience sampling undoubtedly aided the recruiting process. For instance, one interviewee would suggest another potential respondent, who in turn contacted several more on my behalf. There was an additional music journalist who said she wanted to participate, but I decided against interviewing her in the interest of time. Initially, it was feared that recruits would be hard to come by, but I wound up having the opposite experience and could have kept interviewing more journalists. Such a trend indicates that despite facing sexism and gendered harassment, female music writers are willing, even hungry, to share their experiences. In the future, it would be wise to conduct a similar study

with more time and resources on hand.

Table 1

*Demographic Description of the Sample at the Time of Interview (N = 15)*

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Pronouns</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Hispanic/ Latina</b>	<b>Race</b>
Claire	52	She/her	Houston, TX	No	White
Maddy	32	She/her	Denver, CO	Yes	Hispanic/Latina
Whitney	33	She/her	New York, NY	No	White
Kacey	33	She/her	Nashville, TN	No	White
Sadie	44	She/her	Nashville, TN	No	White
Joan	65	She/her	Chester, CT	No	White
Lydia	59	She/her	Nashville, TN	No	White
Molly	52	She/her	New York, NY	No	Black
Shelly	31	She/her	Fort Worth, TX	No	White
Brittany	24	She/they	Denton, TX	Yes	Hispanic/Latina
Michelle	34	She/her	Dallas, TX	No	White
Elizabeth	58	She/her	Nashville, TN	No	White
Diane	36	She/her	Denton, TX	No	White
Amber	39	She/her	Dallas, TX	Yes	White
Nadia	33	She/her	Garland, TX	No	White

In addition, the demographic questions revealed that all participants, except for one, use she/her pronouns; one respondent uses she/they. Each writer considered themselves a cisgender female. More than two-thirds of these sources (11 participants, 73.33%) identify as white, non-Hispanic/Latina. Three participants identify as Hispanic/Latina and one identifies as Black. With the Hispanic/Latina and Black participants, each one answered that they had faced gendered harassment, with the Black respondent, Molly, emphasizing the intersectional nature of the

gendered abuse she has faced. “There’s a different type of harassment in relation to women of color simply because there are sexualized racial stereotypes that exist,” Molly said.

In addition, one lesbian respondent, Whitney, reported that although she had faced gendered harassment, she believes that her sexuality and gender expression may have ultimately worked to safeguard her against worse treatment. Those who “present” as more feminine could get hit harder. Being a self-described “butch lesbian,” though “is a different kind of treatment, because we’re not considered sexual objects by these guys,” Whitney said. Future studies should focus more on gendered harassment faced by female music journalists of color and those who identify as LGBTQ+.

In terms of geography, another surprising element to this study is that most of the respondents reside outside North Texas. However, several who do live in a different state had called the Dallas-Fort Worth area home at some point. Most respondents live in large urban areas, modest cities, or small towns, with no one staying in a rural area. One participant, Joan, currently lives in Chester, Connecticut, which has a population of roughly 3,700; however, much of Joan’s work had been centered around New York City, where she was an active music journalist during the 1970s. Nearly half of respondents (seven total) currently live in Texas, with six living specifically within the North Texas area. Meanwhile, one respondent stays in Denver, two reside in New York City, and four call Nashville, Tennessee, home. No one currently lives on the West Coast.

I conducted in-depth, qualitative interviews with 15 participants, which ranged in length from 20 minutes to one and a half hours. These primarily took place on the phone, although three interviews were held via Zoom. Next, the interviews were transcribed; I took notes throughout the transcription process. From there, each transcription was printed out so that I could mark up

the pages with highlighter and begin to note the emergence of certain central themes. In analyzing qualitative data, researchers must unearth certain themes, of which there are two types: semantic and latent (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). While semantic themes focus on data’s surface-level meaning, latent themes are more concerned with the underlying assumptions, ideas, and conceptualizations that work to mold and inform data’s semantic content. Themes can be discovered in pertinent participant experiences and perceptions, and they are ultimately helpful in answering the research questions (Caulfield, 2019). Therefore, this study zeroes in on multiple overarching latent themes, which will be further explored in the following pages. There were five overarching themes that Table 2 helps illustrate: sexism within the newsroom, sexism outside the newsroom, devaluing, threats and targeted abuse, and responses.

Table 2

*Themes and Subthemes that Arose during the Course of Analysis*

<b>Sexism w/in newsroom</b>	<b>Sexism o/s newsroom</b>	<b>Devaluing</b>	<b>Threats</b>	<b>Responses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Definition</li> <li>• Microaggressions</li> <li>• Uncertainty, “lucky”</li> <li>• Power differential</li> <li>• Sexist treatment/ expectations</li> <li>• Women in charge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Definition</li> <li>• Genre</li> <li>• Artist harassment</li> <li>• Troll fodder</li> <li>• Green/locker room</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pigeonhole</li> <li>• Benevolent sexism</li> <li>• Belittling</li> <li>• Look/ageism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical threat</li> <li>• Online GH</li> <li>• Close calls</li> <li>• Groping</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivate</li> <li>• Deflate</li> <li>• Control</li> <li>• Avoidance</li> <li>• Support</li> <li>• Report</li> </ul>

**Sexism Within the Newsroom**

**Definition**

Although this study’s primary focus is on gendered harassment, it is worth noting that sexist treatment often occurred but did not rise to the definition of gendered harassment. Sexist and gendered treatment within the newsroom is fairly ubiquitous and includes instances of

gendered harassment. It can manifest in ways such as unequal treatment and pay, subtle and overt misogyny, and unwanted attention and advances. Even those participants who did not believe they had faced overt gendered harassment still questioned the role that their gender played in the way they were treated by colleagues and superiors. Of the 15 participants, a total of 14 (93.33%) relayed stories of sexist treatment and/or gendered harassment within or outside the newsroom during the course of their work. Still, several respondents struggled with whether to classify the behavior as rising to the definition of gendered harassment, which Chen et al. (2020) describe as a “specific type of harassment that includes sexist or misogynist comments that criticize, attack, marginalize, stereotype, or threaten a person based on attributes of gender or sexuality” (p. 879). For this paper’s purposes, I still describe instances of sexism and misogyny even if the respondent was uncertain that theirs reached the level of gendered harassment.

### Uncertainty

Several participants initially said they were unsure whether the negative treatment they had endured was gendered in nature. Throughout the interviews, some respondents appeared to engage in a sort of calculus about it. For instance, they might say that the harasser did not hurl insults that were explicitly about their gender (“Women can’t write!”); therefore, they were uncertain whether to qualify it as such. However, when asked about whether they had experienced gendered harassment during their time as a female music journalist, nearly every single participant had at least one unpleasant encounter to relay. A couple of the interviewees claimed that it was quite possible that they had been harassed but were simply oblivious to it, either on account of their own naivete or by being wholly wrapped up within themselves and in their own world. It is also possible that those interviewees were in denial.

One respondent, Claire, grew up with brothers and spent much of her time playing in

bands or going to shows. Even though she had received many vicious emails from readers, she was unsure how much of it was gendered in nature; some of her male colleagues received similar missives. Another respondent, Nadia, used to serve as the music and culture editor at an alternative weekly. She said if she did have an unpleasant encounter with a male colleague, she felt it was because they did not see eye-to-eye and it did not necessarily have to do with gender. Still, she acknowledged that there may have been undertones of which she was not aware. “I’ve never been anything else but a woman, so sometimes it’s hard to separate out: Am I being treated this way because I’m a woman, or is this just normal?” she said. Despite the fact that certain participants questioned whether their own treatment rose to the definition of gendered harassment, no one disputed the phenomenon itself or that it occurs within the music journalism realm.

### *Feeling “Lucky”*

In one interesting trend that dovetails with the “uncertainty” subtheme, several respondents said they viewed themselves as “lucky.” For instance, someone may have reported that although they had in fact faced sexist treatment, they know of other female music journalists who had been subjected to far worse. Amazingly, this includes female respondents who had received rape and death threats, and who were physically targeted by angry, screaming men at shows. Two of the participants who were above 50 noted that they worried about their younger peers and colleagues, in part because of the rise of the Internet troll and online gendered harassment. This is in spite of older participants having been on the receiving end of some of the most overt gendered harassment and male aggression noted in this study. Still, several women also remarked that they got “used” to facing gendered harassment over time, with some seemingly resigned to the idea that it just comes with the job. One 52-year-old respondent,

Claire, said she thinks she would react differently if she were to receive threats today.

I think if I got a death threat or a rape threat now, I don't know how upset I would be about it. I might take it in stride. Not that it's my responsibility to take that in stride — I mean, they should really just stop fucking harassing — but I'm also a realist. And I think if you're going to be a critic in today's world, you're just going to get the shit, man.

## Microaggressions

Certain respondents relayed experiences of microaggressions within the newsroom from men in positions of power. Microaggressions can be defined as “everyday slights, indignities, put-downs, and insults that people of color, women, LGBT populations, or those who are marginalized” endure during interactions (Desmond-Harris, 2015). In newsrooms, microaggressions are particularly high for female journalists of color and lesbian reporters, who are more than twice as likely to have their judgment questioned than their male counterparts (Childers, 2020). Although some participants might have argued that it does not necessarily meet the level of gendered harassment, they viewed instances of microaggressions as sexist all the same, with some reporting that it worked to chip away at their self-esteem. One respondent, Kacey, worked at a radio station where the program director would consistently call her the wrong name. She was not convinced that the director had legitimately forgotten her real name; instead, she thought he may have felt he could get away with it on account of her age and gender. Another writer, Whitney, had produced content for an LGBTQ+ country blog. Still, the man who operated the outlet, which was naturally home to many queer contributors, regularly misgendered her nonbinary colleagues.

Another woman, Lydia, said a male columnist would frequently treat the women who worked at her publication like he was their boss. This peer would, for instance, send in his handwritten copy and demand that the women type it up for him. Meanwhile, journalist Diane said that on her last day of work at a regional outlet, her male boss announced during a meeting

that she had been “this small person” when she first started. She felt as though he had insinuated that she was his protégée, and the experience was so demeaning and belittling that she fled to the bathroom to cry: “It bothered me so much because [I was made to feel like] I wasn’t a peer, you know what I mean?” she said. During such instances of perceived microaggressions, the participants did not believe that their male colleagues would have been treated the same way.

### Masculine Hegemony

Spanning generations, many respondents reported that they felt as though the music journalism world is a de facto “boys’ club.” Joan, 65, remembers the rock journalism scene as one filled with usually older men who would drink heavily. As a young writer for an alternative news weekly during the 1970s, she wound up dating a couple of fellow music journalists but felt that they did not take her work seriously. When she first started writing for her publication, Joan said she didn’t realize that it would be such a “men’s club” because of how naïve she was. One of her female friends also wrote for *Rolling Stone*, which Joan similarly described as a “boys’ club.” Another participant, 32-year-old Maddy, recalls working in a similar environment when she was the clubs editor at an alternative weekly several years ago. She sometimes was the only female present during meetings. “It’s hard to be the only woman — or one of like, two, three women — at an editorial table full of men, especially when it comes to the need for a woman’s perspective on things,” she said.

Some respondents also believed that they witnessed less-qualified straight white men secure opportunities that they say should have gone to them. Maddy, for instance, said she was often put in charge of “training these dudes from out of town” how to do the job that she thought she deserved. In another case, a former music and culture editor at an alt-weekly, Shelly, said she was thrown into her job without any sort of actual training. She ultimately wound up hating the

gig and quit after roughly a year, and a previous (white male) music editor agreed to fill the role while the paper recruited a new hire. From there, the outlet's editor-in-chief made Shelly train this interim music editor on a job that he had already done in the past. Adding insult to injury, the editor-in-chief asked the male music editor to choose where the three would eat lunch while never consulting Shelly, even though she had little time left at the outlet. Shelly marveled at the differences in the way that they were treated.

Journalism is an industry that still suffers from gendered pay gaps (Finneman et al., 2019; Funke, 2017). Certain participants indicated that the trend may also be present in some music newsrooms, where men who hold similar jobs are paid significantly more than the women who have been there longer. During her time writing about music for a regional magazine, Diane reported that she once learned that a male peer's per-piece rate was nearly double hers. She reasoned that the difference in pay could have been because the male writer was more confident in asking for that amount; it was possible that she had named and accepted a lower rate. Still, Diane said: "Either way, it seemed very unfair." Another respondent, clubs editor Maddy, noted that her job was essentially "full-time work for part-time pay." She said in addition to her writing work, she was expected to attend several shows during the week and write concert reviews, sometimes staying up until 4 a.m. to file before having to return to the office mere hours later. No one stayed in that position for more than a year, Maddy said.

