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Gender issues in the music industry and popular music higher education: Exploring the experiences of young musicians

As Kallberg points out, 'nearly every experience of music, including its creation, performance and perception, may incorporate assumptions about gender; and music itself can produce ideologies of gender' (Kallberg 2001: 645). This article discusses a UK-based empirical research project investigating experiences and issues relating to gender and sexuality for young performers of popular music, at the intersection of the popular music industry and popular music higher education/training.

The research takes place in a context of increasing discussion and action relating to gender inequality in the music industry, with statistics highlighting ongoing issues. For example, significantly more women work in entry level roles (59%) than in management and senior positions (30%) in the UK music industry (UK Music, 2016). Only 16% of UK songwriters and composers registered with Performing Right Society (PRS) are women (PRS Foundation 2018). Research into musicians' mental health identifies sexist attitudes and sexual harassment as issues for women in the industry (Help Musicians UK 2018). A snapshot of the UK live popular music market shows 74% of tickets sold in 2017 were for all-male acts (Larsson 2017). Recent scholarly research in this area includes Lieb's investigation of gender issues in the pop music industry, which asserts that a young female performer entering the music industry has 'literally nowhere to go (…) if she wants to sell big numbers but is not believed to be hot enough to invest in' (Lieb 2013: 108).

Given the issues currently identified in the music industry, for the many higher education courses offering vocational training for a popular music performing career, engaging with issues and debates relating to gender and sexuality is crucial. Hebert *et al.* (2017: 458) point out that there are 'clear tensions and ethical challenges' facing educators and institutions who are 'working towards equitable ends in and through music education' at the same time as seeking to 'prepare students for an industry that endorses and perpetuates sexism and even misogyny.' As Woodward (2017) notes, 'masculine domination of popular music performance and music production makes the demand for gender equity in the popular music classroom all the more challenging' (Woodward 2017: 401), arguing for the adoption of a 'feminist pedagogy' in both schools and HE, 'which would address equality

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and focus on the necessity of taking action' (Woodward 2017: 459). Similarly, Whiteley (2015) argues for the inclusion of the study of gender as part of vocational and music-industry-facing popular music performance degrees. This is essential not only to prepare students for 'the so-called "real world"' (Whiteley 2015: 375) of the music industry, but also to empower them to 'confront and change the balance of power of a multi-million pound industry that in some respects relies for its business on engendering insecurity in women' (Whiteley 2015: 69).

This article discusses ongoing research into young musicians, gender and sexuality, which focuses on the following questions:

- How do young performers of popular music (aged 18–25), in higher education, training or early career, identify with, experience and perform gender and sexuality in their musical practices?
- What are their key issues and challenges relating to gender and sexuality?
- How do popular music higher education and music support organisations currently respond to these issues and challenges, and what needs to change?

Interviews carried out with music industry professionals identified a range of issues including: lack of female participation in music scenes, projects and programmes; masculinisation and male domination of music facilities and scenes; lack of female leaders, tutors, staff and role models; lack of visibility and recognition of female participation; barriers to non-hetero sexualities. The primary focus of the research, however, is to generate data from young musicians themselves, in order to explore perspectives grounded in their own beliefs, experiences and practices. Furthermore, the research involves participants of all genders, and from diverse socio-economic, regional and national backgrounds, to gain insight into the experiences of a broad range of young people and explore how gender and sexuality intersect with other aspects of identity. Emerging themes arising from data generated from survey and interview research with music students include gender issues in relation to group dynamics, peer group learning, networking and collaboration, as well as unequal expectations and stereotyping of roles.

Based on these data, this article explores gender and sexuality issues for young musicians, considering how music education prepares them for the music industry, as well as seeking to challenge its norms and inequalities.

