MUSIC, GENDER, AND COMING OF AGE

IN THE LIVES OF INDIE ROCK PERFORMERS

by

MICHAEL RAMIREZ

(Under the Direction of Linda Grant)

ABSTRACT

Using interview data from thirty-eight women and men independent rock musicians living in Athens, Georgia, this study analyzes the gendered life course pathways that characterize entry into musical participation during young adulthood. The data illustrate the ways in which women and men's lives are increasingly gendered as they progress through the life course. During childhood, musicians have similar experiences in musical interest and development. During adolescence, however, women's and men's experiences begin to diverge, leading men to develop skills and experiences earlier than women. These experiences benefit men in early adulthood, the time during which they begin seriously contemplating a career in music. Men have a smoother entrance into the music world and are able to start or join bands more easily than women.

Gender influences both participation in music and the development of identity. Men identify as musicians much earlier in the life course than do women. In comparison to women, men have a broader definition of what constitutes musicianhood and define it in such a way as to ease their inclusion. As a result, more women are hesitant in claiming an identity as a true

musician. At the same time, both women and men see the music world as a context in which innovative constructions of femininity and masculinity are possible.

During the transition to adulthood, musicians must deal with the dilemmas of adulthood. They respond in one of three ways. Some persist in music, defining it as an adult-like career no different from traditional lines of work. Others decenter their identities as musicians, switching to more normative non-performance related aspects in the music world. Others begin to abandon their identities as musicians, changing routes to more traditional careers. In general, independent rock musicians are innovative in their attainment of the core characteristics of adulthood. Although their simultaneous status as musicians and as adults is somewhat tenuous, they cite ways in which their participation in music provides them with a securely adult identity.

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MICHAEL RAMIREZ

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MICHAEL RAMIREZ

Major Professor: Linda Grant

Committee: James Dowd
Joseph Hermanowicz

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
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DEDICATION

For Yvonne,

still the coolest girl in the world.

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Completing this dissertation was not a breeze. I'd like to thank those people in my life who pushed, inspired, and encouraged me to complete this project.

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Yvonne, my sister, though you're not a musician yourself, you did surface in this project from time to time. So many of the musicians with whom I spoke cited their older siblings as sparking their interest in music. During one interview, a musician described his relationship with his older brother, someone he clearly looked up to. In response, I said, "Yeah, I have a seven

year older sister. And I always thought she was really cool and I would never be as cool as she was." Even now, all these years later, I still look up to you.

I must also thank the rest of my family: Grandma, Grandpa, all my aunts, uncles, cousins, and my two handsome nephews. In your own way, each of you encouraged me to pursue—and complete—this degree.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION:

MUSIC, GENDER, AND THE LIFE COURSE

Typical of many youth of my generation, music was a center point of my life through adolescence and early adulthood. Maybe it was just a coincidence, but as my musical interests shifted during adolescence, so did my ideas of gender. During my middle school years, I was absolutely enthralled with "cock rock"[1] bands of the late 1980s/early 1990s. But when I heard Nirvana during my sophomore year in high school, I realized it was time to ditch the cock rock for good. In adolescence, similar to most boys my age at the time, I began trying to figure out who I was. I was fascinated with the way Nirvana lead singer Kurt Cobain transcended the gender divide. I even went out and bought the now-famous Nirvana seahorses t-shirt, the back of which described the way in which the male carried the offspring until birth.

Similar to boys coming to terms with adolescence in Kinney's (1993) research, I felt like I didn't belong. My disdain for sports set me apart from the jocks. I was a fairly good student and did identify somewhat with the nerds, but wasn't wholly a part of that clique either. I played the saxophone my first few years in high school, but since I did not take the high school band very seriously, this activity did not become an important part of my identity. I was beginning to

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[1] "Cock rock" is a (usually) disparaging term used to describe a popular genre of music from the 1980s and early 1990s. These bands were typically hypermasculine and performed songs with sexually suggestive and/or explicit content and misogynist themes and lyrics. In short, cock rock is an "explicit, crude, and often aggressive expression of male sexuality" (Frith and McRobbie 1991:374). Popular bands of this genre include Mötley Crüe, Guns 'N' Roses, Poison, and Warrant. Ironically, despite their hypermasculine overtones in their musical content, they are somewhat hyperfeminine in their presentation of self, wearing tight clothing, heavy makeup, and excessively teased hair.

realize that particular expressions of masculinity were highly valued in my high school, by boys and girls alike, and that I didn't fit the components of this hegemonic masculinity. So I ultimately was a bit of a loner. But music gave me solace. I spent countless hours alone in my room upstairs learning to play the guitar, and I began writing songs. Fortunately, I befriended another loner who played the drums, and we soon started a band together. And through participating in music as a member of a band, I became comfortable with who I had been all along.