### Power Differential

Women who attain leadership roles in music journalism sometimes have male writers attempt to usurp their authority, participants recalled. For example, multiple female music editors recounted that freelancers do not always treat them with the same respect and deference they would likely afford a male boss. Shelly said she once had to send back edits on a male freelance

journalist's story about a musician. From there, the writer sent Shelly a long text message about how she didn't understand how important this artist was; he also demanded that she not run the story and said he would be taking it elsewhere. In addition, Shelly said she had worked with another male freelancer who was consistently unprofessional and rude in his emails to her. Later, she also heard that this freelancer had spread an "infuriating" rumor throughout town that she wanted to have sex with him. Shelly learned of this rumor through her male boss.

Other respondents said that sometimes, a female music writer might be accused of having had sex with a male editor to secure a job, particularly if she happened to be young and pretty. Diane remembers that a local music writer with whom she was close and respected greatly once falsely accused her of landing a position at a magazine because he believed that she'd slept with the person who hired her. That rumor still gets under her skin. Elizabeth, 58, currently works as a music critic at a national outlet but has written for numerous other publications in the past. She similarly said that many women in the field are accused of being successful only because they are good-looking or supposedly dated a certain person. For many women, there's a constant questioning of their "right" to hold certain positions, she said. "It's not just a matter of questioning your authority in terms of, 'Well, do you have a valid opinion about the new Kendrick Lamar record?'" Elizabeth said. "It's also: 'Why do you have that job?'"

## Sexist Treatment

### *Time and Expertise*

As previously mentioned, some female music journalists and editors said they believe men in their line of work are sometimes threatened by their authority and knowledge. In the case of Whitney, the writer who published articles in an LGBTQ+ country blog, a male editor appeared to be intimidated by her expertise. Sometimes, he would reject one of her pitches, only

to assign it to someone else two weeks later. She also said she felt as though the editor was not respectful of her boundaries and that she provided him with a lot of “emotional labor,” a term that Miller and Lewis (2020) define as “the work of managing one’s emotions to keep others happy” (p. 1). There were many other instances that led to Whitney leaving that publication, but she said she felt that she had endured consistent microaggressions and what she refers to as “inadvertent harassment.” “Nobody ever commented on my body or on my gender,” Whitney said, “but there was this sort of demand on my time and expertise.”

One male leader was similarly inconsiderate about Joan’s time and expertise. Once, she was asked by an editor at her publication to interview The Velvet Underground’s Lou Reed, who was known in the music journalism scene as being a difficult source. After Joan was given the assignment, she asked her photographer friend to go with her to take pictures. So, the two were ushered into RCA Records to meet with the mercurial rock star, who was uncooperative and dismissive. After some time, though, Joan got frustrated with Reed’s attitude and snapped back, which appeared to make him respect her more. Suddenly, she said, Reed became nicer, stopped mumbling monosyllabic answers, and “got real.” After surviving that ordeal, Joan and her friend were even invited by Reed to attend a rehearsal at the studio, which they did.

When she got home, Joan wrote up the interview, one that she felt she absolutely “aced.” Yet when she submitted it all to her publication, Joan’s editor said they no longer wanted to run it without providing further explanation. In hindsight, Joan thinks that her male boss was perhaps playing a kind of cruel joke by foisting her upon a rock star known to harbor hostility toward the press. Luckily, Joan was eventually able to get the interview published by a competing magazine, but the way that the editor had treated her was upsetting all the same. “I was so livid. I was absolutely livid,” she said. “I didn’t know why he would send me into the viper’s nest to do

something when he wasn't serious.”

Diane provided another example of the sort of outdated patriarchal system under which newsrooms frequently operate. Speaking of her time at a regional affiliate of a public radio station, she said women were expected to behave a certain way if they wanted to gain editorial power or have male bosses like them. In addition, she said, “it was insane” how much more attentive men were to her on the days when she'd come in wearing makeup. They also were kinder on those days, generally speaking: “You feel like you exist whenever you do that,” she said.

Amber, meanwhile, has written as a music journalist but is currently the editor of music and culture at a regional alt-weekly. In a more egregious example of blatant sexism at play, Amber explained that for years, she had asked her boss to let her have an office room with a desk. Previous music and culture editors were granted use of the space, but each time she asked, her boss gave it to another staff member with the promise that she'd be next in line. In summer 2021, the coveted office space was available once more, and by that point, Amber had been with the company for many years. Yet instead of honoring his pledge to let Amber have the room, her boss offered it to a brand-new male news editor who had only been hired a couple of months prior.

### *Seduction Attempts*

Two female music writers reported getting hit on by their male superiors. In Maddy's case, she said the newsroom staff once went out for a happy hour following work to welcome a new male music editor. Drinks flowed, both outside and inside the newsroom; at the alt-weekly publication, Maddy remembers there was a cubicle that hosted alcohol, which staff called the “Bar Cube.”

On one particular day, though, the new music editor became inebriated at the bar where they were all celebrating his arrival. Maddy said at one point, they were sitting next to each other, and she turned to tell him something. The next thing she knew, he was shoving his tongue in her mouth. She was able to pull away and let him know that she was not interested in him romantically. Yet she also did not report the incident to HR or anyone else, in part because she didn't want to make a big deal out of a "drunken mistake" and subsequently risk being alienated. In addition, he had the job that Maddy wanted. "I just wanted to seem as down to ride as possible for the paper," she said of her reasons for not saying anything.

Then, there's the question of how an editor's attraction to a writer manifests in a work setting. Claire remembers freelancing when she was in her early 30s while living with her boyfriend, which is something that her older male music editor knew. When this editor would ask her to accompany him to shows, she would. While they were out, though, Claire said the editor would put his hand on her leg, which she "fucking hated." Still, she wouldn't make a scene, instead removing his hand and not saying anything. It didn't have a huge effect on her mentally, she said, but Claire still wondered what role that kind of pass played in their work relationship:

If I don't let him put his hand on my leg, am I not going to get this assignment? And that's the bullshit that I just never really had the answer for. Is this just a guy who would've given me the assignment even if I had been just a raging bitch at his face, or was this the deal we made? Was this a contractual thing?

### Women in Charge

Most participants could remember having experienced sexism and gendered harassment at some point during their time as a music journalist. Yet there was a marked difference in the stories told by women who primarily worked with male bosses versus those who had mainly or exclusively dealt with women. With women in charge, these participants largely reported a

positive and healthy working environment with the occasional bad memory or two, thanks to a former male boss, colleague, or source. Some also acknowledged that they felt “lucky” to have landed in such a warm and welcoming workplace filled with supportive women.

Respondent Sadie, who created two music blogs before moving to music PR, said the vast majority of people she worked with were kind women. (The one male publicist with whom Sadie had created a website was cruel and narcissistic, she said. He would nitpick Sadie at the same time that he would publicly take undue credit for their work, always neglecting to mention her during media interviews.) Both Sadie and other participants said they greatly benefited from having a female mentor; Sadie currently works with two women who have provided priceless insight. If she is dealing with a source who is snarky, or if she ever questions herself, Sadie understands that she can go to her all-female support system, something that she wishes she had experienced sooner. “If I had had that from the beginning, I can’t even begin to describe how priceless that would have been,” she said. “It would have just really revolutionized my experience.”

Meanwhile, music critic Elizabeth has sought to trade competitiveness among fellow female music journalists for a feeling of mutual support. Years ago, she edited a book featuring the works of prominent female rock critics throughout the decades. Elizabeth also helped to found an advocacy, activism, and networking organization called “Strong Women in Music” that lasted a couple of years. Throughout her time as a writer, Elizabeth didn’t have as many female role models, even though she sought them out. Once, when she was finally able to meet another woman whose work she respected, Elizabeth said she was “vibrating on this frequency” because she had longed to connect with other women she admired.

## Sexism Outside the Newsroom

### Definition

Sexism, misogyny, and gendered harassment experienced outside the newsroom can appear in many forms. Rather than coming from those with whom female journalists work, such as peers and editors, this type of treatment may occur at the hands of readers, online trolls, musicians' support (tour managers, promoters), as well as the artists themselves. One trend that was somewhat surprising is that genre appears to affect the presence and frequency of gendered harassment toward female music journalists. Another was that in addition to hitting on female music journalists, some artists have used their position of power to intimidate their critics through social media. Just as within newsrooms, these women were virtually unanimous in describing their respective music scenes as being male-dominated.

### Genre

Some female music journalists reported that they specialize in a certain genre, and some genres are more sexist than others. For instance, each of the participants who wrote about country music mentioned that it is a music scene still plagued by toxic masculinity, with one saying that it is a genre with “incredible gender disparity.” They also all mentioned one specific controversy in country music that occurred in 2015: Tomato-gate. That year, a male radio consultant named Keith Hill spoke about the underrepresentation of female country artists on radio stations. He said songs by women should be treated as a tomato garnish to a salad, with male artists serving as the lettuce. Whitney remembers challenging Hill on Twitter over his “tomato” analogy. Sometime after that, she realized that Hill was only following two people on Twitter: her and Marissa Moss, another female country music writer for *Rolling Stone*. For days, Hill continued to antagonize Whitney on social media but eventually got bored. Despite the

widespread outcry spurred on by Tomato-gate, female artists were still underrepresented in country radio seven years later (King, 2022).

In addition, Molly describes the metal genre as one that is dominated by white men. She has written a book about her experiences as a Black woman in that world, where she was often made to feel unwelcome, largely because of her race. Sometimes during interviews, she got the sense that the musicians were uncomfortable being questioned by a Black woman. Former clubs editor Maddy similarly said the metal scene is riddled with hostility toward women. One time at a show, she said she was confronted by a man who owned a metal bar in North Texas. When Maddy introduced herself, he scoffed at her and complained that she never listed his shows. This aggressiveness was one example of why Maddy said she never wanted to go near the metal scene. She described the hip-hop world as similarly misogynistic, both in terms of lyric content and the broader culture, but was resolved to continue writing about it. “My stance was: I love rap music and I love hip-hop, and I’m not going to be bullied out of it because I’m a woman,” Maddy said.

Rock ‘n’ roll is another male-dominated genre that focuses on women’s sexuality at the same time that it undermines their knowledge and authority. Sadie, 44, had founded two online music outlets: one about rock and the other about Americana. She said she noticed a marked difference in the way that artists treated her depending on the genre to which they belonged. The Americana artists, for instance, were always kind to her and were grateful for her interest and coverage. The rock artists, however, were the only ones with whom Sadie ever had issues during interviews. She cited three examples of bad interviews with rock artists. Two of the interviews wound up being unusable because of the musicians’ unwillingness to answer her questions. In addition, two of the rock artists had been her personal heroes, but now, she said that she can

never listen to their music again. Sadie did not know whether those rock artists would have treated a male journalist the same way, although she doubts it. Then again, Sadie said, they may have acted that way because she herself wasn't famous and wasn't writing for an esteemed outlet like the *New York Times*.

Of course, even the female-driven pop music industry is rife with gendered harassment and sexism. As previously mentioned, female pop artists who pack stadiums are often viewed as “uncool” by male listeners and other insiders in the male-dominated music industry. For her first piece as music and culture editor for an alt-weekly, Shelly wrote about her love for Taylor Swift. She believes that this column may have contributed to subsequent negative views of her work as music editor; from then on, readers seemed to question her musical taste and direction for the publication. Still, Shelly defends her stance on Swift and believes that people's outsized hatred for the young pop singer is rooted in sexism. When people look at Swift's concerts, they see a stadium filled with young female fans (i.e., teenyboppers), so they automatically label the music as “hype” and “fluff,” Shelly said. Even though Shelly believes that Swift is a legitimate musical prodigy, a certain subset of listeners may never take her seriously:

Taylor Swift has won album of the year at the Grammys three times, a title she shares with only a few other people like Frank Sinatra and Stevie Wonder. She's an incredibly acclaimed artist and musician ... but she is still a woman.

### Sexist Treatment from Musicians

Sometimes, female music journalists report getting harassed by a male music artist or members of their team. These women say that they are at times treated as potential romantic partners and not like working professionals. Amber, the alt-weekly music editor, said she will sometimes ask a musician for an interview, but then receive vulgar responses. They might compliment her looks or ask her out on a date, which she describes as a “little catcall-ish.” Once,

Amber arrived at a house party with a male colleague, and a Grammy award-winning musician opened the door. When the musician saw Amber, he announced: “Hey, the hot girl is here!” Although the musician may have meant it to be flattering, Amber said she was embarrassed because it was not the way that she wanted to be remembered. Another time, Amber sent an Austin musician a message on social media asking if he would be willing to talk for an interview. He then asked her to call him, so she did, and he said he was “a little bit horny” and attempted to have phone sex with her.

