

GENDER INEQUALITY
IN METAL MUSIC
PRODUCTION

EMERALD STUDIES IN METAL MUSIC AND CULTURE

Series Editors:

Rosemary Lucy Hill and Keith Kahn-Harris

International Editorial Advisory Board: Andy R. Brown, Bath Spa University, UK; Amber Clifford-Napleone, University of Central Missouri, USA; Kevin Fellezs, Columbia University, USA; Cynthia Grund, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark; G r me Guibert, Universit  Sorbonne Nouvelle, France; Catherine Hoad, Macquarie University, Australia; Rosemary Overell, Otago University, New Zealand; Niall Scott, University of Central Lancashire, UK; Karl Spracklen, Leeds Beckett University, UK; Heather Savigny, De Montford University, UK; Nelson Varas-Diaz, Florida International University, USA; Deena Weinstein, DePaul University, USA

Metal Music Studies has grown enormously in recent years from a handful of scholars within Sociology and Popular Music Studies, to hundreds of active scholars working across a diverse range of disciplines. The rise of interest in heavy metal academically reflects the growth of the genre as a normal or contested part of everyday lives around the globe. The aim of this series is to provide a home and focus for the growing number of monographs and edited collections that analyse heavy metal and other heavy music; to publish work that fits within the emergent subject field of metal music studies, that is, work that is critical and inter-disciplinary across the social sciences and humanities; to publish work that is of interest to and enhances wider disciplines and subject fields across social sciences and the humanities; and to support the development of early career researchers through providing opportunities to convert their doctoral theses into research monographs.

Forthcoming publications

Paula Rowe, *Heavy Metal Youth Identities: Researching the Musical Empowerment of Youth Transitions and Psychosocial Wellbeing*

Ruth Barratt-Peacock and Ross Hagen (eds), *Medievalism and Metal Music Studies: Throwing Down the Gauntlet*

Catherine Hoad (ed) *Australian Metal Music: Identities, Scenes and Cultures*

Peter Pichler, *Metal Music and Sonic Knowledge in Europe: A Cultural History*

GENDER INEQUALITY IN METAL MUSIC PRODUCTION

BY

PAUWKE BERKERS AND

JULIAN SCHAAP

*Erasmus University Rotterdam,
The Netherlands*



United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India
Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2018

Copyright © Emerald Publishing Limited

Reprints and permissions service

Contact: permissions@emeraldinsight.com

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without either the prior written permission of the publisher or a licence permitting restricted copying issued in the UK by The Copyright Licensing Agency and in the USA by The Copyright Clearance Center. No responsibility is accepted for the accuracy of information contained in the text, illustrations or advertisements. The opinions expressed in these chapters are not necessarily those of the Author or the publisher.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-78714-675-4 (paperback)

ISBN: 978-1-78714-674-7 (E-ISBN)

ISBN: 978-1-78743-929-0 (Epub)



ISOQAR certified
Management System,
awarded to Emerald
for adherence to
Environmental
standard
ISO 14001:2004.

Certificate Number 1985
ISO 14001



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

*In memory of
David Paans
for being the most colourful person ever
spotted at a grindcore concert.*

This page intentionally left blank

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|------|
| Lists of Images, Figures and Tables | ix |
| About the Authors | xiii |
| Preface and Acknowledgments | xv |
| Introduction: Gender Inequality in Metal Music Production | 3 |
| 1. Winds of Change? Longitudinal Trends and Cross-national Differences (with Frank Weij) | 27 |
| 2. 'Female-Fronted Metal': Gender Differences and (Sub)Genres | 47 |
| 3. All Vocals, Few Chords: Gender Differences in Instrumentation | 65 |
| 4. Wielding the Double-Edged Sword: Gender Differences in Artistic Careers | 79 |
| Conclusion: Women Are Nowhere, Gender Is Everywhere | 103 |
| Appendix 1: Quantitative Data – The Metal Archives | 111 |
| Appendix 2: Qualitative Data – Interviews with Metal Musicians | 115 |
| References | 119 |
| Index | 145 |

This page intentionally left blank

LISTS OF IMAGES, FIGURES AND TABLES

IMAGES

- Image 1: All-male band Asphyx, live in 2007. Photograph by Hervé Girod, used under CC-BY-3.0, desaturated and cropped from original. xiv
- Image 2: Sisters of Suffocation, live at Dong Open Air 2017. Photograph by Markus Felix/PushingPixels, used under CC-BY-SA-3.0, desaturated and cropped from original. 2
- Image 3: Lita Ford, live at Gods of Metal 2009. Photograph by Shadowgate, used under CC-BY-2.0, desaturated and cropped from original. 26
- Image 4: Nightwish, live at Oberhausen 2015. Photograph by Markus Felix/PushingPixels, used under CC-BY-SA-3.0, desaturated and cropped from original. 46

| | |
|---|-----|
| Image 5: Arch Enemy, live at RheinRiot Köln 2016. Photograph by Markus Felix/PushingPixels, used under CC-BY-SA-3.0, desaturated and cropped from original. | 64 |
| Image 6: Bolt Thrower, live at PartySan Schlotheim 2012. Photograph by Acid Pix, used under CC-BY-2.0, desaturated and cropped from original. | 78 |
| Image 7: Myrkur, live at Wacken Open Air 2016. Photograph by Frank Schwichtenberg, used under CC-BY-SA-3.0, desaturated and cropped from original. | 102 |

FIGURES

| | |
|--|----|
| Figure 1.1. Number of new male/female metal musicians over time. | 35 |
| Figure 1.2. Percentage of new women in metal music over time. | 36 |
| Figure 1.3. Globalisation of metal (based on MA database). | 38 |
| Figure 2.1. Longitudinal development of key subgenres, including gothic metal. | 55 |
| Figure 3.1. Instrumentation within gender categories. | 72 |

| | |
|---|----|
| Figure 3.2. Longitudinal trend of instrumentation among female musicians. | 76 |
| Figure 4.1. Longitudinal analysis of institutional recognition of female metal musicians. | 97 |