Key words: gender, sexuality, popular music, music industry, higher education, qualitative research

Introduction

This article discusses gender and sexuality in relation to young performers of popular music, based on a research project in its early stages, supported by UK Music[2]. Findings so far are informed by scoping and pilot studies, as well as ongoing

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[2]   UK Music is a campaigning and lobbying group which represents the recorded and live music industry and has links with UK music higher education through its Music Academic Partnership (UK Music n.d.).

informal research occurring as part of teaching popular music undergraduates at the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts (LIPA) in the UK. These young musicians are engaged in study that is primarily practical, vocational and music industry[3] facing, and are therefore at the intersection of the music industry and popular music higher education. To clarify central concepts, the term gender is 'the social constructedness of what maleness and femaleness mean in a given culture' (Beard and Gloag 2005: 69). Similarly, sexuality is 'a cultural and historical phenomenon, the discourses, institutions, and practices that create it are those of particular times and places' (Maus 2014 cited in Leonard 2015: 181). As Kallberg points out, 'nearly every experience of music, including its creation, performance and perception, may incorporate assumptions about gender; and music itself can produce ideologies of gender' (Kallberg 2001: 645). The study of gender takes up relatively little space on the course at LIPA, but it can imbue every aspect of musical understanding and practice. Students are increasingly engaging with issues of gender equality, not least because of the wave of controversy and debate relating to such issues in the music and wider entertainment industries, as exemplified by the #metoo and Time's Up movements. Consequently, given the vocational nature of many popular music degree courses, such as the one offered at LIPA, it is important to consider gender in the curriculum. The interconnected music industry and higher education contexts are central to this discussion, and are outlined in the first section of the article. The research project discussed in this article focuses on the experiences and practices of young musicians in relation to three key questions: How do performers of popular music identify with, experience and perform gender and sexuality in their musical practices? What are the issues and challenges experienced by young musicians, in relation to gender and sexuality? How do educational institutions respond to these issues and challenges, and how could their responses be improved? The second section of this article outlines the research project so far, and the third section focuses in more detail on themes arising from interview data, discussing experiences associated with group dynamics and peer group learning, networking and collaboration, and unequal expectations and stereotyping of roles. Summarising the discussion and pointing towards a more extensive future research project, the final section makes preliminary suggestions as to how music higher education can help to empower young musicians to deal with and challenge the inequalities of the music industry.

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[3]   Although Williamson and Cloonan (2007) point out that there are several interconnected but distinct music industries, e.g. recording, publishing and live music, for simplicity I use the all-encompassing singular term 'music industry'.

Contexts

Music industry

Young musicians' experiences and challenges are situated within a context of increasing discussion and action relating to gender inequality in the music industry. Some of the most significant organisations associated with the UK music industry have carried out research, published reports and taken action to redress the imbalance. For example, the UK Music Diversity Survey report (2016) shows women make up 59% of entry-level business roles yet only 30% of senior executive positions in the UK music industry (UK Music, 2016). Female membership of the Performing Right Society (PRS)[4] is currently 16% (PRS Foundation 2018), and an evaluation of the first five years of PRS Foundation's *Women Make Music* scheme reports that 78% of the 18 female musicians interviewed had experienced sexism in the industry (PRS Foundation 2017). Recognising the need for more awareness of mental health among musicians, research commissioned by Help Musicians UK[5] found 70% of respondents experienced panic, anxiety and/or depression, and identified sexist attitudes and sexual harassment as particular issues for women in the industry (University of Westminster 2017: 25). Help Musicians UK launched the musicians' support service *Music Minds Matter* in December 2017 (Help Musicians UK 2018). In the live music sector, festival line-ups are male-dominated (e.g. BBC 2015, Savage 2018) and, in 2017, 74% of tickets sold in the UK live popular music market were for all-male acts (Larsson 2017). Festival Republic[6] responded to this situation by launching the *ReBalance* project in 2017, to provide 'a step up for female led bands and solo artists' (Festival Republic 2017). Smaller organisations are also working towards greater gender equality in the music industry, for example Brighter Sound's *Both Sides Now* programme was launched in 2017 'to support, inspire and showcase women in music across the North of England' (Brighter Sound 2018); and networks such as She Said So, Girls I Rate and Girls That Gig facilitate collaboration, networking and support for female musicians.