Several female music journalists also reported that the artists they were trying to interview would act as if they were sexual objects. For instance, Molly said that sometimes, male musicians treated her as if she were a groupie. There might be sexual overtures or an invitation to join them backstage. Elizabeth similarly felt diminished in music culture, eventually writing a book chapter on the history of fans and groupies as a way to reclaim those stories. “Because as a woman, my authority was often equated with my desire to sleep with the men I was writing about,” she said.

Yet some respondents reported that an artist might engage in harassment even if it was not sexual in nature. Michelle, who once wrote about country music, reported that she had been a big fan of singer-songwriter Sturgill Simpson, whom she had previously profiled. Around the start of the pandemic, he livestreamed a performance in lieu of an in-person concert. At some point during the set, he said: “We wouldn’t be in this situation if some asshole didn’t eat a bat,” referring to the unsubstantiated rumor that bat consumption in China spread the coronavirus to humans (Vinetz, 2020). So, Michelle slammed Simpson’s remark on Twitter as racist.

The following day, Simpson posted a screenshot of her tweet on Instagram, along with a lengthy rebuttal. Michelle said after that, the two were able to mend fences in direct messages,

with Simpson finally understanding why his statement may have offended others. Still, by putting Michelle on blast, she wound up receiving a deluge of hate mail from fans. Simpson ultimately took down the post, but not before his fans began attacking Michelle as a “fat bitch” and worse. “I don’t think he’d ever really considered the consequences of: ‘If I say this about this woman who nobody knows, she’s going to get rape threats for the rest of the day,’” Michelle said. “I don’t think that had crossed his mind.”

### Troll Fodder

The women music journalists said they can predict the types of stories that will set off trolls. No matter how well-researched these writers are in their critiques, if they are perceived as attacking a musician who has an extremely dedicated fanbase, they can expect to receive hate mail. Much of it will focus on the writer’s appearance, a line of attack that trolls will employ less often with men. Certain musical artists have ascended to superstar status, with fans so dedicated that the musician can seemingly do no wrong. Country music writer Michelle said even if she were to spend a good deal of time researching a subject, trolls will always find something to pick apart, and there will always be a gendered element to their hatred. “Most of the harassment is going to be, ‘You’re stupid and should just kill yourself,’” she said. “But there’s going to be a pretty large contingent of it that’s going to be like, ‘this stupid *woman*.’”

Music critic Elizabeth provided concrete examples. She recently appeared in a documentary about R&B singer R. Kelly’s history of abuse, pedophilia, and predatory behavior toward women. Another time, she wrote a cerebral piece about The Beatles, race, and gender. Both times, Elizabeth said, trolls attacked her appearance. “It always turns to, ‘Oh my God, this is what she looks like,’ and they’ll find some particularly unflattering picture of me online,” she said. In fact, several other respondents similarly reported that they would receive the most troll

hatred when their music writing touched on the topics of race, gender, or sexuality. Country music fans in particular get especially upset when a writer mentions misogyny or racism within that scene, participants said.

#### Green Room, Locker Room

Multiple respondents relayed that they were expected by their bosses to gain access to the backstage green room, artist tour bus, or even the musicians' homes. These women reported that they were often the only woman in a room full of male artists, promoters, and various posse members. Sometimes, the writer was with the artist one-on-one; other times, groupies were present the whole time. Such environments were frequently shrouded in a sort of machismo luster and led to the female music journalists feeling uncomfortable or even unsafe. As with the previous example of the female sports journalist in the locker room (Kane & Disch, 1993), these women music writers felt as though they were pushed into a hyper-masculine world without a safety net.

Elizabeth said that in those environments, the divisions between work and play can be so blurred that it has made it hard to do her job at times. She recalls how the tour bus served as an "anything goes" artist safe haven. Two participants recounted how actually completing a scheduled interview with an artist sitting on a tour bus was not always guaranteed. Elizabeth remembered that one time, she had to reschedule an interview with a rock star for a later date because he would not cooperate. "Between the young women on the tour bus and the need for drugs, I had no chance," she said. "I didn't even get the interview." Meanwhile, Lydia recalled getting harassed by tour managers on a frequent basis; once, she thought a tour manager was going to lock her in the bus with him as he kept insisting that she didn't *really* want to "go back outside." (She did want to go back outside, and luckily was able to exit.) Sexism and misogyny

run rampant in the music journalism workplace, Lydia said, and female writers may essentially be wrongly looked down on as sex objects:

There was no respect for us as women. It was just like: “You’re a woman, I’m a tour manager. Ergo, you’re a sex object.” It was really demeaning the way that the industry people looked at us, and I’m sure the guys did not get the same response.

### Devaluing

Several female music journalists relayed that gendered harassment and sexist treatment make them feel devalued. It may begin to weigh on their self-esteem and confidence, and sometimes, they end up being completely demoralized and discouraged. Women writers can feel devalued in a number of ways, including by believing that their gender has prevented them from rising in the ranks in a male-dominated industry. Other women may feel as though their appearance has an entirely disproportionate bearing on the way their work is viewed. Although these instances do not necessarily fall under the term “gendered harassment,” they are sexist in nature all the same and can carry serious consequences for the writer’s mental well-being.

### Pigeonholing

Certain female music writers said they believed that their gender may have given them some sort of advantage. They also said editors may expect them to pen stories that align with the journalist’s own gender and race. For some women, it was easy to feel like a tokenized female reporter in a newsroom full of men. Music critic Elizabeth said she’s heard from some people who accuse her of only getting to where she is today *because* she is a woman. In situations of a scarcity of jobs for female music journalists, women are sometimes pitted against each other, she said. Once, a music editor told Elizabeth that he would have loved to hire other women, but that there weren’t any as good as her. If there can only be one woman in the room, then it’s easy to

view other female music journalists as the competition, she said. But, Elizabeth added: “If you can be the only one, then you can’t have solidarity.”

One 24-year-old former freelance music writer, Brittany, felt as though her identity as a Latina woman made a difference in her pitches. She believed that some editors may have considered her pieces because they wanted to bring in a cultural attribute to their coverage. At the same time, however, Brittany would also receive pushback for pitches centered on women and people of color, with editors seemingly uncertain as to why such stories should matter or insinuating that they were somehow “biased.” In addition, Latina clubs editor Maddy said her male bosses at times encouraged her to infuse her writing with more “her.” She believes that the word they were actually looking for was “sassy.” Maddy said she had a reputation for being a spitfire who would deliver “hot takes,” and if she strayed from that at all, her bosses seemed somewhat disappointed. “I did kind of feel that I was being put into this ‘spicy Latina’ packaging,” she said.

### Benevolent Sexism

Although most respondents reported that they had endured hostile sexism, some also recounted a certain level of benevolent sexism, wherein male superiors may treat them paternalistically. For example, multiple women said they felt as though their gender may have served to soften the anger of a fuming boss. In Nadia’s case, she said she sometimes felt as though her male counterparts were subjected to harsher treatment from newsroom leadership than she was receiving. She questioned whether this was because she was better liked, or if it was because she was a woman.

Amber said that at times, her boss might speak to her in a tone that is more condescending than how he would treat male staff. He also might compliment her looks in a

paternalistic way. For instance, the two had recently been talking about Amber getting back into the dating pool, a subject that she said “comes up a lot with him.” Next, he informed Amber that her “problem” is that she's really smart and good at her job, but that she’s “so beautiful that men don’t see those things.” Although Amber thinks he meant it as a compliment, he likely would not have used those words to describe her male coworkers.

### Belittling

While working in an industry rooted in masculine hegemony, several of this study’s participants said they were treated as “lesser-than” by men both inside and outside the newsroom. Sometimes, belittlement manifests when women are not believed. Metal writer Molly recalls a question-and-answer article she did wherein she interviewed a transphobic musician. She turned in the piece to a national publication, and shortly after it went live, her inbox started filling with hate mail. The editor had changed the interview’s headline without Molly’s knowledge or consent to something she said was “extremely transphobic.” When she began receiving upset messages from people she knows, she explained that she would never write something so hateful. Still, she said, they didn’t believe her. Molly said her reputation was nearly ruined, through no fault of her own, and she vowed to never write for that publication again.

Another form of belittlement can occur when women are ignored. When Brittany was first getting started freelance writing, she said she made two successful pitches to a well-known Texas publication. She worked hard on each piece and turned them in, only to be met by radio silence. Any time she tried to ask for an update on the status of the stories, she wouldn’t receive a response. Yet each day that passed, the young Latina writer would see another story by a white male journalist on the publication’s website. After weeks of attempting to contact the editors, they finally nixed one of her stories because it was no longer timely. Brittany didn’t get a

response about the other story at all. In addition, she said, the editors never responded to inquiries about when she would receive a kill fee; she was never paid for her work.

Brittany said the publication is an established one with the resources and funding to respond to writers. Instead, they ignored her, which made her feel terrible and discouraged her so much that she stopped writing completely. Since then, Brittany has reread those two stories and said she doesn't understand why they were not used, nor why she never received an explanation. The way the young journalist was treated felt "ugly" to her because the editors refused to give her feedback or revise the pieces. "I have cried over this: cried over the realization that that is exactly why I no longer have a fervor for writing," Brittany said. She is now too anxious to make pitches, even though she misses writing and still thinks of stories she would like to tell.

Brittany's experiences have changed her outlook on music writing: "Journalism is an industry for white men. Period."

### Lookism, Ageism

Another way that female music journalists reported that they felt devalued is when men would evaluate them according to their looks, not their ability. Music editor Amber said she sometimes feels as though her looks get brought up unnecessarily. For instance, when posting on social media, she said her followers are far more likely to react to one of her photos than one of her articles. Some women writers may receive unwanted sexual advances, but that is not the only way that their appearance might play into their treatment. If a female music journalist looks young, she may not be taken as seriously by male bosses and musicians. Her expertise and depth of knowledge might be called into question and they may be talked down to or trivialized. For instance, when Joan was writing as a young adult, she said she had a "babyface" and was very skinny:

I don't know if people could take you that seriously if you looked that young and that waifish ... and also being female on top of that. I mean there were all these factors that physically, I didn't look like I was somebody that could write the way I wrote.

Music critic Elizabeth notes that there is a flipside to harassment: marginalization and exclusion. She said writer culture is sexist, lookist, classist, and predominantly white, so anyone who identifies outside the "norms" could have a more difficult time. Elizabeth remembered that once when she was younger, she was at a party for a well-known literary magazine and that there were numerous pretty, thin, blond female music writers milling about. In that moment, she said, she felt "nonexistent and invisible" because she did not have "the look." There is also the question of whether a female music journalist was given an assignment because of her good looks, perhaps because male rock stars would want to talk with them. At the same time, however, male music journalists are not held to such exacting standards, she said; their importance is not tied to whether they look nerdy or scrawny.

Studying harassment is important, but it is also necessary to think about who isn't even getting into the room, Elizabeth said. She notes that while working on a book featuring female music journalists, she realized how few women continued to work in the field after the age of 35. There is this "whole idea of viability," Elizabeth said, as well as "this sense of: 'What the fuck would a woman over 40 even be doing at a rock show?'" Other study participants in their 50s similarly viewed their age as a factor in shielding them from a certain level of gendered harassment.

As a middle-aged Black journalist specializing in extreme music, Molly sometimes faces questions of legitimacy in a genre dominated by young white men. "People look at me, and they're like, 'What are you doing?'" she said. At the same time,

however, Molly believes that she has built up enough of a reputation to where she does not run into too many problems anymore.

### Threats and Targeted Abuse

Many of the participants reported that they had been targeted by online trolls or even threatened with violence by men at shows; one respondent, Molly, said aggressive and racist metal concert attendees have made her fear for her safety. Although some of these threats are more severe than others, a mean email can still harm their mental health and work productivity. Threats toward female music journalists emphasize what is often felt but rarely so explicitly said: Music journalism is still a boys' club, and women had better not attempt to challenge the structural hierarchy. If they dare to write about music in the men's realm, then they may face threats to their safety. Notably, the respondents of color are the only ones who reported having felt as though they were in imminent physical danger during shows, further underlining the need for a follow-up study focused solely on minority female music journalists.

### Online Gendered Harassment

As with female journalists in other male-dominated beats, several female music writers reported getting harassed by trolls online. Some of this harassment came in the form of a prolonged campaign, such as what Whitney experienced with Tomato-gate. Other participants reported getting more explicit messages from anonymous Internet users. Shelly remarked that women have it particularly hard when it comes to online engagement: "To be a woman on the Internet is a special place in hell." Shelly said although she no longer works as the music editor at an alt-weekly, she has recently received terrible direct messages in her capacity as a freelancer. Some trolls have called her a "fat cunt," a "bitch," and have told that she is "too ugly to rape." She said such verbal abuse is something for which one is never prepared. She also

bemoaned the fact that when she was in college, student journalists were not taught that they might face such harassment.