Reflecting back, I wholeheartedly believe music aided my transition to adulthood and has had an important influence on the person I have become in adulthood. Although I didn't end up pursuing a musical career, some of the lessons from performing music in my younger days stuck with me, and they even steered me in the direction of developing an interest in gender issues when I began to study sociology. Music helped me discover a comfortable form of masculinity.

Is this the case with other people who are invested in music? Music is important to many young people, and there is much to be learned about the consequences of music in men and women's lives. Does music-making in adolescence and young adulthood shape who people become and where they find themselves as adults? And, in contrast to my experience, what influences people to persist in the "adolescent" pipedream of becoming a musician in adulthood? Does gender make a difference in the experiences one has in musical worlds, and in the influence of music on identity development? Music is a gender-stratified enterprise, although I was probably less sensitive to this as an adolescent than I am today. Women do participate in music as a form of cultural production, but do they do so in equal terms with men and with the same consequences?

Music is an important form of cultural production, and a major venue for cultural expression, especially among adolescents and young adults. Musical worlds are also a useful site for exploring enduring sociological questions related to gender stratification, cultural production and reproduction, and the development of gender identity. In this dissertation I use qualitative research carried out in the musically-rich, indie rock[2] scene of Athens, Georgia, to explore questions about gender and social structure, gender and cultural production, and gender and identity development over the life course. I examine the lives of contemporary musicians to understand the role that music plays in life course trajectories and most especially the transition from adolescence to adulthood. For many youth, I suspect especially for those who perform music and devote a major portion of their lives to music, music is the central milieu in which this transition is accomplished. I use intensive, qualitative interviews, and to a lesser extent participant observation of musicians in performances to explore the meanings of serious involvement in musical performance for development during adolescence and early adulthood. Further, I compare and contrast the experiences and outlooks of women and men who are music performers. I seek to understand what leads young people to a serious commitment to music in young adulthood, how music is linked to identity development, and, specifically, how it is linked to gender identity. In particular, my dissertation addresses the following questions:

- Do women and men performers have equal access to and similar experiences as performers of indie rock music, or is this world, like many other musical genres stratified by gender and disadvantageous to women?

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[2] Indie (or independent) rock is a broad umbrella category of music that, in some ways, refers to nothing about the styling of music. It refers primarily to bands that are not signed to major record labels. (They are not necessarily unsigned, but instead may be under contract with smaller, independent labels.) Indie rock bands are assumed to have more control over all aspects of their music and to be more "authentic" due to the less commercial emphasis of these bands' careers.

- How is gender enacted, represented, recreated, and transformed by women and men performers in the indie rock musical world? Does indie music participation reify or transform traditional understandings of gender roles and relationships, or do both these things simultaneously?

- How does participation as a music performer influence the transition from adolescence to adulthood and the gender identity development of women and men participants?

- What are the consequences of music performance participation by women and men? Are there significant gender differences in sustained commitment to musical performance beyond young adulthood or, in cases where young adults leave musical performance behind or decenter it in their lives, in what they perceive they learned from their involvement in musical worlds that will affect them later in life?

Thus, I am interested in exploring the intersections of music, gender, identity and development from two vantage points: how gender affects involvement in music and how music affects gendered transitions to adulthood.

Although there has been some sociological analysis of music as a system of production (Faulkner 1971; Goodwin 1990; Grazian 2003; Hennion 1990; Kealy 1990; Peterson and Berger 1990) and consumption (Buxton 1990; Christenson and Roberts 1998; Grazian 2003; Riesman 1990; Williams 2001), my study is distinctive in its focus on music as it affects the life course trajectories and identity development of women and men musicians.