Recent scholarly research in this area includes Lieb's (2013) investigation of gender in the music industry, which concludes that female performers have little choice but to use sex to position themselves whereas male performers have 'sex and sexuality available to choose as just one option from a range of other position strategies' (Lieb 2013: 110). Leonard (2015) considers gender in relation to music video and genre, as well as focusing on the particular challenges faced by women

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[4]   A UK royalty collecting organisation for songwriters, composers and publishers.
[5]   A charity that supports professional musicians.
[6]   The UK's largest festival promoter.

in non-performing music industry roles. Warwick and Adrian's (2016) volume *Voicing girlhood in popular music: performance, authority, authenticity* compiles a range of young female perspectives on music performance, employment, mediation and consumption. Kearney's book *Gender and rock* (2017) offers a comprehensive analysis of the ways in which gender operates in the rock genre, exploring aspects including discourses, roles, technologies, performance and criticism. Whiteley has been a key figure in the study of gender and sexuality in relation to popular music (Whiteley 1997, 2005, 2013; Whiteley and Rycenga 2006), and her chapter 'Blurred lines, gender and popular music' (Whiteley 2015) is central to the discussion in this article, as it links gender issues in the music industry with higher education.

Higher education

Given the issues in the music industry, it is essential to include the study of gender as part of vocational, industry-facing popular music performance courses. As Whiteley (2015: 375) argues, students need to be prepared for 'the so-called "real world"', as well as empowered to confront and change the balance of power of an industry that 'in some respects relies for its business on engendering insecurity in women'[7] (Nichols 2014 cited in Whiteley 2015: 369). However, as Hebert *et al.* (2017: 458) point out, there are 'clear tensions and ethical challenges' facing educators and institutions who are 'working towards equitable ends in and through music education' at the same time as seeking to 'prepare students for an industry that endorses and perpetuates sexism and even misogyny.' As Woodward (2017: 401) notes, 'masculine domination of popular music performance and music production makes the demand for gender equity in the popular music classroom all the more challenging', arguing for the adoption of a 'feminist pedagogy' in both schools and higher education, 'which would address equality and focus on the necessity of taking action' (Woodward 2017: 459).

Although this article focuses on higher education, the ecological nature of music education is clear, and Green's (1997) argument that music education at school level produces gendered musical practices provides an important foundation for the discussion. For example, Green's research confirms girls' tendencies towards singing, as well as assumptions among their peers and teachers that singing is a feminine practice. These tendencies and assumptions filter through to higher education, as demonstrated by gendered practices among music students at LIPA, who gain their places on the course by applying and auditioning on a first instrument, including voice. Since LIPA's first year of operation (1996) to the present, the majority of vocal students have been female, and the majority of

[7] The words of Jacqueline Hynes, Chair of the Musicians' Union Equality Committee.

instrumentalists have been male.[8] While an educational culture that is evenly balanced in relation to musical roles and gender is highly desirable, imbalance at the application stage is rooted in formative socio-cultural experiences and primary/secondary level education.

At tertiary level, Bogdanovic's (2015) research into gender in university music departments found 'the gendering of roles, disciplines, practices and behaviours plays a big part in Music, resulting in the underrepresentation of women in many areas' (Bogdanovic 2015: 19). Only staff were interviewed but participants observed gendering of roles and practices among students, for example in relation to musical instruments and technologies: 'You rarely see a woman on the drums. And you rarely see a woman programming or doing the live sound. You generally see females singing or playing the keyboard' (Bogdanovic 2015: 12). As Bogdanovic explains, the gendering of student and staff roles in higher education is 'complex and multifaceted':

> the gendering of instruments has an immediate impact on gendering of the academic and pastoral roles, resulting in a clear lack of female role models in many areas of music education, which in turn plays a part in choices students make, often resulting in perpetuation of the established gendered musical pathways (Bogdanovic 2015: 10).