Another respondent, Michelle, said trolls attack her when they do not agree with her on an issue. They will call her mean names like “ugly” and “fat,” insults that she described as the first cards in trolls’ “insult deck.” Michelle said that for a while, she changed her Twitter bio to reflect a derogatory term that she had been called: “fat bitch.” Although such names may have initially bothered her, over time they appeared to lose some of their power over her. These days, she is able to shrug off such comments: “I feel very dead to it,” she said, laughing. “I should probably talk to my therapist about that.”

Meanwhile, Shelly highlighted the bind that many female music journalists find themselves in; although they want to avoid troll harassment, many still need to list their email address so that readers can contact them. When a journalist is just starting out, the first abusive emails and comments they receive really hurt, Shelly said. Yet like Michelle, she said that over time, she has begun coping by “owning” the insults. “I guess I try to own it, like Hillary Clinton owning ‘nasty woman’ or Taylor Swift owning the ‘snakes,’” she said. “I’ve tried to turn it around.” During the 2016 presidential debate, Donald Trump slammed Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton as a “nasty woman,” which then became a feminist rallying cry for her campaign (Plank, 2016). In 2017, Taylor Swift was dubbed a “snake” on social media during a feud with another celebrity. She subsequently co-opted snake imagery as part of a tour and while promoting an album (Williams, 2018).

## Groping

Some of the threats fielded by female music critics may come in the form of unwanted sexual contact. Multiple participants reported having been groped by a man in the context of

music journalism. Elizabeth said that as a generalist music critic, she would often go to varying types of shows; it might be punk one night and African music the next. Many of the rooms from which she worked were charged with erotic energy. Sometimes, it was fun to be in such a flirtatious atmosphere, she said, but invariably, some man would take things too far. It was “standard behavior” for a female music critic to have to “throw someone’s hand off [their] ass,” she said:

Every woman was getting felt up in those rooms, especially at certain kinds of shows. This was just what happened, you know? And it’s kind of amazing when I look back on it that that was just the status quo, but it truly was. You just had to push people off you.

Amber also recalls a time when a man grabbed her rear end. For a while when she was freelancing for an alt-weekly publication, she penned a series wherein the premise was that she would interview musicians “in bed,” both figuratively and literally. The idea was that such an intimate setting would coax the artist to open up and provide more personal details. Still, Amber said, the series’ name, “In Bed With,” seemed to “confuse” some of the men she interviewed. Once, when Amber was set to write about a male music producer for the series, she ran into him at a bar a few days prior to their appointment. They were talking when he suddenly grabbed her behind, a move that Amber said made her feel humiliated, frustrated, and devalued. After that, she asked her female music editor if the photographer who would be taking photos prior to the interview could stick around for the entirety of the conversation. Amber said she did not want to be alone with the producer in his house, so the editor agreed to direct the photographer to stay the whole time.

### Physical Threats

Certain respondents reported that they had received rape and/or death threats based on

their work. One time, Michelle said she wrote a semi-satirical blog for an alt-weekly publication about how much she hates tall people who go to concerts. Michelle said she clocks in at 5 feet, so she bemoaned the fact that taller attendees can sometimes be rude and block her view of the band. In the piece, she wrote something to the effect of: “If you step on my toes, I’ll kick you in the shin.” Before long, though, Michelle said she learned that her article wound up on an Internet forum for tall people, some of whom appeared to be violent. Reading through the comments, she said users would write things like: “If you’re going to kick me, I’ll beat you to death.” Luckily, Michelle hasn’t ever experienced such threats in person. She said that in general, she has been attacked by “faceless weirdos on the Internet who, you know, tell me to go kill myself because I think that people should not be racist or whatever.”

Another former music writer said she was shaken up after receiving threats to her physical well-being. Although Claire had worked as a music journalist for a time, she said she received the most vicious threats when she was an art critic for an alt-weekly publication. She was used to getting pushback for some of her work, but said that it did not seem gendered in nature. However, one time in the late-1990s, she said her harsh criticism of some new local art galleries got under people’s skin. Before long, she received death threats and rape threats. The experience scared Claire, who said she watched her back in public for around six months. At the time, Claire lived alone in a garage apartment, so she also felt isolated. When asked how she coped with such gendered harassment, Claire answered in four words: “I bought a gun.”

### Close Calls

Two respondents, both of whom are women of color, said they had been physically threatened in person in their capacity as female music journalists. Maddy, the Latina clubs editor, said a male friend of hers once pitched her a piece that he wanted to write for her publication.

Since she was not in a position to approve it, she told him that she would at least forward it to the higher-ups. She followed through on her promise, although her editor did not reach out to the friend.

Then one night, Maddy saw this friend at a club, and he drunkenly and aggressively began to ask her about the status of his pitch. She told him that she had done her part to help, but he implied that she had not supported him adequately in trying to convince the paper to publish him. When she attempted to walk away, the friend grabbed Maddy's arm "really hard," she said. He pulled her back toward him and said: "Don't walk away from me when I'm talking to you." From there, Maddy remembers telling him that if he did not immediately let go of her arm, she would "fucking scream" and flag down the security guard. He then let go of her, saying "don't be like that," and she was able to walk away. Maddy said this was the only instance that something scared her during her time working in the music industry. When asked whether she believed that he might have treated a male clubs editor the same way, Maddy quickly replied: "Hell no! Absolutely not. He would have just kissed my ass until he got the call from the [publication]."

Once, around 2007, Canada native Molly went to cover a metal festival in Montreal, Quebec. Once there, she said she was not prepared for the amount of racial harassment that she faced. People would come up to her and scream in French; someone even threw a beer bottle at her head. It was a two-day festival, so she had to sit down and think about whether she would want to go back the following day. Although she did not feel safe in that environment, the assignment was the first time she had written for a certain metal magazine. She did not want to let the opportunity "go down the toilet," so she steeled herself to go back the next day.

It was a very traumatic experience for Molly, who said she still has difficulty wrapping

her head around how people can get that angry to see a Black person at a metal festival. She was worried at the time that if she were to be physically attacked, no one would know where she was to come help her. In addition, Molly took her own photos at the concert, and she was worried that an attack on her could also damage her equipment. So, she decided to start pushing back. One time, a male attendee walked up and began screaming at her, so she raised her hands as if to say: “Do you want to fight?” As soon as Molly did that, she said, he turned around and walked away. “I [was] tired of people calling me the N-word or whatever, and I was just like: ‘The next person that tries to step to me, they’re done. I’m not putting up with this,’” she said. Luckily, the second day went much smoother and she was able to turn in the piece.

Some respondents reported that such experiences have altered the way that they work. For instance, Molly has vowed to never again cover a festival in Quebec; she is also much more cautious at shows. After being put in physical danger at the festival, Molly set some rules for herself. If she was not taking photos in the pit, she made sure to always stand in a space with light on her and where people could see her. She would also leave shows 10 minutes early to ensure she was the first to go. “I knew it wasn’t safe to be a straggler,” Molly said. “I was always just making sure I was in a space where I know where the exit is.”

### Responses

Participants reported responding to gendered harassment in a variety of different ways. For some, sustained sexist treatment and gendered harassment actually inspired them to work harder; for others, they said it might push them to become completely unmotivated or even depressed. Certain interviewees ultimately quit their jobs or left the field entirely on account of this type of treatment. Several women reported that they have attempted to cope by contacting other female music journalists, forming a sort of support network to help them better process

such negative encounters. In addition, respondents largely neglected to report instances of gendered harassment to their superiors, which could contribute to the perpetuation of the phenomenon.

### Motivate

Although sexist treatment would typically bother respondents, a couple of women reported that it was a motivating factor for them. Rather than letting it discourage them to the point of stopping, some said they were driven to prove their detractors wrong. For instance, country music writer Kacey said nastiness and hate from trolls would typically make her double down and work even harder. This also applies to misogyny experienced in person. Once, Kacey was setting up a video camera so she could film an interview with a musician when he made an “extremely off-color joke” about what they were going to do with the camera. Even though Kacey was bothered by the remark, she also did her best to brush it off and keep doing her job to spite him.

Metal writer Molly also reported that she must contend with the added burden of double- and triple-checking her work to make sure that it’s “bulletproof.” Male metal writers, meanwhile, are not held to the same standards. Although Molly resents having to put in the extra effort, she spends that additional time to ensure that readers cannot justifiably pick apart her pieces. Similarly, clubs editor Maddy highlighted the impossible double-bind that is thrust upon many female music writers, which she described as “frustrating.” On one hand, she felt as though she had to work harder to be taken seriously as a writer, especially since she said she was known as a “party girl.” On the other hand, Maddy reported she was “very much encouraged” by her publication to live that kind of lifestyle. “I always thought that it was a catch-22, because it meant that I had to work that much harder to prove myself as a smart person and a writer who

knew my shit,” she said, adding that it also made her harbor a good deal of resentment.

## Deflate

Certain female music journalists reported that their experiences with gendered harassment ultimately served to demotivate them; many used words like “humiliated,” “devalued,” and “frustrated” to describe how it made them feel. Rather than inspiring such participants to hone their craft, they might instead adopt a more lax approach to writing, even taking breaks from work or quitting entirely. Some participants began to believe that they should be smarter and said they had feelings of inadequacy. It might also exacerbate symptoms for those participants who already grapple with mental health issues. Sadie, who founded two online outlets, said gendered harassment makes her feel small and as if her work and efforts do not matter. She struggles with anxiety and depression, so for her, sexist treatment takes a while to recover from. “I would just go through a period of, ‘What am I doing? Am I worth anything? Does anything I do here even matter?’ That kind of thought process,” she said.

Music editor Shelly also said gendered harassment would harm her mental health, noting that she once spent an entire \$100 therapy session talking about a freelancer who had acted in a sexist manner toward her. In addition, she said being accused of doing an insufficient job deflated her so much that she stopped caring about her work. She did not see the point of putting energy and effort into something when she knew that she would receive flak for it regardless. There would be days when Shelly would go home for lunch to cry because she hated her job so much. Eventually, she ended up quitting, and although she still works in journalism, she does not believe she would accept a job as a music writer. (It is also important to note that Shelly had been brought on as editor for her publication’s music and culture section. She believes that she had been hired because she was great at culture writing, even though she said she was not as

knowledgeable about music. Shelly did not think she was good at music writing, nor did she like it, so she is not sure how big a role sexism played in her decision to leave the field.)

Still, some participants who are passionate about music journalism also said they have been pushed to quit their jobs because of gendered harassment. After her negative experiences freelancing, Brittany ultimately got a full-time job doing communications for a political organization. She has enough free time and flexibility to spend time writing and pitching new music stories, but she never does. “I’m so terrified of pouring everything into a story and it just crashing and burning,” she said.

Maddy also no longer works in music journalism; these days, she is the office manager for a cannabis tech startup company. She has freelanced since leaving her job as clubs editor, but said if she were to ever get back into the profession, she would not be interested in writing about male musicians. Instead, she would approach the work through a purely feminist lens. “I started getting some static and feedback as I started to get older,” Maddy said. “Music journalism is a young person’s game for the most part.” Of the 15 participants, only four are currently writing about music as journalists for publications. In addition, one person is employed at a music hall of fame and another works at a music marketing company. Although 40% of participants still worked in a music-related job, only around one quarter were actively employed as music journalists/editors.

## Control

Certain respondents decided to stick around and push back against gendered treatment by attempting to take charge of their scenario. Some participants reported that they would spend time getting mentally prepared before publishing a certain story if they believed that it would somehow inflame the trolls. Others have created strategies for dealing with gendered abuse, such

as writing mean emails that they never send. Sadie has attempted to regain control over her emotional and mental health by counteracting negative attention with positivity. She created a folder on her laptop filled with encouraging and kind messages she has received from artists; they might be emails or screenshots of sweet tweets. Now, whenever Sadie has had a difficult day, she will open up the folder to remind herself that her work matters. It has helped her to realize that a majority of people with whom she interacts appreciate her viewpoint.

Another respondent, Shelly, said she has attempted to stave off online harassment by signing up for Deleteme.com, a service that allows users to remove themselves from websites. She advises young journalists to pay for the subscription because it can scrub their phone numbers and addresses, as well as their family members', from the web. That way, trolls cannot track them down or dox their personal information. Other female music journalists have chosen to write under a pseudonym. When Maddy recently covered the allegations regarding physical and sexual abuse by shock rocker Marilyn Manson, she chose to adopt a pen name. She worried about her real name appearing in the byline because of the highly sensitive nature of the subject, and because of Manson's fanatical followers.

Some participants also reported that they have taken steps to prevent gendered harassment in person. After consistently getting hit on by artists and other music-industry workers, Maddy said she adopted a new persona: "I kind of remember fighting fire with fire in that I started showing up to every show, gig, or event with like a new dude on my arm from outside the industry," she said. From then on, she attempted to portray herself as a "maneater," embracing the attitude that "if you can't beat them, join them." Still, while male musicians would be nice to her in person, Maddy said she believed that her maneater persona made them resentful and jealous.