TABLES

| | |
|---|----|
| Table 1. Explaining gender inequality in metal music production at three levels. | 19 |
| Table 1.1. Percentage of women metal musicians per region (UN geoschemes). | 41 |
| Table 1.2. Percentage/number of women metal musicians per country. | 43 |
| Table 2.1. Percentage of men and women, within subgenres. | 56 |
| Table 2.2. Percentage of musicians in a subgenre, within gender categories. | 56 |
| Table 2.3. Cross-national differences based on subgenres, within gender categories. | 59 |
| Table 3.1. Percentage instruments played by women, sorted per male/female subgenres, within gender of subgenre. | 74 |
| Table 4.1. The trade-off between cultural and structural embeddedness in metal music. | 86 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Table 4.2. Relationship between gender and being signed to a label. | 98 |
| Table A.1. First group respondent background characteristics. | 116 |
| Table A.2. Second group respondent background characteristics. | 117 |

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Pauwke Berkers is Associate Professor of Sociology of Art and Culture at the Department of Arts and Culture Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands. He has published widely on issues of ethnic/racial and gender inequality in arts and culture in, among others, *Cultural Sociology*, *Gender & Society*, *Journal of Gender Studies*, *Metal Music Studies* and *Poetics*. He is also a member of the International Society for Metal Music Studies.

Julian Schaap is a Ph.D. Candidate and Lecturer at the Department of Arts and Culture Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands. His research focuses on social stratification on the basis of whiteness, race-ethnicity and gender in various cultural fields. This work has been published in journals such as *New Media & Society*, *Popular Communication*, *Sociologie* and *Metal Music Studies*.

Co-Author, Chapter 1

Frank Weij is a Ph.D. Candidate and Lecturer at the Department of Arts and Culture Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands. He studies the relationship between arts and politics through computerized methods and has research published in journals such as *Gender & Society*, *Convergence* and the *International Journal of Consumer Studies*.



PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Somewhere in 2012, Julian stumbled upon a YouTube video of a young woman doing a so-called ‘vocal cover’ of a song by brutal death metal band Suffocation. Female vocalists in metal, particularly in extreme subgenres, like death metal, seemed scarce – to say the least. What was striking was the number of times this video was shared and commented on. Some shared it as a novelty or because they felt – as with most non-death metal fans – that it was comical; others because they ‘simply’ thought it was good music. It created quite a buzz, which seemed to have everything to do with the vocalist’s gender. We decided to unpack this example and examine to what extent women used the Internet to showcase their skills, how people respond to this, and how it relates with gender. With the moral support of bands like All For Nothing, Bolt Thrower, Fuck the Facts, Girlschool, Oathbreaker, and War On Women playing in the background, we wrote our first metal music paper in 2013 (Schaap & Berkers, 2014). The results were surprising: men and women were not evaluated as differently as previous studies had indicated – notwithstanding clear evidence for gender-biased evaluations and various forms of sexism.

Hence, we were curious to find out whether these vocalists felt that YouTube helped them in circumventing gender boundaries in the ‘offline’ metal scene. We discovered that women (and men) use YouTube as a means to gain attention and, sometimes, to find a band to join (Berkers & Schaap, 2015). While women reported many instances of gender discrimination in both online and offline situations, they did emphasize that online sharing platforms helped them to gain attention. In contrast, the male vocalists we interviewed felt that higher visibility (as women) actually gives women an unfair advantage in the competition for attention. At conferences, where we presented our research, we noticed that the topic of gender and (metal) music increasingly received academic attention. As most research consisted of qualitative case studies – like our previous work –, a key question was left unanswered: how many women are actually involved in metal music production? When we realized that the online metal band repository *Encyclopaedia Metallum: The Metal Archives* also registered musicians’ gender, we web-scraped this website to find an answer to this question. The results of this research you can read in this book.

Although books are excellent in hiding the contingent reasons for their existence, clearly this book – like most books – is the logical consequence of an (at times unlikely) sequence of events. It probably also comes as no surprise that both of us were socialized into metal music from a young age onwards. Julian clearly remembers his discovery of Slayer’s *Divine Intervention*, which was the most evil-looking CD cover he could find in his local music store as a 12 year old. Pauwke recalls being reprimanded by his English teacher in high school for wearing a Machine Head shirt saying “Fuck It All”, which retrospectively sounds like a huge metal music cliché. So indeed, in terms of topic selection, this book

has been informed by our personal preferences. As cultural sociologists however, we have aimed to discuss metal music in a sociologically ‘disinterested’ way. This means that we have tried to keep our personal evaluations of the music itself, its culture, and meaning (be it positive or negative) away from informing the research. Instead, our motivation for conducting this research is grounded in a clear research problem: gender inequality in a masculine field of cultural production. Importantly, this does warrant that we reflexively take note of our own position as (white) men, which we have tried to continually do during the process of this research (and life in general). When deemed necessary, we have added such reflections in the text.

There are many people we owe gratitude to. First, we thank Philippa Grand – and all her colleagues at Emerald Publishing – for reaching out to us during the American Sociological Association conference in Seattle, in 2016. The true seeds of this book were planted during this meeting, and we thank you for your trust in us in bringing this book to fruition. This confidence was further supported by our academic friends and series editors, Rosemary Hill and Keith Kahn-Harris, as well as Karl Spracklen. We met on multiple occasions over the last years and had many enjoyable conversations about sociology, gender, whiteness, (metal) music and beer. Rosemary Hill (once more), Gabby Riches and Caroline Lucas – thank you for organizing and hosting the first *Metal and Marginalisation* symposium in 2014, which was a wonderful way to meet like-minded scholars working on similar topics. Furthermore, we need to extend our thanks to the International Society for Metal Music Studies, and to Heather Savigny and Niall Scott in particular. Much of this research has been shaped by the many conversations we had at conferences and, in the case of Heather, ample

meetings in our hometown Rotterdam. Beyond the field of metal music studies, our research was supported greatly by being included in international conferences such as the European Sociological Association (2012 in Berlin), the *Music, Gender & Difference* conference (2013, in Vienna), and *Keep it Simple, Make it Fast!* (KISMIF 2016 in Porto). We would like to express our gratitude to the organizers of the latter two conferences: Rosa Reitsamer and Paula Guerra. We are very glad that you found our research worthwhile at an early stage and are happy, Paula, that you will let us launch this book at the KISMIF conference 2018.