The comments made by Bogdanovic's research participants regarding students' stereotypical musical roles, and the relationships between these roles and the broader gendered music higher education landscape, highlight a gap in existing research, namely the experiences of young musicians in higher education, in relation to gender and sexuality.

Researching young popular music performers, gender and sexuality

My research aims to explore the following questions:
- How do young performers of popular music (aged 18–25), in higher education, training or early career, identify with, experience and perform gender and sexuality in their musical practices?
- What are their key issues and challenges relating to gender and sexuality?
- How do popular music higher education and music support organisations currently respond to these issues and challenges, and what needs to change?

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8   Of the 2017–18 cohort of 82 students, 31 are female (38%). There are 37 students who have voice as their first instrument, and 24 of these are female (65%). Of the remaining 45 students who have an instrument as their first study (e.g. drums, guitar, bass, keys), seven are female (16%).

The impetus for this research is provided by my experience of teaching popular music undergraduates. Alongside my awareness of gendered musical practices and roles, as described above, I have engaged with students' experiences of and perspectives on gender and sexuality through observation, discussion and supervision, all of which illuminate the relevance of gender-related issues to young musicians. Topics and issues that concern female students particularly include the tension between sexual empowerment and sexualisation in performance, feminism in popular music, intersectionality and genre, gendered roles and stereotypes, and all-female line-ups and events. Male students have researched topics such as representations of masculinity in performance, gender relations in song lyrics, and the effects of 'coming out' for homosexual musicians.

Although music students at LIPA are increasingly engaging with experiences and issues relating to gender, it remains seemingly more important to female students. Similarly, the majority of gender-related research, discussion and action is female-focused. Due to gender inequality being an issue that, ostensibly at least, concerns and affects mostly females, it might appear reasonable to engage only females in gender-related research. However, as gender is a relational concept, 'one of the primary means through which (…) men and women define themselves is through and against one another' (Nayak and Kehily 2008: 4), female-focused research can result in a partial account. Furthermore, it is important to understand masculinity as an unmarked norm which 'has a tendency to define itself as non-performative, and is commonly perceived and presented as "natural", "original", and absolute' (Biddle and Jarman-Ivens 2007: 5). This has resulted in its relative scarcity in considerations of gender, although the recent discourse of 'toxic masculinity' (Godwin 2018) is sharpening the urgency of the need to interrogate the ways in which masculinity is socially constructed. In addition, from a purely practical perspective, involving everyone in the movement for gender equality in the music industry is essential 'if we want to change things from within, with input from those who currently hold the most power' (Reed 2013)[9]. To develop a deeper understanding of gendered musical identities, experiences, practices and relationships, therefore, this research project involves participants of all genders.

The primary focus of the research is to explore perspectives grounded in the ideas, beliefs, experiences and practices of young musicians. Consequently, qualitative research is most appropriate, defined by Strauss and Corbin (1998: 10–11) as 'any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification. It can refer to research about persons' lives, lived experiences, behaviors, emotions, and feelings.' However, as Silverman (2006) points out '[c]ertain kinds of quantitative measures may sometimes be

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[9]   Vanessa Reed is Chief Executive of PRS Foundation.

appropriate in qualitative research' (Silverman 2006: 59). He suggests one way of combining quantitative and qualitative research is to begin with a quantitative study to establish a sample of respondents and the broad contours of the field, then use qualitative research to look in depth at a key issue using some of the earlier sample (Silverman 2006: 48).

This was the approach taken in the pilot study for this project in May 2017. Before this, however, a scoping study was undertaken in summer 2016. With the support of UK Music, I contacted a range of professionals working in the music industry or in music education/support roles. Seven of these agreed to an interview, to discuss their insights into the key challenges relating to gender and sexuality for young musicians today[10]. They identified a range of issues such as the masculinisation and male domination of music facilities and scenes; lack of female participation in music scenes, projects and programmes; few female leaders, tutors, staff and role models; low visibility and recognition of female participation; and barriers to non-hetero sexualities.