## Avoidance

Another way that respondents dealt with gendered harassment is through avoidance. They might act as though there wasn't really a problem because for them, it was easier to pretend that everything was fine than to face the issue. Some participants reported that they have sought to protect themselves by avoiding certain neighborhoods or geographical locations. Molly, for instance, said she will not attend shows in the Brooklyn neighborhood of Williamsburg because the people there are "douchebags." That area is also home to a white supremacist music scene, which could be hostile to her as a Black woman. For her part, Joan said she is "the Queen of Denial" and "more flight than fight" when it comes to sexist treatment, so she does her best to not dwell on it.

Some participants reported that they have to disengage whenever they are faced with gendered harassment and sexism. Diane said such treatment has harmed her mental health, which has a domino effect. Sometimes, she feels that she is not performing at the level that she holds for herself, which "bums [her] out." So, she has consistently sought out new opportunities. "I've job-hopped a lot, and I think it comes down to this desire — and it never happens — but it's a real desire to be respected as a writer," she said. In addition, Michelle said she has developed a sort of strategy for online gendered harassment: simply logging off and stopping. For her, the greatest coping mechanism is avoiding her computer entirely.

## Support

Some respondents indicated that they have dealt with gendered harassment by actively seeking out support, either via peers and colleagues or through a third-party, such as a therapist. Yet for Brittany, a Latina former freelance music writer, such support can be hard to come by: "I do feel like there's a big missing component for the support of marginalized identities in

journalism,” she said. “And that does make it hard.” Still, other female music journalists said they have amassed a solid network of like-minded women over time. When Kacey was working as a country music writer, she said she wishes she had more women to talk to and ask for advice. She said although she has built several connections over the years, it can be more difficult for writers who are younger and just starting out in their careers. Kacey said she eventually realized that music journalism “is not what *Almost Famous* made it out to be,” but she urges female writers to stick with it, even though the career may not be as glamorous and rosy as they had hoped. “Either you can quit and give up, or you can prove that you’re strong enough to handle it,” she said. “And hopefully, maybe then by doing that, you can make it better down the line for the people after you.”

Maddy believes that women in music journalism, particularly those in positions of editorial power, will work to attract more women to join the field. She said she was brought into the music journalism world through women, too. It will only get safer when there are no longer just one or two women in the editorial meeting in a room full of men, she said. Maddy also wishes that she had been forewarned about just how male-dominated the writing industry is. When she was in high school, she viewed writing as a sensitive and romantic art form and would envision “writers’ colonies full of women.” Yet the reality, she said, was far different:

It was nothing like that. And I always wondered why of all these people in school who were encouraging me to write, none of them gave me the warning that I would have to work twice as hard as men.

## Report

Few respondents said they ever reported gendered harassment to a superior or editor. Some participants feared that their boss would not take their concerns seriously. Others worried that doing so could work against them, insofar as they would be viewed as weak or a suppressant

to the machismo “boys’ club” atmosphere of the male-dominated newsroom. Some said they did not have anyone to report to, either because they were their own boss (such as an outlet’s founder) or because they were a freelancer with no real clear direction of where they should direct their complaint. In Whitney’s case, she never reported gendered harassment because the people she felt undermined by were the editors themselves. Lydia, meanwhile, said she never felt secure reporting her discomfort with her magazine’s overtly sexual overtones because it was simply part of the culture. “Honestly, I don't even know who I would have reported that to, because I truly believe they would have rolled their eyes and taken [an] ‘if you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen’ stance,” she said.

Based on participants’ responses, there also appears to be a difference in the way that women editors process writers’ claims of gendered harassment versus the way that male editors handle it. For instance, music editor Shelly said she once tried to report an instance of gendered harassment to her male boss, but that she initially didn’t get help. Eventually, after returning to ask for support more explicitly, this boss agreed to let Shelly cut ties with the sexist freelancer who had spread the false rumor that the two had had sexual relations. Meanwhile, when Amber told her female editor about the time that she was groped by a male interviewee, she immediately received the reassurance that she sought. The editor told Amber that she could cancel the interview if she felt uncomfortable and supported her in having a photographer stay throughout the entire day.

Race may also play a role in whether female music writers opt to alert their editors to cases of gendered harassment. Molly said she did endure such instances, particularly following the release of her book about being a Black woman in the metal scene. Even though this harassment creeped her out, she did not report it because she felt as though her white editors

would not understand the “combination of racialized sexualized stereotyping.” Although female music journalists in general are often viewed as “groupies” in the metal scene, Molly said it is particularly bad for Black women.

Molly has received invitations to artists’ hotel rooms. She said it was as if they believed that Black women would always be available sexually, an assumption she thinks they likely made based on whatever porn that they were consuming. “I was mildly insulted but I always saw it as what it is — it had nothing to do with me, but just so they could say they slept with a ‘Black chick,’” she said. Molly added that the harassment would primarily occur at the hands of musicians who were attempting to go mainstream and become “rock stars,” as if they were playing a role. In contrast, the more extreme and underground metal scenes were often home to older musicians who were playing music because they wanted to, Molly said. Many of these musicians had families and were less likely to harass her.

## CHAPTER 9

### DISCUSSION

This research delved into 15 female music journalists' experiences with gendered harassment and sexism. These included current and former music writers, editors, and freelancers ranging in age from 24 to 65. They lived in cities across the country, although many called North Texas home, where the research was also conducted. The goal of this study was to learn the extent to which female music journalists field gendered harassment from readers, superiors, co-workers, and sources, in addition to what strategies they have developed to cope. It also asked how these journalists' mental health was affected, as well as if gendered harassment weighed in on the direction of their careers. Finally, participants were asked to explain whether they reported gendered harassment to their editors, and if so, how those superiors chose to handle such claims. Unfortunately, this research found that female music journalists regularly grapple with sexism and gendered harassment, a pervasive problem that can still be seen in music newsrooms in 2022. Respondents had faced gendered harassment from men in a number of roles, including editors, musicians, tour managers, and online trolls.

Out of all participants, only one definitively said she had not faced sexist treatment or gendered harassment during her time as a female music journalist. Although every other participant recounted at least one story when asked if they had endured gendered harassment, some appeared hesitant to label it as such. Even those who said they had received threats to their physical safety also reported that they know of other women who had experienced far worse. Overall, these women appeared eager to downplay their experiences with gendered harassment; while they recognize it as a problem, they also may not have wanted to paint themselves as a victim (North, 2016). Women who have dealt with sexual harassment are sometimes reluctant to

admit it because it can be humiliating, traumatizing, and stigmatizing; in addition, some believe that reporting it may backfire on them and will boil down to their word versus the harasser's (Chance, 2017; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine et al., 2018; Patel, 2018).

As such, there appeared to be a reticence among respondents to call gendered harassment by that name, perhaps because they did not want to be defined by it (Chance, 2017) or because they had internalized the hegemonic masculinity of the newsroom (Whipple & Coleman, 2021). In fact, one respondent remarked that she did not report her encounters with gendered harassment because it was just "part of the culture." The "locker room" nature of the green room may have worked to make some of these women doubt whether the treatment they had experienced had actually risen to the level of gendered harassment. Some seemingly did not acknowledge that even being subjected to vulgar insults, such as "bitch" or "cunt," and offensive comments about their bodies count as gendered harassment (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine et al., 2018).

The analysis of this research identifies that although many do not want it labeled as such, a worryingly high number of female music journalists have dealt with gendered harassment. Even after the mainstreaming of feminism (Dasko, 2022) and the rise of the #MeToo movement in music (Arthur, 2020; Humphries, 2019; Lee, 2020), some participants have reported that they are still regarded as second-class citizens in their music newsroom when compared with their male peers. Others say they have been treated as sex objects by male bosses and artists. Participants have addressed gendered harassment in a number of ways, including by dealing with it head-on through a formal report or by ignoring it, although most decided against telling their superiors about it. Some women choose to cope with gendered harassment by logging off from

their computers, building a support network, or even by quitting their jobs.

In addition, the interview results support the theory that female music journalists' mental health is harmed by gendered harassment, although this was not ubiquitous. Some respondents, such as country music writer Michelle, simply got "used" to the harassment and said it did not bother them as much over time. "At the end of the day, it's this horrible, awful thing, and over a decade, it calcifies into annoyance," Michelle said. "It's just a hardening." Although some have been able to continue working in the field, others have had their career prospects dashed because of the treatment they endured. In addition, most journalists interviewed had dealt with gendered harassment, yet few ultimately reported it to a superior. Freelance writers did not know to whom they should report the abuse (Domanick, 2018) and some women who worked for themselves similarly did not know where they should direct their complaints. Others believed that their reports would simply be "shrugged off" by their superiors, or that their editors would not understand the magnitude of the harassment.

Theme one covered sexism in the newsroom and broadly supported prior research about gendered harassment in journalism. As in the sports and technology realms, this research suggests that female music journalists must quickly learn to navigate operating in a newsroom riddled with misogyny while writing about a grossly sexist industry still driven by and marketed toward white men (Davies, 2001; Elafros, 2010; Zimmerman, 2015). The music newsroom is largely run like a "boys' club" where women encounter frequent microaggressions (Childers, 2020) and feel pressured to act like "one of the boys" (Steiner, 2012, p. 210).

The research also found that female music journalists have internalized the sexism and misogyny of the music newsroom (Whipple & Coleman, 2021), either by viewing other women in the field as competition or by downplaying the gendered harassment that they have

experienced. Yet those participants who wrote for female editors appeared to feel more comfortable reporting sexist treatment. For instance, Amber, who had been working for a female editor at the time, was the only person who seemed pleased with the way that her boss handled reports of gendered harassment from a male source: by offering to nix the interview, and by agreeing to have a photographer stay throughout the session. This female editor was working under an ethics of care by validating Amber's claims and taking action to protect her (Held, 2014). Her actions also support feminist media theory, which highlights the positive experiences that journalists have working for women editors compared with men (Lucht & Batschelet, 2019).

Yet few women detailed claims of gendered harassment to male editors, in part because they felt as though they would not be believed or taken seriously (Eberspacher, 2019; North, 2016). At the same time, female music editors often reported feeling undermined by their male freelancers, workers who likely viewed their authority as a threat (Netchaeva et al., 2015). Multiple participants who had endured gendered harassment classified themselves as "lucky" because they felt as though their treatment was relatively mild, a trend also seen in other studies (Sobieraj, 2018). Another surprising finding was that some interviewees who recounted troubling stories when asked about gendered harassment appeared to contradict themselves later by claiming they had endured no such thing.

In addition, many participants divulged that they had experienced sexism and gendered harassment from artists, trolls, and other music-industry insiders. Several respondents claimed that they were treated as sex objects by male artists, while others said they had to grapple with consistent abuse from online trolls, a phenomenon witnessed by many female reporters (Adams, 2018; Chen et al., 2020; Ging & Siapera, 2018; Mantilla, 2013; Sobieraj, 2018). As with female journalists in other male-dominated fields, music writers relayed that trolls were particularly

upset by stories touching on topics such as racism, politics, and misogyny (Chen et al., 2020; Eberspacher, 2019; Harki, 2021). Also, the tour bus appears to represent an “anything goes” environment for musicians and their crews, similar to the function that the locker room serves for male athletes (Hardin & Shain, 2006; Kane & Disch, 1993). Meanwhile, respondents who specialized in certain areas, such as country and metal, reported that misogyny runs rampant within their respective genres.

Another theme found in this research was “devaluing,” in that many female respondents said they felt belittled by the ways that male editors and artists treated them. Such a devaluing might manifest through women being pigeonholed, such as a Latina journalist being expected to write with a certain level of sassiness. It can also appear as benevolent sexism, wherein male editors might treat their female staffers paternalistically, thereby perpetuating the newsroom’s hegemonic masculinity (Messerschmidt, 2019). Multiple female music journalists also said they had been groped by male bosses and sources, which made them wonder whether the men had expected a sort of *quid pro quo* exchange. Echoes of this can be seen in the treatment of female music fans, a relatively large number of whom were groped and sexually assaulted at Woodstock ‘99, for instance (Hyden, 2019; Michel, 1999; Vanhorn, 1999). The interview results also indicate a high level of ageism and lookism, with female music journalists believing that their appearance might help or hurt them in their career prospects. Some female music journalists detailed that they felt invisible in a male-dominated news culture, similar to what some female sports journalists have previously reported (Miller & Miller, 1995).