We work in the stimulating department of Arts and Culture Studies at Erasmus University Rotterdam. Here we find ourselves surrounded by wonderful colleagues, of whom we need to thank a couple of individuals in particular. Koen van Eijck, for never complaining that we devoted too much time working on this radically enlarged side-project. Frank Weij, for conducting most of the web scraping, and for never giving his opinion on metal music. Zsuzsi ‘Oxford comma’ Nagy-Sándor, for doing some excellent editing for us, betwixt and between becoming a ‘serious’ person. Michaël Berghman, Janna Michael, Femke Vandenberg, Niels ‘papaya’ van Poecke – completing the FEBO crew – thanks for always being willing to discuss music-research with us.

We also teach various courses within the department, in which we meet many eager and interested students who share their (occasionally unsolicited) thoughts on our research. In particular, we thank Camila Martner Castillo, for doing a truly wonderful job during her research internship, setting up her own branch of our larger research project. Some of the interviews she conducted have been used in the chapters of this book, for which we are very grateful. Obviously, we are also indebted to these interviewees, who were willing

to share their time, thoughts and experiences for the sake of our research. We hope you find that we have represented your voices well (while taking note of the fact that ending up in a book on gender inequality – rather than a book on metal music in general – is part and parcel of the problem at hand). We are also grateful to the photographers who have allowed us to use their beautiful photographs through Creative Commons licenses. Finally, we are extremely grateful of the founders, moderators, and editors of *Encyclopaedia Metallum: The Metal Archives*. Without your meticulous archiving work – proving that the metal scene is indeed a participatory community – we (and the world) would not possess such a great deal of knowledge on metal's past and present.

Essentially, this book was largely produced in pockets of time around teaching tasks and other – sometimes extremely unrelated – research tasks. This means that it also chewed its way out of working hours into leisure time – which we tend to (very willingly) share with others. For Julian, he first needs to thank Ben, Both, Damien and Vince for ten years of making death metal together in Sepiroth. Much (if not most) of his knowledge about metal music and its practices developed in bars, rehearsal spaces, studios, vans, venues and tours with them. Although leaving a band is rarely an enjoyable thing to do, he is extremely happy to have been replaced by Sonia, the first woman in the band. Furthermore, he thanks (formally here, but informally everyday) Danitsja for lovingly dealing with him and for occasionally preventing him from working. This has become significantly easier (and even more fun) with the arrival of Midas, whose Duplo-interventions are an excellent way to force him away from datasets. While Pauwke would like to point out to Julian the inherent inconsistency between arguing for disinterested science and thanking

extended families, he would like to thank Cynthia for being so nice to ‘a nuisance’ like himself.

Pauwke Berkers and Julian Schaap
Rotterdam, the Netherlands
February 2018

This page intentionally left blank



INTRODUCTION: GENDER INEQUALITY IN METAL MUSIC PRODUCTION

In 2004, an anonymous blogger submitted a post entitled ‘Why do women hate metal – or any other complex music?’ on the forum of *Ultimate Metal*:

*Why do so few women care for complex music?
I know of no woman that gets exciting about a
guitarist or drummer or groundbreaking band.
All women seem to care about is sappy happy
songs – of course this is a broad generalization,
some women really do care for complex stuff etc.
Yet, as I think about it, how many women are even
musicians? And those that are, how many have any
talent besides a few Chinese violinists, and certain
female vocalists? Is complex, or non-emotional
music totally a male interest?*

While recognising that this statement is a ‘broad generalisation’, the author observes a lack of women in metal music production, and offers a few – rather flawed – explanations of why this might be the case. The first reaction posted challenged the blogger’s observation with an opposing generalisation: ‘Because you’re wrong. Plenty of girls like metal.’ In the discussion that

ensued, different positions were taken on the assumed absence of women in metal; yet, few substantial answers emerged to key questions about gender inequality in metal music production: To what extent are women participating in making metal music? Are they more involved in particular subgenres than in others? Do they fulfill different roles in bands? To what extent does the degree of recognition differ between women and men in metal music?

In general, our goal is to unpack the extent of gender inequality in metal music production, in a comparative perspective, and to provide explanations for these findings. As the blogpost demonstrates, this question has multiple components. We have therefore divided the topic into four key parts: longitudinal trends and cross-national differences (Chapter 1), subgenres within metal (Chapter 2), roles in terms of instrumentation (Chapter 3) and degree of recognition (Chapter 4).

First, this book provides insights into the longitudinal trends and cross-national differences of gender inequality in metal music production. Whereas existing studies are mostly limited to specific local scenes at one particular moment in time, we look at the broader picture, that is, global and long-term developments. Second, genres are important in metal, meaning that boundaries are heavily policed (what is metal and what is not?). Yet, previous studies focus mostly on one subgenre, instead of including and comparing several subgenres in their research. In this book, we aim to shed light on how genre matters in the participation of women as producers of metal music. Third, we examine instrumentation (who plays what?) as different instruments have more or less status in metal music, and we know little about such differences. Fourth, as presence does not necessarily equal degree of recognition, we analyse differences in recognition between female and male musicians (as measured by being signed to record labels). In addition to these empirical contributions,

our book makes two key additions to the study of (gendered) artistic careers (Miller, 2016a). First, it theoretically develops the concept of the double-edged sword by linking it to theories of tokenism and cultural/structural embeddedness. Second, it provides a systematic theoretical overview to explain gender inequality in metal music production by examining three gender practices – *learning*, *doing* and *evaluating* – at three different levels – *society*, *pop music* and *metal*.