Focusing on the key participant group for the research, i.e. young performers of popular music, the pilot study involved final year music undergraduates at LIPA, and combined quantitative and qualitative methods. First, an online survey was sent to 50 final year music students, inviting simple tick box responses to questions relating to how they identified themselves in terms of gender and sexuality; the relationships between their gender and sexual identities and aspects of their musical practice such as genre, image, instruments, lyrics, performance style, persona, roles and responsibilities, technologies, vocal style and working relationships; issues they had experienced relating to gender and sexual identities, such as physical, sexual or verbal abuse, inappropriate comments, lack of credit/ recognition, sexual harassment, sexualisation, stereotyping of roles, unequal expectations, unequal opportunities and unequal pay. The survey received thirteen responses (eight female, five male). While clear conclusions can't be drawn from this small sample, there are some interesting findings, such as:

- Ten respondents agreed their gender relates to their musical practice, primarily around aspects such as image, persona, lyrics, vocal style and performance style.

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[10] Telephone interviews were carried out with: Vick Bain, CEO of BASCA (4 July 2016), Stewart Baxter, Arts Development Worker at The Warren Youth Project, Hull (31 August 2016), Dai Davies, Strategic Development Manager at Ebbw Vale Institute (30 August 2016), James Hannam, Senior Grants Manager at the PRS for Music Foundation (2 December 2016), Andy Inglis, artist and tour manager and music industry mentor (1 July 2016), Kate Lowes, Head of Programmes at Brighter Sound, Manchester (4 July 2016), Carrie Mansfield, Creative Director at The Garage, Norwich (7 September 2016).

- Six students reported a range of issues arising from their gender identity, including stereotyping of roles, inappropriate comments, unequal expectations, lack of credit/recognition, sexualisation and unequal opportunities.
- Sexuality relates to the musical practice of five of the respondents, mainly with regard to working relationships, persona, genre, lyrics, and performance style.

Six of the survey respondents agreed to be interviewed, although only five interviews took place due to time constraints. The interviews were carried out at LIPA, and were one-to-one, semi-structured and audio-recorded, each lasting between 30 and 40 minutes. They built on the survey information to generate more in-depth, qualitative data, as well as exploring experiences and issues in educational contexts.

Interview findings

Before discussing some of the experiences and views of the interviewees, I will briefly introduce them[11]. Georgia, Lise and Lucy are female; Ian and Kristian are male. Georgia and Lucy are British, Kristian and Lise are Norwegian, and Ian is North American. All five are white and were around 21 years old at the time of the interviews. Both males and two females identified as heterosexual and one female identified as bisexual. The following discussion of their experiences focuses on three themes that emerged strongly from the data: group dynamics and peer group learning, networking and collaboration, and unequal expectations and stereotyping of roles. While the ongoing research project aims to explore both gender and sexuality, it is worth noting that much of the data generated so far, and discussed here, relates primarily to gender.

Group dynamics and peer group learning

Lise and Georgia, both instrumentalists, reported the effects of gendered group dynamics on their learning experiences. For Lise, her formative music educational experiences were characterised by feelings of shyness and lack of confidence: "it was very male dominated and I felt like it influenced me a lot. I've always felt a bit shy because I'm a woman, I'm a girl and I play and I don't feel like I can be as good". Her account indicates a strong perception of inequality between boys and girls in terms of confidence and motivation levels, teacher attention, and the freedom to make mistakes:

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[11]   Most of the interviewees are anonymised at their request.

> In rehearsals my teacher would have five or six boys and three girls and he'd always spend time with the best in the group who were these two boys. Because we were girls we never dared to ask 'can you repeat that again' so it would end up with us not learning it because we were too scared to ask because we didn't want to look stupid in front of the boys. And that would lead to inappropriate comments from the boys like 'you never practise, you don't know this anyway' or 'you're not good enough for this'. I think girls get less room to make mistakes.