Certain respondents said they had been threatened by male readers, musicians, and others in the music journalism industry. It is certainly noteworthy that both interviewees who had been physically threatened at a show were women of color. Unfortunately, this is not surprising given

the elevated threats that minorities in other beats and careers receive on a regular basis; for female writers of color, sexist and racist abuse often go hand-in-hand (Eberspacher, 2019; European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2016; Harki, 2021; Sobieraj, 2018). Much of the gendered harassment that participants faced was from online trolls, similar to the rampant misogyny and sexism that is present in the gaming community and that led to Gamergate (Braithwaite, 2016; Illing, 2017; Nieborg & Foxman, 2018). This is consistent with the *toxic disinhibition* effect, which posits that certain Internet users are emboldened to behave badly thanks to the shield of online anonymity (Suler, 2004).

In addition, multiple participants received death and/or rape threats, leading some to fear for their physical safety. Sadly, this runs parallel to the threats lodged against female journalists in other beats (Chen et al., 2020; International Women's Media Foundation, 2018; Quinn, 2017; Sobieraj, 2018). It also illustrates how far the music journalism industry needs to progress toward applying an ethics of care approach to ensure its women workers feel safe, cared for, and secure (Camponez, 2014; Held, 2014; Hossain & Aucoin, 2017).

Participants responded to gendered harassment in various ways, which can be lumped into four basic categories: *motivate*, *deflate*, *control*, and *avoid*. Although interviewees reported they resented doing this, some have been *motivated* to prevent gendered harassment by working harder to ensure their stories are bulletproof; others honed their craft to get better and spite their detractors. Still, some participants said they feel *deflated* when they receive sexist treatment and might become anxious or even depressed (Miller & Lewis, 2020). Unfortunately, gendered harassment has pushed some female writers to quit their job or to leave the music journalism field entirely, a devastating trend that is similarly witnessed in other male-dominated newsrooms (Adams, 2018).

At the same time, certain respondents have attempted to regain *control* of the situation when they are made to feel powerless, such as by proactively taking steps to secure their cybersafety or by adopting a pen name (Adams, 2018). Others have *avoided* dealing with the abuse, including by logging off their computers. Steering clear of certain topics is similar to the way that female journalists in other beats have attempted to prevent gendered harassment. Meanwhile, some respondents have vowed to never return to specific music venues. Sobieraj (2018) similarly learned that female journalists sometimes create “mental maps” for themselves so they may safely navigate public spaces where the threat of male violence is possible (p. 1701).

Female music journalist respondents largely expressed interest in creating or finding a support network with other women writers. They also emphasized the importance of elevating women to leadership roles in the male-dominated music newsroom. The need for women in positions of power (Finneman et al., 2019; North, 2016; Steiner, 2012) is further underscored by this study’s finding that few participants had ever reported instances of sexism or gendered harassment to their superiors (Miller & Lewis, 2020). This could have been because they did not feel as though their claims would be taken seriously, or even because their editors were the ones doing the harassing. Participants also expressed a fear of becoming alienated if they were to report such abuse because it would mean that they were challenging their organization’s foundation, which is invariably rooted in hegemonic masculinity.

This research had several limitations, both in terms of theoretical basis and generalizability. Of all the study’s participants, very few had reported an instance of gendered harassment to their boss. As such, this study was unable to properly delve into how editors chose to respond to reports of gendered harassment, thereby virtually invalidating the utilitarian theoretical justification. Having said that, ethics of care and feminist media theory served the

research well. Another limitation was the study's use of snowball and convenience sampling methods. Several respondents volunteered to ask their friends and colleagues to participate, some of whom did, so this study could not be applied to the broader music journalist population. I have also worked with multiple participants at a certain regional outlet, further rendering the study's generalizability null. Another weakness is the study's small participant pool; if there had been more time available, the research would have included additional respondents.

Although this research benefited from a somewhat broad sample, future studies should delve further into gendered harassment faced by female music journalists who come from diverse racial, ethnic, sexual, or gendered (e.g., nonbinary) minority backgrounds. One participant used she/they pronouns, but the rest fell under she/her. Three participants identified as Hispanic/Latina and one as Black, yet the vast majority (73.33%) were white. Future research should investigate what respondent Molly called the "combination of racialized sexualized stereotyping" experienced by female music journalists of color.

Respondents hailed from cities dotting the United States, which was somewhat surprising given this study's use of snowball and convenience samplings. Even still, nearly half of respondents (seven, 46.67%) were from Texas, with six living in cities in the North Texas region. Moving forward, it would be wise to broaden the scope to include female music journalists from many other states and even countries; the intersection of geography and gendered harassment could be another angle to explore.

Hegemonic masculinity has long steered the tone of music criticism both in coverage and the newsroom, but promising strides have been made toward attaining equitability for female music writers in recent years. Even still, this study's findings underscore the urgent need for more women in leadership positions within the field of music journalism. Respondents reported

that there is a thirst for support networks of female music writers, so women in the industry should continue building informal support groups, as well as official ones. TrollBusters is an excellent example of an organization that seeks to improve the Internet safety of female reporters (Kabas, 2016), so its model could potentially be applied to help women in the music journalism field.

Several participants also said they were blindsided by the gendered treatment that they encountered. Journalism schools must work to better prepare female (and minority) students for the gendered (and racial) harassment they are likely to face once in the music journalism field. Editors could also let their writers know, in the clearest of terms, that they will listen to, and take seriously, claims of gendered harassment. Such overtures will let women know they are safe in reporting instances of sexism and abuse. If editors and others in the music newsroom are not aware of such encounters, then they will remain unresolved. Empathetic editors will also bolster employee retention. When women are heard and believed, they feel safe enough to stay in their jobs, and music criticism benefits from a diversity of voices.

## CHAPTER 10

### CONCLUSION

This research sought to understand whether female music journalists deal with gendered harassment, and if so, to what extent. Unfortunately, women music writers are subjected to gendered and sexist treatment within and outside the male-dominated music newsroom. Trolls, colleagues, superiors, and some musicians themselves are perpetrators of this abuse. Although female music journalists cope with said treatment in a variety of ways, many reported that it harms their mental health and emotional well-being. Respondents were sometimes motivated to work harder to spite their detractors, or they might be pushed to log off their computers. In some cases, they have quit their jobs or left the field entirely. Often, gendered harassment goes unreported, with freelancers unsure of where they should turn for help. Some music journalists did not inform their superiors when they encountered this treatment because they believed their complaints wouldn't be taken seriously, or even because their editors were the harassers.

This study has also served to fill a gap in existing literature. Sexism in the music industry and harassment of female journalists have both been extensively studied, but this research may be the first of its kind to focus on the gendered harassment of women music writers. The study was limited because it cannot be generalized; it relied on snowball and convenience sampling. It also would have benefited from a more robust and diverse pool of participants. Future research should focus on the gendered harassment of minority female music journalists, and music newsrooms should strive to reflect an increasingly diverse readership in their hiring practices. Music journalism should no longer be reserved for male critics, musicians, and fans: It's time for women writers to command center stage.

APPENDIX A  
LIST OF QUESTIONS

- How did you get into music journalism?
- What are some of the jobs that you've had in the field?
- Where do you work now and what is your title?
- As a music journalist, do/did your experiences differ from that of your male colleagues, generally speaking? How so?
- As a music journalist, have you ever experienced gendered harassment within the workplace from male colleagues, bosses, etc.? Please explain.
- As a music journalist, have you ever experienced gendered harassment from sources, readers, online trolls? Please explain.
- Are there any particular topics that appear to agitate online trolls? Which ones?
- How has this gendered harassment made you feel?
- Does such treatment affect your mental health? If so, how?
- Does it harm your work productivity? If so, how?
- Have you devised any coping mechanisms to deal with this treatment? If so, what are they?
- If you have dealt with gendered harassment as a female music journalist, did you ever report it to a boss/superior, such as an editor? If not, how come? If so, what was their response and how did it make you feel?
- Is there anything that could have better prepared you for what a career in music journalism is really like?
- Have these experiences changed the way that you view/think about working in music journalism? Please explain.
- What else do you want to add about your experiences with gendered harassment that I didn't think to ask you?

APPENDIX B  
DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

- Age:
- Location (city, state):
- Preferred pronouns:
- Current gender identity:
  - Cisgender female
  - Transgender female (assigned male at birth)
  - Transgender male (assigned female at birth)
  - Genderqueer, gender nonbinary, or genderfluid
- Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Don't know/don't wish to answer
- Which of the following describes your race? You can select as many as apply:
  - White
  - Black or African American
  - Hispanic/Latino
  - Asian or Asian American
  - Native American/American Indian/Alaska Native
  - Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian
  - Some other race (please specify):
  - Don't know/don't wish to answer

## REFERENCES

- Abou-Sabe, R. (2019, December 20). Chadwick Stokes talks charity, dispatch and Massachusetts roots. *WBZ NewsRadio*. <https://wbznewsradio.iheart.com/content/chadwick-stokes-dispatch-charity-massachusetts-roots-interview-drew-moholland>
- Adams, C. (2018). They go for gender first: The nature and effect of sexist abuse of female technology journalists. *Journalism Practice*, 12(7), 850–869. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2017.1350115>
- Aguirre, A. (2019, August 8). Taylor Swift on sexism, scrutiny, and standing up for herself. *Vogue*. <https://www.vogue.com/article/taylor-swift-cover-september-2019>
- American Press Institute. (n.d.). Diversity and inclusivity in journalism. *American Press Institute*. <https://www.americanpressinstitute.org/diversity-programs>
- Antunovic, D. (2019). ‘We wouldn’t say it to their faces’: Online harassment, women sports journalists, and feminism. *Feminist Media Studies*, 19(3), 428–442. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2018.1446454>
- Arana, G. (2018). *Decades of failure*. Columbia Journalism Review. [https://www.cjr.org/special\\_report/race-ethnicity-newsrooms-data.php](https://www.cjr.org/special_report/race-ethnicity-newsrooms-data.php)
- Armstrong, C. L. (2004). The influence of reporter gender on source selection in newspaper stories. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 81(1), 139–154. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769900408100110>
- Arthur, M. (2020, July 28). Me Too in the music industry. *Fear 2 Freedom*. <https://www.fear2freedom.org/bethechangeblog/2020/7/28/me-too-in-the-music-industry>
- Binns, A. (2012). Don’t feed the trolls! *Journalism Practice*, 6(4), 547–562. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2011.648988>
- Braithwaite, A. (2016). It’s about ethics in games journalism? Gamergaters and geek masculinity. *Social Media + Society*, 2(4), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305116672484>
- Buckingham, D. (n.d.). Glam, girls, and fandom. *David Buckingham*. <https://davidbuckingham.net/growing-up-modern/glitter-glam-and-gender-play-pop-and-teenybop-in-the-early-1970s/glam-girls-and-fandom>
- Camponez, C. (2014). Between truth and respect: Towards an ethics of care in journalism. *Comunicação e Sociedade*, 25, 124–136. [https://doi.org/10.17231/comsoc.25\(2014\).1864](https://doi.org/10.17231/comsoc.25(2014).1864)
- Caulfield, J. (2019, September 6). How to do thematic analysis: A step-by-step guide & examples. *Scribbr*. <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/thematic-analysis>

- Chance, Z. (2017, October 18). Here's why we don't speak up against harassment. *Psychology Today*. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/make-it-so/201710/here-s-why-we-don-t-speak-against-harassment>
- Chandler, J., & Gordon, H. (2019, February 7). For every 47 music producers who are men, there is 1 woman. *CBC*. <https://www.cbc.ca/music/for-every-47-music-producers-who-are-men-there-is-1-woman-1.5017584>
- Chen, G. M., Pain, P., Chen, V. Y., Mekelburg, M., Springer, N., & Troger, F. (2020). 'You really have to have a thick skin': A cross-cultural perspective on how online harassment influences female journalists. *Journalism*, 21(7), 877–895. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884918768500>
- Childers, N. A. (2020, November 24). The moral argument for diversity in newsrooms is also a business argument — and you need both. *Nieman Lab*. <https://www.niemanlab.org/2020/11/the-moral-case-for-diversity-in-newsrooms-also-makes-good-business-sense>
- Closson, T. (2021, September 28). How the Black women around R. Kelly's case feel about his conviction. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/28/nyregion/r-kelly-verdict-metoo-black-women.html>
- Coaston, J. (2019, May 28). The intersectionality wars. *Vox*. <https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/5/20/18542843/intersectionality-conservatism-law-race-gender-discrimination>
- Cohen-Almagor, R. (2017). J.S. Mill's boundaries of freedom of expression: A critique. *Philosophy*, 92(4), 565–596. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819117000213>
- Cohut, M. (2020, October 13). The controversy of 'female hysteria'. *Medical News Today*. <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/the-controversy-of-female-hysteria>
- Coscarelli, J., & Ryzik, M. (2019, February 13). Ryan Adams dangled success. Women say they paid a price. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/13/arts/music/ryan-adams-women-sex.html>
- Cush, A. (2017, October 16). Allegations of misconduct by ex-Real Estate guitarist Matt Mondanile detailed by seven women. *Spin*. <https://www.spin.com/2017/10/matt-mondanile-ducktails-real-estate-sexual-misconduct-allegations-detailed>
- Dasko, D. (2022, January 17). Feminism is mainstream, and there are numbers to prove it. *The Globe and Mail*. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-feminism-is-mainstream-and-there-are-numbers-to-prove-it>
- Davies, H. (2001). All rock and roll is homosocial: The representation of women in the British rock music press. *Popular Music*, 20(3), 301–319. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/853623>