LEARNING, DOING AND EVALUATING GENDER IN SOCIETY, POP MUSIC AND METAL

In the blogpost at the start of this introduction, many implicit and explicit preconceptions about gender were employed: ‘women are more emotional than men’, ‘women prefer happiness over sadness or anger’ and ‘women like simple things as opposed to complex ones’. These ideas are the result of a complex mix of learning, doing and evaluating processes in society, (popular) music and metal music. To lay a solid and systematic theoretical foundation for the upcoming chapters, we will first discuss how we define gender and gender inequality. We will subsequently consider how people learn, do and evaluate gender in society at large, pop music in general, and metal music specifically, and how these three levels affect each other.

I. GENDER IN SOCIETY AT LARGE

Instead of seeing gender as a stable set of ascribed personality traits (‘gendered person’ approach), we define gender as a social construction – as ‘ways of being’ considered appropriate for one’s sex category. Gender is a primary category of framing social relations and affects all domains of social life – how men and women are supposed to act, dress, move and comport

themselves (Ridgeway, 2011). This includes what music one should – and should not – like, listen to or produce as a man or a woman (Frith & McRobbie, 1990). How agentic gender is enacted in social interactions (*doing*) depends, to a large extent, on sex role socialisation (*learning*) and being held accountable towards dominant cultural beliefs (*evaluating*).

As children, men and women *learn* which roles, expectations and norms, associated with each sex category (masculine or feminine), they are expected to exhibit. Whereas boys are typically raised to be tough, independent and competitive – they need to stand out – girls are brought up to be romantic, social, flexible and popular – they need to fit in (Christenson & Roberts, 1998; Schwartz & Fouts, 2003). Main agencies of socialisation are the family, school, peer groups, friends and the (mass) media. Social norms and expectations for girls and boys are conveyed through ‘an immense number of small interactions’ (Connell, 2009, p. 95). This learning process can occur via a clear role model, who inspires observers to look like and behave in certain ways. For a girl, this might be her mother, or another female relative. In our media-saturated culture, these role models are also likely to be successful female media superstars; for example, a pop singer like Ariana Grande, or a media personality like Kim Kardashian. Some female celebrities have challenged gender stereotypes; for example, a – self-described – feminist actress such as Emma Watson, or a rock music trailblazer like No Doubt’s Gwen Stefani (Gauntlett, 2008, p. 226). Learning these gender roles works through a system of rewarding compliance – ‘smiles from mothers, approval from friends, good marks at school, success in the dating games, appointment to a good job’ – and sanctioning non-conformity – ‘all the way from frowns and cross voices to getting beat up or sent to gaol’ (Connell, 2009, p. 95). As they grow up, children internalise gender-appropriate behaviour and largely act upon these norms and expectations. However, *sex role socialisation*

theory, as described above, leaves little room for agency of the learner, nor accounts for the situated adaptability of gender (Moloney & Fenstermaker, 2002).

Instead, *doing* gender is an ongoing activity in the context of everyday social interactions, offering possibilities as well as constraints (West & Zimmerman, 1987). On the one hand, this implies that gender is not a set of monolithic traits that are passively learned. Gender socialisation is also about learning how gender relations work, including how to circumvent them (Connell, 2009). Moreover, as gender differences are an accomplished result of social interactions, agency and social change are inherent in doing gender (West & Fenstermaker, 1993). On the other hand, social actors are often held accountable vis-à-vis dominant, learned gender norms. Successful ways of being a man (*hegemonic masculinity*) consist of situated practices actively constructed in a hierarchical relation vis-à-vis different femininities (Connell, 1995). ‘Feminine’ quality characteristics – including physical vulnerability, passivity or compliance – are symbolically posited as complementary and inferior (*emphasised femininity*) to ‘masculine’ traits such as physical strength, aggression or authority (Beynon, 2002; Schippers, 2007). Yet, when individuals are held accountable for failing to live up to dominant gender norms, it may thereby weaken the accountability of particular conduct to a sex category (West & Fenstermaker, 1993).

By definition however, doing gender means to engage in behaviour at the risk of gender *evaluation* (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Indeed, gendered acts are assessed by others – both men and women. Besides being held accountable to dominant gender norms, men and women generally face different status expectations unrelated to a task itself. *Diffuse gender status beliefs* are widely held cultural beliefs that evaluate one sex (male) as generally superior and diffusely more competent than the other (female) (Ridgeway, 2011).

In other words: '[W]omen's competence is often evaluated more harshly than men's, regardless of their numerical proportions and even when they exhibit equal or superior performance' (Roth, 2004, p. 193). In addition, women and men face specific gender status beliefs, in other words, 'those that are relevant to their presumed skills but do not advantage them in situations not connected to those skills' (Ridgeway, 2011, p. 50). For example, a study showed how men are considered superior at changing a tyre, but not at vegetable gardening (Rashotte & Webster, 2005).

To conclude, we define gender inequality as a system of social practices within society that constitutes women and men as different in socially significant ways, and organises relations of inequality on the basis of these differences (Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999) – often resulting in horizontal and/or vertical sex segregation in occupations. To persist, gender inequality requires that both people's experiences and widely shared cultural beliefs confirm to them that men and women are sufficiently different, in ways that justify men's greater power and privilege (Ridgeway, 2011).

II. GENDER IN POPULAR MUSIC

Representation of Women in Pop Music

For over four decades, scholars have been investigating gender inequality – both numerically and symbolically – within popular music production (Bayton, 1998; Frith & McRobbie, 1990; Leonard, 2007; Lieb, 2013; Wells, 1986). While comparative longitudinal and cross-national data are largely lacking, many scattered pieces of the puzzle provide a fairly clear picture of the position of women in (popular) music production: (1) their representation in general, as well as

(2) in different music genres, (3) playing various instruments and (4) the degree of recognition they have received compared to their male counterparts.