Despite these challenges, Lise disavows the benefits of a single-sex education: "if you spend 12 years of your life with only girls you don't learn to deal with any boys. You don't learn how it works and how to deal with it".

In contrast, Georgia's single-sex education gave her the confidence to pursue her ambition to be a drummer: "I went to an all girls' school so I was never under the impression that I could do anything else other than what I wanted to". Moving to a mixed-sex school at the age of 16, however, challenged her confidence: "cos I was round boys all the time I was more self-conscious of myself when I was working and drumming. Even though I'd been drumming for at least 8/9 years at this point, I was more self-conscious than I ever had been". While Georgia recognises the positive aspects of learning in an all-female environment, like Lise, she acknowledges the value of learning how to negotiate gender relations: "I think for me it was positive but obviously in the real world you can't work with women all the time and you've got to work with more men".

Lise's feelings of insecurity in male-dominated learning groups continued in higher education, for example in her experiences in music improvisation class at LIPA: "I stopped doing improv cos I'm not that good and in the group I was the only girl for the first and second year". Although she recognises the social structures that lead to such feelings: "I guess it's just society that a lot of women feel less than a man, if you're put next to each other", she also internalises the negative feelings: "it's mostly just in my head and I'm holding myself back".

Ian's perspective on gender differences in musicianship support Lise's view of the particular challenges of improvisation class for some female students. In his experience, female musicians are "less inclined to jam and just play for the sake of playing." He suggests this is "kind of an assertive thing, and certain women haven't had the practice or feel not as open with putting out an opinion. Cos that's kind of what a jam is – an idea and you put it out and see how it works with other people's ideas." In relation to some female students in improvisation classes, he observes:

> Even in improv classes here there's a sort of timidity sometimes, even if they're fantastic. You need a certain self-belief I think that is almost less characteristic to women. I think a pure, driven, 'I'm the shit, I'm amazing, I can do anything' – I feel like men feel that more than women.

For Lise, the challenges of improvisation class would have been more manageable with a more equal gender balance: "if you're put on the spot in front of eight or seven boys it's gonna be a lot more intimidating than if it's with a roomful of girls." However, Lucy offered an alternative perspective on the issue of gender balance in class. As mentioned above, the majority of vocal students at LIPA are female and, due to the logistics of timetabling, are often grouped together. This was not always beneficial for Lucy, for example in music production class:

> Everyone else was put in groups based on ability apart from the vocalists because our timetable clashed. So I was a bit like, I've been put with all the girls and 1) I don't really want to be cos I spend a lot of time with girls as it is anyway and 2) I didn't really feel like I was at their standard.

This issue for Lucy arose from the effects of gendering of roles (singing as a feminine practice) on peer group learning and group dynamics, in a similar way to the effect of the gendering of instrumental practice (coded masculine) on the experiences of Georgia and Lise.

Networking and collaboration

Central to the working lives of performing musicians, networking and collaboration can be influenced by gender. In relation to networking, both Georgia and Lucy commented on the tendency of male students to 'stick together'. In Georgia's view: "It's very much a lads' club. They always go to each other before me for work, they always forget I'm a drummer." While she similarly prioritised her female friends, "If I wanted to offer work to my friends, I'd probably think of other women first", this does not create equality of opportunity because "there are less women than men": an effect, as mentioned above, of the gendering of musical instruments and practices. Lucy's experience confirms this: "Boys are a little bit more involved in their own sex group than they think. Boys sort of swarm together". In Lucy's view, this often results from different interests along gender lines: "I find that the boys here talk about guitar pedals for ages, for absolutely hours and I'm like 'I'm not interested in this, this is such a boring boy conversation to me.' I think boys take more interest in the technical side of things".