- Davies, S. (2019, August 23). Is music journalism in crisis? *XLR8R*. <https://xlr8r.com/features/is-music-journalism-in-crisis>
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2009). Four observations about hate speech articles & essays. *Wake Forest Law Review*, 44, 353–370. [http://www.wakeforestlawreview.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Delgado\\_LawReview\\_01.09.pdf](http://www.wakeforestlawreview.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Delgado_LawReview_01.09.pdf)
- Desmond-Harris, J. (2015, February 16). What exactly is a microaggression? *Vox*. <https://www.vox.com/2015/2/16/8031073/what-are-microaggressions>
- Domanick, A. (2018, March 15). The dollars and desperation silencing #MeToo in music. *Vice*. <https://www.vice.com/en/article/9kzex7/inside-music-industry-sexual-misconduct-harassment-problem-and-metoo>
- Downes, J. (2012). The expansion of punk rock: Riot grrrl challenges to gender power relations in British indie music subcultures. *Women's Studies*, 41(2), 204–237. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00497878.2012.636572>
- Duggan, M. (2014, October 22). Online harassment. *Pew Research Center*. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2014/10/22/online-harassment>
- Dunn, K., & Farnsworth, M. S. (2012). 'We ARE the revolution': Riot grrrl press, girl empowerment, and DIY self-publishing. *Women's Studies*, 41(2), 136–157. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00497878.2012.636334>
- Eberspacher, S. (2019). 'Delete your account' or deal with it? How news organizations are failing to support female reporters against online harassment. *Georgetown Journal of Gender and the Law*, 21(1), 143–170. <https://www.law.georgetown.edu/gender-journal/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2020/01/Note-1.pdf>
- Eberwein, T. (2019). 'Trolls' or 'warriors of faith'? *Journal of Information, Communication and Ethics in Society*, 18(1), 131–143. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JICES-08-2019-0090>
- Elafros, A. (2010). 'No beauty tips or guilt trips': *Rockrgirl*, rock, and representation. *Popular Music and Society*, 33(4), 487–499. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03007761003694258>
- Elster, N. (2019, November 21). I'm not hysterical — But you're sexist. *Rewire News Group*. <https://rewirenewsgroup.com/article/2019/11/21/im-not-hysterical-but-youre-sexist>
- European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. (2016). *Violence, threats and pressures against journalists and other media actors in the EU*. [https://ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/newsroom/image/document/2016-47/fra\\_threats\\_and\\_pressures\\_paper\\_19751.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/image/document/2016-47/fra_threats_and_pressures_paper_19751.pdf)
- Everbach, T. (2018). 'I realized it was about them ... Not me': Women sports journalists and harassment. In J. R. Vickery & T. Everbach (Eds.), *Mediating misogyny* (pp. 131–149). Palgrave MacMillan. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-72917-6\\_7](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-72917-6_7)

- Fenton, M. K. (2018, January 1). A history of sexual harassment laws in the United States. *Wenzel Fenton Cabassa: Employee Rights Attorneys*.  
<https://www.wenzelfenton.com/blog/2018/01/01/history-sexual-harassment-laws-united-states>
- Fetters, A., Chan, J. C., & Wu, N. (2020, January 31). Classical music has a ‘God status’ problem. *The Atlantic*.  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2020/01/conservatories-sexual-harassment-abuse/604351>
- Finneman, T., Thomas, R. J., & Jenkins, J. (2019). ‘I always watched eyewitness news just to see your beautiful smile’: Ethical implications of U.S. women TV anchors’ personal branding on social media. *Journal of Media Ethics*, 34(3), 146–159.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/23736992.2019.1638260>
- Flatow, G. (1994). Sexual harassment in Indiana daily newspapers. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 15(3): 32–45. <https://doi.org/10.1177/073953299401500304>
- Funke, D. (2017, June 14). WSJ union report shows persistent gender pay gap at Dow Jones. *Poynter*. [www.poynter.org/business-work/2017/wall-street-journal-union-report-shows-persistent-gender-pay-gap-at-dow-jones](http://www.poynter.org/business-work/2017/wall-street-journal-union-report-shows-persistent-gender-pay-gap-at-dow-jones)
- Geesing, M. (2017, April 17). The female voice in music journalism: A chat with Frances Morgan. *NBHAP*. <https://nbhap.com/stories/we-make-waves-interview-frances-morgan-female-voice-in-music-journalism>
- Ging, D., & Siapera, E. (2018). Special issue on online misogyny. *Feminist Media Studies*, 18(4), 515–524. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2018.1447345>
- Glick, P., & Fiske, S. T. (1996). The ambivalent sexism inventory: Differentiating hostile and benevolent sexism. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 70(3), 491–512.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.70.3.491>
- Gordon, S. (2020, July 2). What is the #MeToo movement? *Verywell Mind*.  
<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-the-metoo-movement-4774817>
- Grady, C. (2018, July 20). The waves of feminism, and why people keep fighting over them, explained. *Vox*. <https://www.vox.com/2018/3/20/16955588/feminism-waves-explained-first-second-third-fourth>
- Gray, D., Citron, D. K., & Rinehart, L. C. (2013). Fighting cybercrime after the *United States v. Jones*. *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, 103(3), 745–801.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/43895378>
- Hardin, M., & Shain, S. (2006). ‘Feeling much smaller than you know you are’: The fragmented professional identity of female sports journalists. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 23(4), 322–338. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07393180600933147>

- Hare, K. (2021, October 20). More than 90 local newsrooms closed during the coronavirus pandemic. *Poynter*. <https://www.poynter.org/locally/2021/the-coronavirus-has-closed-more-than-60-local-newsrooms-across-america-and-counting>
- Harki, G. (2021, March 12). When writing about race, abuse follows. Especially for journalists of color and women. *Poynter*. <https://www.poynter.org/ethics-trust/2021/when-writing-about-race-abuse-follows-especially-for-journalists-of-color-and-women>
- Hartman-Caverly, S. (2020, October 6). ‘Defending scoundrels’: 4 moral arguments for 4chan. *Intellectual Freedom Blog*. <https://www.oif.ala.org/oif/?p=22081>
- Hecht, Z. (2021, July 2). All your favorite female artists have male producers. Why? *Her Campus*. <https://www.hercampus.com/culture/jack-antonoff-lorde-taylor-swift-female-artists-male-producers>
- Held, V. (2014). The ethics of care as normative guidance: Comment on Gilligan. *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 45(1), 107–115. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josp.12051>
- Herman, J. P. (2019, December 13). Hollywood’s 10 worst depictions of female music journalists. *Variety*. <https://variety.com/feature/hollywood-10-worst-female-music-journalists-crazy-heart-richard-jewell-1203435207>
- Hesse-Biber, S. N. (2017). *The Practice of Qualitative Research: Engaging Students in the Research Process*. SAGE.
- Hobson, J. (2020, May 27). Black women, hip-hop & #MeToo: ‘On the Record’ spotlights music industry. *Ms. Magazine*. <https://msmagazine.com/2020/05/27/black-women-hip-hop-metoo-on-the-record-spotlights-music-industry>
- Hossain, M. D., & Aucoin, J. (2017). The ethics of care as a universal framework for global journalism. *Journal of Media Ethics*, 33(4), 198–211. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23736992.2018.1509713>
- Hudson, D. L. (2017, December). Counterspeech doctrine. *The First Amendment Encyclopedia*. <https://www.mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/940/counterspeech-doctrine>
- Humphries, S. (2019, March 8). Is the music industry finally facing its #MeToo moment? *The Christian Science Monitor*. <https://www.csmonitor.com/The-Culture/Music/2019/0308/Is-the-music-industry-finally-facing-its-MeToo-moment>
- Hunt, E. (2019, August 27). A brief history of Riot Grrrl — The space-reclaiming ‘90s punk movement. *NME*. <https://www.nme.com/blogs/nme-blogs/brief-history-riot-grrrl-space-reclaiming-90s-punk-movement-2542166>
- Hyden, S. (2019, August 13). The legacy of Woodstock ‘99 is sexual assault. *The Ringer*. <https://www.theringer.com/2019/8/13/20801339/break-stuff-episode-six-sexual-assaults-woodstock-99>

- Illing, S. (2017, September 19). The woman at the center of #Gamergate gives zeros fucks about her haters. *Vox*. <https://www.vox.com/culture/2017/9/19/16301682/gamergate-alt-right-zoe-quinn-crash-override-interview>
- International Women's Media Foundation. (2018). *Attacks and harassment: The impact on female journalists and their reporting*. <https://www.iwmf.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Attacks-and-Harassment.pdf>
- Irvin, M. (2013). Women in TV broadcast news: Reporters and sources in hard news stories. *Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications*, 4(1). <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/789/women-in-tv-broadcast-news-reporters-and-sources-in-hard-news-stories>
- Johnson, D. (2008). Utilitarianism without consequentialism: The case of John Stuart Mill. *The Philosophical Review*, 117(2), 159–191. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00318108-2007-035>
- Johnson, J. (2020, June 21). What to know about toxic masculinity. *Medical News Today*. <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/toxic-masculinity>
- Johnston, E. (2021, November 24). Misogyny still defines the music industry in 2021. *Mancunion*. <https://mancunion.com/2021/11/24/misogyny-still-defines-the-music-industry-in-2021>
- Kabas, M. (2016, March 18). Troll Busters helps protect women from online bullies. *Daily Dot*. <https://www.dailydot.com/irl/troll-busters-online-harassment>
- Kahlert, H., & Das, S. (2021). *Be the change — Women making music*. Midia. <https://midiaaresearch.com/free-report-download/axOaOzy145jOuvmjVcvWTS0e5mjjcxLj>
- Kane, M. J., & Disch, L. J. (1993). Sexual violence and the reproduction of male power in the locker room: The 'Lisa Olson incident'. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 10(4), 331–352. <https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.10.4.331>
- Kelly, K. (2018, March 19). With #KillTheKing, heavy metal is having its #MeToo moment. *Vice*. <https://www.vice.com/en/article/9kg9ez/with-killtheking-heavy-metal-is-having-its-metoo-moment>
- King, S. (2022, February 9). 'Redesigning women': On the marginalisation of women in country music. *Varsity*. <https://www.varsity.co.uk/music/22955>
- Krivkovich, A., Nadeau, M., Robinson, K., Robinson, N., Starikova, I., & Yee, L. (2018). *Women in the workplace 2018*. McKinsey & Company and LeanIn.org. [https://wiw-report.s3.amazonaws.com/Women\\_in\\_the\\_Workplace\\_2018.pdf](https://wiw-report.s3.amazonaws.com/Women_in_the_Workplace_2018.pdf)
- Lee, S. (2020, January 22). When will the music industry have its #MeToo moment? *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/shanonlee/2020/01/22/when-will-the-music-industry-have-its-metoo-moment/?sh=36c573e17803>

- Loreck, J. (2016, January 5). What does the ‘male gaze’ mean, and what about a female gaze? *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/explainer-what-does-the-male-gaze-mean-and-what-about-a-female-gaze-52486>
- Lough, K. (2020). Patriarchal pits: The gendered experiences of female concert photographers. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 29(7), 820–831. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2020.1821178>
- Lucht, T., & Batschelet, K. (2019). ‘That was what I had to use’: Social and cultural capital in the careers of women broadcasters. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 96(1), 194–214. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699018776917>
- Lupton, P. (2018, September 24). Is intersectionality exclusive to third-wave feminism? *Woroni*. <https://www.woroni.com.au/words/is-intersectionality-exclusive-to-third-wave-feminism>
- Maguire, M., & Delahunt, B. (2017). Doing a thematic analysis: A practical, step-by-step guide for learning and teaching scholars. *All Ireland Journal of Higher Education*, 9(3). <http://ojs.aishe.org/index.php/aishe-j/article/view/3354>
- Maino, C. (2020, March 22). Feminism and fame; Women, music and the #MeToo movement. *The Boar*. <https://theboar.org/2020/03/women-music-and-the-me-too-movement>
- Mantilla, K. (2013). Gendertrolling misogyny adapts to new media. *Feminist Studies*, 39(2), 563–570. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23719068>
- Mapes, J. (2019, October 23). The chorus of #MeToo, and the women who turned trauma into songs. *Pitchfork*. <https://pitchfork.com/features/article/2010s-on-women-singing-openly-about-abuse>
- Marie Claire*. (2019, September 16). How #MeToo shows that we need to acknowledge sexism in the music industry too. *Marie Claire*. <https://www.Marieclaire.co.uk/reports/music-industry-sexism-426585>
- McGlynn, C., & Ward, I. (2014). Would John Stuart Mill have regulated pornography? *Journal of Law and Society*, 41(4), 500–522. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6478.2014.00683.x>
- Messerschmidt, J. W. (2019). The salience of ‘hegemonic masculinity’. *Men and Masculinities*, 22(1), 85–91. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X18805555>
- Michaels, P. (2016, July 17). Memo Steve Price: How ‘hysteria’ has been used to degrade and control women. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/memo-steve-price-how-hysteria-has-been-used-to-degrade-and-control-women-62604>
- Michel, L. (1999, August 9). Rape made Woodstock nightmare for woman. *Buffalo News*. [https://buffalonews.com/news/rape-made-woodstock-nightmare-for-woman/article\\_103b6fdb-6094-50b6-9e12-756c43ff83e5.html](https://buffalonews.com/news/rape-made-woodstock-nightmare-for-woman/article_103b6fdb-6094-50b6-9e12-756c43ff83e5.html)