First, women are generally underrepresented as (pop) musicians, comprising 36% and 40% of the population of musicians in the United States and the Netherlands, respectively (National Endowment for the Arts, 2008; Van Bork, 2007). Data on the percentage of women songwriters (registered at rights organisations) suggest even lower numbers: 22% in Australia (Strong & Cannizzo, 2017), 16% in the UK (PRS, 2017) and 12% in the Netherlands (Smeulders, 2018). In the British popular music industry, women typically occupy the majority of low-status and/or entry-level positions, rather than the male-dominated executive occupations (UK Music, 2016).

Second, women's representation differs between music genres. Extensive research on music consumption has found that men tend to prefer 'harder' and non-mainstream forms of popular music, for example, rock, 1970s rock, Southern rock, psychedelic rock, hard rock and heavy metal; while women have a stronger preference for 'softer' and more mainstream genres, such as chart pop, folk and classical music (Christenson & Peterson, 1988; Christenson & Roberts, 1998; Colley, 2008; Hargreaves, Comber, & Colley, 1995; Roe, 1985; Skipper Jr, 1975; Van Wel, Maarsingh, Ter Bogt, & Raaijmakers, 2008). Recently, algorithm expert Glen McDonald used global Spotify data to demonstrate that female listeners are indeed well-represented in variations of mainstream pop music genres (e.g., 'teen pop', 'Korean pop' and 'Hollywood'), while being underrepresented in variations of hip-hop, rock and – of course – metal, with 'progressive deathcore' being the least 'feminine' genre (Every Noise at Once, 2017). While studied to a lesser extent, research suggests a similar gender distribution for music production across genres (Bayton, 1998; Hill, 2016; Kearney, 2017; Reddington, 2000).

Third, like (sub)genres, musical instruments are heavily gendered (Wych, 2012). Women are found to be overrepresented as singers (Bayton, 1998), while underrepresented as instrumentalists (Van Bork, 2007), particularly when it comes to (amplified) rock instruments such as drums, guitar and, to a lesser extent, bass guitar (Bourdage, 2010; Clawson, 1999b). This is not exclusive for modern popular music genres. In early nineteenth-century Viennese music, women were expected to steer clear from wind instruments or the cello, since playing these ‘interrupted notions about bodily decorum; notions that celebrated a quiet body not engaged in physical effort, and notions that stretched across Europe and back at least a century’ (DeNora, 2002, p. 28). With the intersection of genre – Beethoven’s ‘hard’ compositions in terms of heaviness and physical presence – also turned the piano into a masculine instrument.

Fourth, we can distinguish between economic and symbolic recognition (prestige). Economic recognition can be measured in terms of chart success, radio airplay, number of (headline) shows and income. While the results vary, depending on time period, location and type of measurement, women are strongly underrepresented in the hit charts – ranging from 20% to 41% (Dowd, Liddle, & Blyler, 2005; Lafrance, Worcester, & Burn, 2011), radio airplay – ranging from 20% to 34% (Kain, 2017; Lafrance et al., 2011), at music festivals – ranging from 1% to 25% (Studio Brussel, 2015; Vagianos, 2016; Vice, 2016), and they make less money, in an already underpaid sector (National Endowment for the Arts, 2008; Von der Fuhr, 2015). In terms of symbolic recognition, studies have shown how female pop artists are largely ignored – newspaper attention remained at around 20% from 1975 to 2005 (Berkers, Verboord, & Weij, 2016) – and are typically under represented in the music canon (Schmutz & Faupel, 2010; Strong, 2011).

Explaining the Representation of Women in Pop Music

So how can we explain such gender inequality in the production of popular music, despite strong evidence that talent and/or ability are normally distributed (Humphreys, 2006; Rosen, 1981)? In addition to societal-level explanations, several factors, specific to the field of popular music, play an important role.

First, *learning* (popular) music is highly gendered in terms of acquiring musical skills and genre knowledge. *Musical socialisation* takes place at home and at school, often through musical families and formal music education. Yet, even though boys and girls are both involved in acquiring musical skills, *gender-based instrument stereotyping* point them towards different instruments – vocals, flute, violin and clarinet for girls; and drums, trumpet and guitar for boys (Wych, 2012). These stereotypes are often reproduced in more informal learning interactions, such as the media and the instrument store, resulting in a lack for stereotype-challenging role models. Learning genre knowledge – *cultural capital* – is also gendered, as boys and girls are expected to enjoy different music genres (gender-stereotyped styles).

Second, popular music is also affected by *doing* gender, as rock music is often defined as a form of ‘male’ rebellion vis-à-vis ‘female’ pop music. Rock artists are ‘the men who take to the streets, take risks, live dangerously and, most of all, swagger untrammelled by responsibility, sexual and otherwise’ (Frith & McRobbie, 1990, p. 374), that is, perform hegemonic *rock masculinity*. Pop artists ‘embrace and celebrate rituals of heterosexual love, romance and commitment’ (Schippers, 2002, p. 24), that is, emphasised *pop femininity*. Women are mainly regarded as passive and private bedroom consumers of this allegedly slick, prefabricated – hence, inferior – pop music (Coates, 1997), excluding them from participating as high-status rock musi-

cians. When women do gender differently, they are held accountable towards dominant gender configurations. For example, where men leading a lifestyle of sex, drugs and rock 'n roll are often admired for such 'masculine' behaviour, women are often considered as passive victims of a similar lifestyle (Berkers & Eeckelaer, 2014). However, these women might become role models for girls and women; maybe not necessarily a family or wholesome role model for parents to show to their children but role models in terms of challenging stereotypes (Gauntlett, 2008).