In preparation for the 'real world' of the music industry, collaboration is a crucial aspect of students' work at LIPA, in relation to performance, songwriting and music production. All the interviewees described gender differences in collaborative practice. For Lise, the experience of collaborating with other females was primarily co-operative: "I find more playing with girls, it's very like, you discuss it amongst you, rather than the projects I've had with boys when it's more like 'you do this or that.'" Although this way of working "might not be the quickest way of

doing things or getting the sound you want", she values the process: "everyone is doing unexpected things that I wouldn't have thought of myself if I was to write out the parts". In Georgia's experience, on the other hand, females tend to focus on the task, whereas males are more experimental: "the way I work with women is different from the way I work with men. It tends to be a different creative process – with women it tends to be a lot more distinct and you know exactly what you're doing whereas with men it goes off on tangents a lot". Echoing previous points about the reluctance of females to improvise, Georgia explains:

> I think it's just the inherent masculinity of showing how good you are at your in-strument. I don't think they do it deliberately all the time but I think it's just inbuilt that men are more likely to show off than women cos they're brought up to be a lad more, to be a show off. When a woman shows off it seems to be a bit more 'Oh look at her full of herself' but when a man does it he seems to get away with it a little bit more.

For Ian, this tendency contributes to the greater challenge of collaborating with females rather than males: "It's way more challenging I think to work with girls. It is a different working relationship". In Kristian's experience of music production, however, he finds collaborating with female singers more straightforward than working with males, particularly in relation to giving feedback:

> I've actually been more able to say directly to females with regards to feedback. But with the men I've felt like I've had to tread a bit more carefully with regards to, it's kind of wrong saying ego-balancing, but I have felt that in regards to keeping an honest conversation, or kind of honest direct feedback, it's been slightly easier with females.

Lucy's account of gender relations in musical collaboration highlights an alter-native experience. She finds working relationships with males are more straight-forward because:

> Boys are a bit more to the point. When boys are a bit annoyed it's like 'Did you say that?' and they might have a wee little bit of a fight and then it's over. Sort of in the way that siblings work is how boys work. Whereas girls are more like a relationship rather than like being brother or sister kind of thing. It's sort of like 'You've done that and I've forgiven you but also I'm not gonna forget it and I probably will hang onto that just for a little bit'.

Although much of her musical output focuses on female experiences and is-sues, Lucy prefers a gender-balanced working environment: "I'm all about balance really and I don't really want to exclude men from what I'm doing".

While there are clear similarities and differences among these accounts, and individual personalities clearly play a role, each of the interviewees perceives gender as a factor in their experiences of networking and collaboration.

Unequal expectations and stereotyping of roles

Many of the experiences and challenges outlined above are underpinned by unequal expectations and stereotyping of roles. Lise's lack of confidence and motivation, in both her earlier music education and in higher education, were arguably solidified by the teachers' attitudes. In relation to her earlier education, she recalls "I would always giggle and try to talk the whole lesson, but my teacher let me cos he wasn't strict with me: 'That's that – you are a girl.'" Similarly, in her improvisation class at LIPA, she felt as if she was allowed to participate less than her male classmates: "I got to be the class clown a bit cos I was the girl. Everyone has to play but when it comes to me just 'no' and everyone just laughs".

As mentioned above, gendering of musical instruments and technologies can shape group dynamics and group learning, as well as experiences of collaboration and networking. Georgia recognises the gendering of her instrument, "With me playing drums, it's seen as masculine, whereas voice is seen as female", and associated technologies: "I think technology holds a lot of women back cos I know there are lot less female instrumentalists but there are even less female producers and engineers." Like Lucy, she perceives a strong interest in technologies as masculine: "I think women in general are not as gear-orientated. A bunch of lads will talk about all their gear and stuff but a bunch of women don't normally go 'Oh look at all my gear'. They show it but don't go into all the specifics – you're not a gear head".

As well as stereotyping of roles, gender is significant in relation to expectations: both Georgia and Lucy encountered inequality in people's responses to them as musicians. Georgia's experience may seem clichéd but remains current in live music culture: "Like you get at gigs when you're setting the drum kit up – 'Are you with the band?' 'Is one of the band members your boyfriend?' And then after the gig 'Oh you played well, I didn't expect you to be as good.'" On the other hand, as well as sometimes receiving patronising feedback, Georgia is sometimes given no feedback at all: "The other bands are all male and they congratulate the men but just say hi to me as if they feel awkward about it and don't really know what to say". Similarly, in Lucy's experience "people assume you're not going to be any good or anything just because I am a girl, cos I'm a woman".