- Miller, K. C., & Lewis, S. C. (2020). Journalists, harassment, and emotional labor: The case of women in on-air roles at US local television stations. *Journalism*, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884919899016>
- Miller, P., & Miller, R. (1995). The invisible woman: Female sports journalists in the workplace. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 72(4), 883–889. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F107769909507200411>
- Miloch, K. S., Pedersen, P. M., Smucker, M. K., & Whisenant, W. A. (2005). The current state of women print journalists: An analysis of the status and careers of females in newspapers sports departments. *Public Organization Review*, 5(3), 219–232. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11115-005-3499-y>
- Moore, L. (2021, May 7). The objectified history of the female pop industry. *The Messenger*. <https://www.garfieldmessenger.org/7203/articles/ae/the-objectified-history-of-the-female-pop-industry>
- Mortensen, T. E. (2018). Anger, fear, and games: The long event of #GamerGate. *Games and Culture*, 13(8), 787–806. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412016640408>
- Moss, M. R. (2018, January 16). Inside country radio's dark, secret history of sexual harassment and misconduct. *Rolling Stone*. <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-country/inside-country-radios-dark-secret-history-of-sexual-harassment-and-misconduct-253573>
- Nadim, M., & Fladmoe, A. (2019). Silencing women? Gender and online harassment. *Social Science Computer Review*, 39(2), 245–258. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0894439319865518>
- National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine; Policy and Global Affairs; Committee on Women in Science, Engineering, and Medicine; & Committee on the Impacts of Sexual Harassment in Academia. (2018). Sexual harassment research. In F. F. Benya, S.E. Widnall, & P. A. Johnson (Eds.), *Sexual harassment of women: Climate, culture, and consequences in academic sciences, engineering, and medicine* (pp. 23–50). National Academies Press. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK519455>
- Netchaeva, E., Kouchaki, M., & Sheppard, L. D. (2015). A man's (precarious) place: Men's experienced threat and self-assertive reactions to female superiors. *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin*, 41(9), 1247–1259. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167215593491>
- Nguyen, M. T. (2012). Riot grrrl, race, and revival. *Women & Performance*, 22(2–3), 173–196. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0740770X.2012.721082>
- Nieborg, D., & Foxman, M. (2018). Mainstreaming misogyny: The beginning of the end and the end of the beginning in Gamergate coverage. In J. R. Vickery & T. Everbach (Eds.), *Mediating misogyny* (pp. 111–130). Palgrave MacMillan. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-72917-6\\_7](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-72917-6_7)

- North, A. (2019, October 4). 7 positive changes that have come from the #MeToo movement. *Vox*. <https://www.vox.com/identities/2019/10/4/20852639/me-too-movement-sexual-harassment-law-2019>
- North, L. (2016). Damaging and daunting: Female journalists' experiences of sexual harassment in the newsroom. *Feminist Media Studies*, 16(3), 495–510. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2015.1105275>
- Owen, N. (2021, September 9). We need to talk about sexual harassment and assault plaguing the music scene. *Cosmopolitan*. <https://www.cosmopolitan.com/uk/reports/a37406426/sexual-harassment-festivals>
- Patel, M. (2018, October 30). Workplace harassment: Why women don't speak up. *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/yec/2018/10/30/workplace-harassment-why-women-dont-speak-up/?sh=70d4a56334b3>
- Paul, N., Sui, M., & Searles, K. (2021). Look who's writing: How gender affects news credibility and perceptions of news relevance. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10776990211042595>
- Pedersen, P. M., Lim, C. H., Osborne, B., & Whisenant, W. (2009). An examination of the perceptions of sexual harassment by sport print media professionals. *Journal of Sport Management*, 23(3), 335–360. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.23.3.335>
- Pentreath, R. (2021, March 26). 81 percent of women say it's harder for female artists in music, with sexual harassment a key challenge. *Classic FM*. <https://www.classicfm.com/discover-music/women-in-music/81-percent-say-more-difficult-female-artists-sexual-harassment>
- Pflum, M. (2018, October 15). A year ago, Alyssa Milano started a conversation about #MeToo. These women replied. *NBC News*. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/year-ago-alyssa-milano-started-conversation-about-metoo-these-women-n920246>
- Plank, L. (2016, October 20). 'Nasty woman' becomes the feminist rallying cry Hillary Clinton was waiting for. *Vox*. <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2016/10/20/13341416/nasty-woman-feminist-rallying-cry-hillary-clinton>
- Powers, A. (1999, August 2). Critics notebook; A surge of sexism on the rock scene. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/08/02/arts/critic-s-notebook-a-surge-of-sexism-on-the-rock-scene.html>
- Quinn, Z. (2017, September 11). Zoe Quinn: What happened after GamerGate hacked me. *Time*. <https://time.com/4927076/zoe-quinn-gamergate-doxxing-crash-override-excerpt>
- Reader, B. (2012). Free press vs. free speech? The rhetoric of 'civility' in regard to anonymous online comments. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 89(3), 495–513. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699012447923>

- Robertson, C. T., Selva, M., & Nielsen, R. T. (2021). *Women and leadership in the news media 2021: Evidence from 12 markets* [Fact sheet]. Reuters Institute. <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2021-03/Robertson%20et%20al%20Women%20and%20Leadership%20FINAL.pdf>
- Ryan, M. (2021, February 1). He ‘horribly abused me for years’: Evan Rachel Wood and other women make allegations of abuse against Marilyn Manson. *Vanity Fair*. <https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2021/02/he-horribly-abused-me-for-years-ewan-rachel-wood-and-other-women-make-allegations-of-abuse-against-marilyn-manson>
- Saunders, G. (2020, March 4). Is it harder for females to make it into the pop industry? *Open Mic*. <https://www.openmicuk.co.uk/advice/is-it-harder-for-females-to-make-it-into-the-pop-industry>
- Sayej, N. (2017, December 1). Alyssa Milano on the #MeToo movement: ‘We’re not going to stand for it any more’. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2017/dec/01/alyssa-milano-mee-too-sexual-harassment-abuse>
- Shafer, E. (2020, April 28). Alanis Morissette: Nearly every woman in music has been ‘assaulted, harassed, raped’. *Variety*. <https://variety.com/2020/music/news/alanis-morissette-me-too-movement-has-not-begun-music-industry-1234591991>
- Smith, S. L., Choueiti, M., Pieper, K., Clark, H., Case, A., & Villanueva, S. (2019). Inclusion in the recording studio? Gender and race/ethnicity of artists, songwriters & producers across 700 popular songs from 2012–2018. USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative. <https://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/aai-inclusion-recording-studio-2019.pdf>
- Smucker, M. K., Whisenant, W. A., & Pedersen, P. M. (2003). An investigation of job satisfaction and female sports journalists. *Sex Roles*, 49(7), 401–407. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1025120406343>
- Snapes, L. (2018, October 31). Hookworms split after abuse allegations against band’s singer. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2018/oct/31/hookworms-split-after-abuse-allegations-against-bands-singer>
- Sobieraj, S. (2018). Bitch, slut, skank, cunt: Patterned resistance to women’s visibility in digital publics. *Information, Communication & Society*, 21(11), 1700–1714. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2017.1348535>
- Steiner, L. (2012). Failed theories: Explaining gender difference in journalism. *The Review of Communication*, 12(3), 201–223. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15358593.2012.666559>
- Suler, J. (2004). The online disinhibition effect. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 7(3), 322–326. <https://doi.org/10.1089/1094931041291295>
- Stiernberg, B. (2020, September 14). Remembering ‘Almost Famous’ and the bygone golden age of music journalism. *Inside Hook*.

- <https://www.insidehook.com/article/movies/remembering-almost-famous-golden-age-music-journalism>
- Tatevosian, M. (2020, February 6). Is riot grrrl dead? *WEBC*. <http://www.weeb.fm/milkcrate/is-riot-grrrl-dead>
- Thraves, L. (2022, January 19). The Music Federation Live launches Safe Spaces Policy. *Music Week*. <https://www.musicweek.com/live/read/the-music-federation-live-launches-safe-spaces-policy/085010>
- Topping, A. (2021, March 10). Four-fifths of young women in the UK have been sexually harassed, survey finds. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/10/almost-all-young-women-in-the-uk-have-been-sexually-harassed-survey-finds>
- Trast, G. (2016, December 14). Musical elitism can contain toxic sexism. Just as One Direction. *The Badger Herald*. <https://badgerherald.com/artsetc/2016/12/14/musical-elitism-can-contain-toxic-sexism-just-ask-one-direction>
- Vanhorn, T. (1999, July 30). Two Woodstock fans allegedly raped in mosh pits. *MTV*. <https://www.mtv.com/news/516319/two-woodstock-fans-allegedly-raped-in-mosh-pits>
- Vinetz, J. (2020, December 11). What's 'bat soup,' and did it cause the new coronavirus? *Healthline*. <https://www.healthline.com/health/bat-soup-coronavirus>
- Walsh-Childers, K., Chance, J., & Herzog, K. (1996). Sexual harassment of women journalists. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 73(3), 559–581. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769909607300305>
- Wang, A. X. (2021, March 8). Women in music dwindled in 2020. *Rolling Stone*. <https://www.rollingstone.com/pro/news/women-artists-music-study-2021-1138094>
- Weiner, N. (2018, December 5). Billboard Woman of the Year Ariana Grande: 'There's not much I'm afraid of anymore.' *Billboard*. <https://www.billboard.com/music/awards/ariana-grande-cover-story-billboard-women-in-music-2018-8487877>
- Whipple, K., & Coleman, R. (2021). Facing the music: Stereotyping of and by women in US music journalism. *Journalism*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14648849211028770>
- Wilkinson, C. (2022, January 13). Meet the people trying to make London nightlife safer in 2022. *Time Out*. <https://www.timeout.com/london/nightlife/meet-the-people-trying-to-make-london-nightlife-safer-in-2022>
- Williams, J. (2018, May 9). Taylor Swift snakes explained: Singer hints at Kim Kardashian feud during 'Reputation' tour. *Newsweek*. <https://www.newsweek.com/taylor-swift-kim-kardashian-snakes-917739>

- Wimmer, R. D., & Dominick, J. R. (2014). *Mass media research: An introduction* (10<sup>th</sup> ed.). Wadsworth.
- Women's Media Center. (2017). *The status of women in the U.S. media 2017*.  
[https://womensmediacenter.com/assets/site/reports/10c550d19ef9f3688f\\_mlbres2jd.pdf](https://womensmediacenter.com/assets/site/reports/10c550d19ef9f3688f_mlbres2jd.pdf)
- Yahr, E. (2018, October 20). How country music has — and hasn't — addressed the #MeToo movement in a difficult year. *The Washington Post*.  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/arts-entertainment/2018/10/20/how-country-music-has-hasnt-addressed-me-too-movement-difficult-year>
- York, C. (2017, September 18). Women dominate journalism schools, but newsrooms are still a different story. *Poynter*. [www.poynter.org/business-work/2017/women-dominate-journalism-schools-but-newsrooms-are-still-a-different-story](http://www.poynter.org/business-work/2017/women-dominate-journalism-schools-but-newsrooms-are-still-a-different-story)
- Zimmerman, A. (2015, August 26). Women's music industry horror stories: Abuse, sexism, and erasure. *The Daily Beast*. <https://www.thedailybeast.com/womens-music-industry-horror-stories-abuse-sexism-and-erasure>
- Zippia. (2021, September 9). Music journalist statistics by gender. *Zippia*.  
<https://www.zippia.com/music-journalist-jobs/demographics>