Third, abundant research has shown that women in pop music are *evaluated* differently than men. Besides diffuse status beliefs discussed earlier, women are stereotypically considered less skilled in various popular music tasks (*specific gender status beliefs*), in particular playing music instruments. Hence the trope 'you play pretty well for a girl' points to a negative-gendered performance expectation, as a woman is expected to be less able to play a particular instrument than a man (Carson, Lewis, & Shaw, 2004, p. 87). Moreover, women are often evaluated on a 'skill' that does not seem relevant to the task at hand: their performance of femininity (Davies, 2001). Instead of their musical abilities, female artists are often assessed on the basis of their appearance, their sexuality and their 'feminine' experiences – such as motherhood, caring tasks and home life (Johnson-Grau, 2002; Schmutz & Faupel, 2010). However, femininity is not a 'skill' that holds a lot of currency in metal music production; yet, it can be employed to gain attention (see Chapter 4).

III. GENDER IN METAL MUSIC

Representation of Women in Metal Music

Defining a musical genre is extremely difficult and subject to considerable discussion, especially within metal scenes.

However, we define metal music as the sonic, verbal and visual transgression of rock/rock 'n' roll music, with the onset of British heavy metal bands such as Black Sabbath (Bangs, 1970).¹ Subgenres of heavy metal music tend to be defined by being either heavier, slower, faster, louder, darker, more technical/complex, more extreme, more lyrically transgressive or a combination of these aspects. The core of the metal band consists of electric, heavily distorted and amplified guitars (often two), 'big' drums (both in sound as in actual style, including many cymbals, toms and double-bass drums), a notably rhythmic bass guitar sound, and a vocalist who either sings (loudly) or distorts his/her voice by screaming or 'growling'. Although this core may include supplementary instruments (e.g., keyboards and strings), most metal bands make use of this three to five-person band structure – taking into account that instrument-players may also sing.

While gender inequality in metal music consumption has been widely studied, few studies have focussed on (numerical) representation of women in metal music production. Moreover, scattered evidence points to a major paradox in metal: challenging mainstream institutions, while accepting traditional gender roles (Krenske & McKay, 2000; Vasan, 2011). As Chris Sosa (2013) put it:

While traditional rock music challenges notions of polite society, metal antagonizes cornerstone institutions of social life. From the sacred nature of religion to the underlying corruption of

1 However, metal music is most easily defined by those who do *not* like it. While most individuals (male and female) have at least a certain sense of tolerance for musical genres they do not appreciate, metal music is typically detested by most people (Bryson, 1996) and generally argued to evoke 'intense abhorrence' (Weinstein, 1991, p. 237) among those who dislike the genre.

political systems, this is a genre that delights in the destruction of hypocrisy. Metal's problem of sexism is strange given such a propensity for cultural challenge. From Metallica to Slipknot, testosterone has been a key component of successful metal music to a degree that's become innate. Gender is rarely challenged in any meaningful way as the artists who perform metal music are becoming even more aggressively masculine.

For women, this paradox seems to entail a social exchange: metal provides them a certain empowerment or liberation – unavailable elsewhere – at the cost of conformity to its androcentric culture (Vasan, 2011).

First, in contrast to popular music in general, we know little about the numerical representation of women in metal music. Although reports fluctuate, audience studies suggest that metal music's Western audiences are dominated by men, typically making up between 65% and 85% of concert-goers (Chaker, 2013; Gruzelier, 2007, p. 62; Purcell, 2003, p. 100). Scarce evidence on metal music production provides only vague indications – instead of concrete figures, suggesting 'only a very small fraction of metal musicians are women' (Walser, 1993, p. 119). As a result, women are 'extremely underrepresented amongst musicians' (Hill, 2016, p. 2). Other studies provide concrete numbers but are case-specific. For example, a recent article on the contemporary Toronto metal scene concluded that 'fewer than 5% of the musicians are women' (Miller, 2014, p. 467). Finally, some sources have suggested that the number of female performers within metal is steadily increasing (Purcell, 2003) – 'They shred. They scream. They pound the drums, they hold down the low end, they throw up the horns' (Kelly, 2011). Yet, such claims often come with no – or little – empirical evidence beyond the anecdotal or journalistic.

Second, even though scattered research points at the numerical underrepresentation of women in metal music production, we know less about gender differences between metal subgenres. Research on music consumption has found that more melodic subgenres such as gothic metal (e.g., Within Temptation, Tristana and Emilie Autumn) and emo metal are comparatively popular among women (Berkers, 2012; Hill, 2011; Kahn-Harris, 2007). As *Every Noise at Once* (2017) demonstrates, industrial, gothic and gothic symphonic metal score highest among metal genres on femininity – taking into account that these metal subgenres are, as discussed earlier, themselves already skewed to the masculine end. Yet, the actual representation of women musicians in various metal subgenres has hardly been studied – apart from more casual observations (Herron-Wheeler, 2014).

Third, as in pop music, ‘female musicians tend to be vocalists or, more rarely keyboard players or bass guitarists’ (Kahn-Harris, 2007, p. 71). A study of the New York extreme metal scene found that 56% of its respondents – women musicians – were vocalists. Moreover, the vast majority (81%) employed clean singing as its preferred vocal style instead of growling, grunting or shrieking. It confirms that ‘female musicians and vocalists have been relegated to support instrumentalists, playing the bass or keyboards as well as adhering to operatic or classical vocal, characteristics traditionally coded as feminine in the overall musical canon’ (Jocson-Singh, 2016, pp. 45–46). In this book, however, we aim to examine this gendered distribution of labour on a global level.

Fourth, in terms of symbolic recognition, previous research has shown ‘the consistently low number of women appearing as musicians against the high number of men’ in metal magazines such as *Kerrang!* (Hill, 2016, pp. 50–51). To our knowledge, there are no academic studies on the role of gender in the canonisation of metal music. However, a quick peek at contemporary metal histories and ‘best metal band’ lists, compiled by

well-known journalists and (online) music magazines, reveals an extremely skewed representation. Wiederhorn and Turman's (2013) *Louder than Hell: The Definitive Oral History of Metal* is written on the basis of interviews with 429 metal music 'characters' – 'the musicians own (...) words' (p. xiii). Of the 20 female characters (5%), only seven are musicians; others include film directors, mothers, girlfriends and groupies. And while *Rolling Stone's* (2017) 'The 100 Greatest Metal Albums of All Time' does contain albums by the likes of Evanescence (female vocalist), White Zombie (female bass player) and Nightwish (female vocalist), there are no women musicians to be found in the top half of the list – let alone all-female bands. Finally, *Loudwire's* (2016) 'Top 66 of Hard Rock + Metal Guitarists of All Time' does not contain any women.