In relation to appearance, Georgia's feelings of self-consciousness when performing are linked with gendered expectations and sexualization: "I feel I am sometimes aware of the way I look on stage. I think 'Oh god people are looking at

me, do I look a bit fat from this angle?' I can't imagine many men sit at the drums and think 'Do I look fat?'" Georgia's discomfort with her physical appearance on stage is, she feels, a result of her gender. She also fears that her female body could distract attention from her identity as a musician: "I don't want people to look at that and not my drumming". However, the gendering of sexualization can sometimes be advantageous to females, at least at the level of individual events, as Georgia recounts: "I've been hired for gigs because I'm a woman before. There was a function band that wanted all women cos it looks a bit more different".

The challenge of unequal expectations is not the sole preserve of female musicians. While expressing reluctance at identifying "the problems of white males" due to the advantages associated with being "a straight white male", Ian raises an issue relating to the pressure he feels to perform in a stereotypically masculine way:

> Sometimes when I'm on stage there's this need to be masculine. So that's one thing I've struggled with is seeing lots of performances and guys being very commanding, which I can do but the thing that I need to bring in more, that isn't taught or readily available, is like giving yourself the vulnerability and the space to be playful.

Similarly, Kristian feels the "stereotype of the male producer with the female artist [as] a kind of authoritarian who is in charge doesn't represent reality at all". He acknowledges the importance of awareness about gender inequality in certain areas of the music industry, but is dismayed by the hostility he perceives in some gender-related discourses: "I think the dilemma is just when you as an individual get blamed for being part of the problem because you're a male". The experiences and views of these two male students highlight the importance of taking account of gendered expectations and stereotypes in relation to all musicians' experiences, not only those of females.

Summary

Gender inequality continues to be an issue in the music industry, but the growing movement of discussion and action to address the issues indicates positive change is more possible than ever before. The increasing number of higher education institutions that offer vocational, practical, industry-facing popular music degree courses, as Whiteley (2015), Hebert *et al.* (2017) and Woodward (2017) argue, are crucial in instigating change but need to navigate the tensions between preparing students for the music industry and equipping them with the knowledge, skills and confidence to challenge its norms and inequalities. The intersection between higher education and the music industry, therefore, is a key site where gender relations can be illuminated and understood, and inequalities challenged and addressed.

The data generated by this research project so far highlight a range of experiences and perspectives. The issues identified by music industry professionals provide valuable underpinning insights that have been enriched further by the interviews with young musicians. Emerging themes include a lack of confidence in group learning and playing contexts for some females, the perception of a 'boys' club' in relation to networking and collaboration, gendered expectations and stereotyping of both female and male musicians, and a tendency towards the gendering of roles, instruments and technologies, all of which contribute to ongoing gender inequality.

Although in its early stages, the research discussed in this article shows the importance of focusing on young popular musicians in higher education, as investigating their gendered experiences and issues can inform understanding to contribute to positive change, both in the higher education context, and progressing into the music industry. Based on the data discussed in this article, practical solutions could include positive action to create greater gender diversity in student cohorts and teaching teams, strengthening of networking and collaborative practices among students through awareness-raising and support, and active challenging of gender stereotypes across the curriculum. It is also important to strengthen links with the music industry through partnerships such as UK Music's Music Academic Partnership, not least to disseminate research findings effectively.

Further research in this area is crucial in order to address the issues created by gender inequality in both music higher education and the music industry. This project aims to build on the preliminary research carried out so far, engaging directly with young musicians of all gender identities, and from diverse educational, socio-economic, regional and national backgrounds, to investigate in greater breadth and depth the ways in which they experience gender and sexuality in their musical practices, the issues and challenges they encounter, and the role of music education.

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