The economic recognition of women in metal has hardly been studied, using traditional indicators, such as chart success and radio airplay, as metal in general has enjoyed limited success in these forms (see Harrison, 2007 and Sernoe, 2005 for exceptions). Moreover, data on income for metal musicians specifically is largely non-existent. Previous research on women's representation at metal festivals suggests that economic recognition is low. Not only were only 16 out of 994 performers at the British Monsters of Rock festival women (1980–2013), they tend to play in non-headlining bands (Savigny & Sleight, 2015).

Explaining the Representation of Women in Metal Music

Besides the previously discussed societal and pop music level explanations, what metal-specific factors may contribute to gender inequality in metal music production? First, women and men in metal – and rock in general – *learn* through what we refer to as *music scene socialisation*. Playing in a band is

largely a male *homosocial activity*, meaning it is predominantly a peer-based – rather than individual – experience, shaped by existing sex-segregated friendship networks (Bielby, 2003; Clawson, 1999a). Moreover, participants learn about metal as a genre and acquire *subcultural capital* (Thornton, 1995) through informal processes, guided by peers and (subcultural) media. Learning to be a metal participant includes acquiring knowledge about its history and practices – such as corporal interactions, rituals and embodiment (Driver, 2011). However, as metal is numerically dominated by men and symbolically coded as masculine, subcultural capital is biased towards male participation (Riches, Lashua, & Spracklen, 2013). While scene socialisation traditionally happened largely outside the institutions of the family and school, aging metal fans educating their children (cf. Harrington & Bielby, 2010), and the arrival of a vocational training degree in metal may increasingly also contribute to learning about metal, possibly affecting gender inequality (Berkers & Schaap, 2017).

Second, options of *doing* gender differently in metal are limited, as the genre is not just male-dominated but masculinist; it is a community built on the cultural beliefs of hegemonic masculinity (Hill, Lucas, & Riches, 2015; Walser, 1993; Weinstein, 1991). As a result, women's acceptance in metal is very much determined by their ability to conform to masculinist codes of doing gender (Hoad, 2017; Nordström & Herz, 2013), that is, women can only do gender on men's terms. These conditions mostly restrict women's participation to two roles: (1) '*den mothers*' who adopt a traditionally masculine style of dress and demeanour to be 'one of the boys' or (2) '*band whores*' who over-emphasise their sexuality in the way they dress and behave, likely resulting in being looked-at as sex objects (Weinstein, 1991; Vasan, 2010). However, despite limited options, women have been

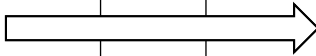
able to challenge, negotiate and reconstitute metal practices (Savigny & Sleight, 2015). For example, Jocson-Singh (2016) suggests a third style of participation, being ‘invisible women’, pointing to a generation of women in their mid-thirties or older, dressing inconspicuously instead of fulfilling either of the two traditional roles mentioned above.

Third, whereas women are underrepresented in popular music production, they are ‘mere’ *tokens* in metal music production; that is, they likely are members of the numerical minority (less than 15%) in a skewed group (Kanter, 1977). As a result, women have a high *visibility*, and consequently they are often confronted with *gender-biased evaluations*, *male gazes* and/or surprised or negative reactions when *gender roles* are challenged (Schaap & Berkers, 2014). They are *evaluated* as women, instead of individuals, when performing metal music; they are looked at with an erotic or romantic gaze. Also, as women in rock/metal music are primarily type-cast into the role of singer, they are likely to violate traditional gender roles – particularly with regard to the female body – when growling or playing most core metal instruments (Kahn-Harris, 2007). As a result, femininity is a *double-edged sword* for women in metal. Because of the rarity of their representation women attract highly desired attention for their bands; however, they are often evaluated based on their feminine appearance rather than their musical skills.

Finally, both the numerical lack of women in metal music production, and their stereotypical symbolic presentation are likely to (partly) structure the beliefs of metal participants and society at large, possibly providing a ‘real’ basis for existing gender beliefs. In other words it might confirm – and naturalise – beliefs that women ‘simply’ cannot make ‘good’ metal music. Therefore, numbers matter.

Table 1. Explaining Gender Inequality in Metal Music Production at Three Levels.

| Dominant ways of: | | |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| <i>Learning</i> | <i>Doing</i> | |
| | <i>Evaluating</i> | |
| I. Society | Sex role socialisation vs. Hegemonic masculinity Emphasised femininity | Gender status beliefs (diffuse) |
| II. Music | Music socialisation 1. Instrument stereotyping 2. Cultural capital vs. Rock masculinity Pop femininity | Gender status beliefs (specific) |
| III. Metal | Scene socialisation 1. Homosociality 2. Subcultural capital vs. 'Den mothers' 'Band whores' | Tokenism 1. Visibility 2. Bias, gazes, roles 3. Double-edged sword |



DATA AND METHODS

For this book, we draw on three data sources: the online *Encyclopaedia Metallum: The Metal Archives* (MA), in-depth interviews conducted specifically for this project, and secondary data (online materials and interviews by others). First, the MA (www.metal-archives.com) is an independent website founded in 2002, which is updated daily by many active members. At this point, it includes more than 100,000 metal bands. Similar to an *online encyclopaedia* like Wikipedia, MA grants a unique page to each band or artist, containing information such as year of formation, year of first release, albums/extended plays released, past and present band members, whether the band is still active, metal music sub-genre(s), lyrical content, artist logo and photos of the artist. This means that MA provides comprehensive, bottom-up accounts of artists' careers, also (long) after bands have disbanded. Since we are interested in gender inequality, our analysis takes place on the level of the *individual musician (including both instrumentalists and vocalists)*, rather than the band. Therefore, we developed and applied a web scraper to MA that scraped musician's pages. The scraper first found the band's page (scraping year of formation, country of formation, whether the band was signed to a label or not, metal subgenre(s) and lyrical themes) and subsequently scraped the information of each current member (name, gender and age). Since we are interested in the *(weighted) symbolic presence* of men and women on metal music stages and albums worldwide, we recorded for every musician (1) the current band of which s/he is still an active member and (2) any former bands s/he was a member of at the moment the group disbanded. The web scraper ran between July and August 2015, gathering data on 350,348 *metal musicians*. Our dataset contains entries ranging from 1964 until 2015, with a peak of entries in 2005. In Appendix 1, we describe the details and limitations of this

data source as well provide an explanation on how we coded subgenres and instrumentation.

Second, the qualitative analysis of this book rests on two sets of interview data, collected at different points in time. The first set was collected by the authors, for the purpose of an article on the usage of video-sharing platform YouTube for aspiring (male and female) metal musicians (Berkers & Schaap, 2015). All 10 interviewees are extreme metal vocalists but differ in terms of race/ethnicity, nationality, band involvement and online popularity. Respondents were recruited through researcher-driven sampling, by contacting the musicians through their YouTube channels directly. Interviews were conducted via video conferencing software Skype, and transcribed verbatim. Both men and women were included in the sample, enabling us to compare their responses. The second group of 10 interviews were conducted by Camila Martner Castillo, as part of her research internship on gender and artistic careers in metal music production. For this reason, all interviewees are women; yet, they vary in terms of race/ethnicity, nationality and instrumentation. Most musicians were recruited online and by subsequent snowball sampling. Interviews were conducted via video conferencing and chat services provided by Skype or Facebook (see Appendix 2 for more details).

Third, additional secondary sources were used to illustrate some of the sociological mechanisms discussed in the text, as well as for the chapter openings. Moreover, they provide additional data used in the book (see Secondary Sources). References to online/offline magazines, TV shows and interviews can all be found in this section.

STRUCTURE AND OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

This book addresses the following research question: *what is the extent of gender inequality in metal music production and*

how can we explain this? A seemingly simple question that is considerably complex to answer. Hence, this book unpacks this question following a framework which leads the reader from the general to the specific, from the overall representation of women in metal production, to metal subgenres and instrumentation and ending with music label recognition.

In Chapter 1, we discuss the extent of gender inequality in metal music production in a longitudinal and comparative perspective and provide context to these findings. In contrast to previous studies, we examine the total metal music production – amateur and professional – at a global level. Our analyses show that since the 1970s, metal music production has been numerically dominated by men, with women only making up about 3% of all metal musicians and vocalists. Longitudinal trend analyses reveal that the low participation of women in metal music has been fairly consistent, although there is reason to believe that their participation is – very, very slowly – increasing. Moreover, variation between countries is limited, which might indicate that metal music’s masculinist connotations have ‘travelled’ from ‘origin’ countries (Europe, the United Kingdom and the United States) with the cultural product itself to other countries (such as Brazil, Chile, Indonesia and Puerto Rico). Relative exceptions are Russia and Japan, in which women make up 6–8% of all metal musicians.

In Chapter 2, we examine to what extent women are represented in various (gendered) subgenres of metal music. Metal music is one of the most differentiated music genres and, for fans in particular, subgenre boundaries matter a lot. There is much differentiation between metal’s many subgenres, varying from the more explicitly masculine (death metal, thrash metal and black metal) to the relatively feminine (gothic metal, folk metal and, in some cases, power and prog metal). Whereas we found a comparatively even subgenre distribution of women metal musicians in the United States, Sweden

and Brazil, women are more clustered in specific subgenres in Japan (heavy and power metal – J-metal), Russia (gothic metal and folk metal) and the Netherlands (gothic metal and prog metal). This partly explains relative high percentage of women in metal music production in Russia and Japan.

Chapter 3 brings us to the level of music-making itself: instrumentation. When women are present in bands, they do not take up the same roles as their male counterparts. Instead, we find notable differences between what kinds of instruments are arguably deemed appropriate for women (vocals, bass guitar, keyboards and other, less traditional metal-instruments such as classical string instruments) and which are considered less fitting (guitars, drums). By focussing on gender role socialisation and instrumentation, we demonstrate how women who do participate in metal music production, tend to take on different roles in a band. As vocalists, women are given centre stage in a band, receiving most of the attention. The prominence of instrumental skill in metal music, however, makes it more difficult for vocalists to receive the musical acclaim that the other musicians in bands gather. As instrumentalists, women tend to occupy support roles (bass and keyboards) instead of core roles (guitars and drums).

In Chapter 4, we examine the mechanisms which are at play when women try to attain and maintain a musical career in metal music. Drawing on in-depth interviews with male and female metal musicians, we demonstrate how femininity can function as a double-edged sword in metal music production. Women are caught between a more positive tension in relation to ‘doubly embedded’ musicians – standing out from the crowd of skilled masculine musicians, and a more negative tension in relation to ‘doubly disembedded’ musicians – receiving gender-biased evaluations in terms of musical abilities. By employing insights from organisational sociology, we show how women in metal music production have to

continually balance between these two tensions. Moreover, by analysing to what extent men and women are signed to record labels, we demonstrate that, surprisingly, there is no statistically significant relation between gender and music label recognition. Possibly, both tensions cancel each other out.

In the Conclusion, we summarise our main findings and critically reflect on our study. Besides (hopefully) having answered why there are so few women in metal music production, the Conclusion also contains a short epilogue on how this reality seems to be slowly changing, almost 50 years after Coven and Black Sabbath first propelled their ominous, heavy and dark sounds into the world.

Nota bene: As a book offers a wonderful yet limited canvas to share our findings, a companion website (www.sociologyof-music.com) has been created where those who are interested are free to further explore (and use) the data and findings in maps, graphs, charts and tables.