<u>The Importance of Young Adulthood for Identity Development</u>

Young adulthood is a quasi-autonomous period when people are finalizing independence from families and making important decisions about future life courses. It is a period that is strongly dominated by peer cultures, and peer cultures are often the site of important cultural

production and innovation, some of which can challenge conventional society in ways that prove either transient or permanent. Although gender identity begins to be established far earlier in the life course, young adulthood is a period when these identities are solidified. Individuals may elaborate gender identities constructed during early childhood, or they may break away from earlier patterns and explore new forms of identities, including those related to gender. Peer contexts are extremely important to gender identity development that occurs during the young adult period, and as they begin to enter higher education and the world of work, they also are influenced by organized patterns of gender relationships and gender norms prevalent in society.

Popular Culture, Gender, and the Life Course

"Very few sociologists have studied the way ordinary people become involved in the creation and performance of popular music," notes sociologist William Bielby (2004) in his address to the American Sociological Association. Bielby's remarks, later published as an essay in the *American Sociological Review,* outline the multiple ways in which an analysis of music can contribute to sociological knowledge, on topics such as status attainment, organization, and cultural commodification. Bielby thus highlights the importance of a close analysis of a heretofore largely neglected arena of social life as a means to develop cultural theory. Bielby's review focuses largely on the marketing and consumption of popular music, but only tangentially on the meaning of music in the lives of those who participate in its production. One possible line of analysis that he does not develop in his review is the potential for study of lives of musicians to contribute to our understandings of identity development and gender stratification in cultural worlds.

Despite the importance of music in the lives of adolescents and young adults in contemporary society, involvement in music has not often been studied in terms of its role in life

course development or as a phenomenon related to gender. Music is an arena, my research will suggest, that contributes in important, but often complex, ways to gender identity development. It becomes a medium that simultaneously recreates but also challenges and transforms gender identities of individuals and their understandings of gender relationships in worlds beyond music.

Music is a key leisure pursuit during adolescence, and one that often grounds youth identity. However, music is more than a hobby for those who commit to musical performance. It is an informal line of work, and one that should be examined for opportunities and constraints that allow some individuals to commit themselves to it. Because participation in a number of musical settings has been gender imbalanced throughout history, studying this culture can shed light on ways the life course may be gendered. Given my theoretical concerns, I frame my study by drawing on several bodies of research literature that have not often been linked: sociological studies of music, research on gender stratification in music, research on the life course with a concentration on gender and the transition to adulthood, and literature on identity development.

For adolescents and adults alike, music is one aspect of the broad concept of *popular culture*, a "set of practices or … activities frequently associated with the field of leisure and 'enjoyed' by large numbers of people" (McRobbie 1991:xiii). Bennett (2001:1) argues that music is "a primary, if not *the* primary, leisure resource" in today's world in the U.S. and other Westernized nations. Similarly, Roe (1987:215 – 216) suggests:

> It is becoming increasingly difficult to escape the conclusion, in
>
> terms of both the sheer amount of time devoted to it and the
>
> meanings it assumes, that it is music, not television, that is the
>
> most important medium for adolescents.

Surveys indicate adolescents spend more time listening to music than watching television (Christenson and Roberts 1998). Furthermore, a recent survey found that 56% of the average U.S. teen's spending money goes to music (Merry 2005). This is more than they spend on video games, clothes, or movies. In the U.S., teens spend an average of 13 hours per week and perhaps between three and four hours a day listening to music (Merry 2005; Roberts and Henriksen 1990).[3] And the iPod, Apple's portable MP3 music player, has sold well over 100,000,000 units since November 2001 (Apple 2007).

Music's impact is greater than sales though. Adolescence is a key point in life when individuals begin to move out of the family and into society and culture more generally. Popular culture is particularly consequential to the lives of young women and men, and it forms an important locale for identity development. For one, youth culture, and the musical preferences associated certain age cohort groups, are important markers of generational membership. It helps the young work through the "natural tensions of adolescence" (Hall and Whannel 1990:27). Youth culture is, in part, a response to adolescents' contradictory expectations as to how to live (Hall and Whannel 1990). This culture also provides a shared set of symbols and meanings to organize life (Hall and Whannel 1990). On a collective level, music binds unacquainted people together not only through sharing similar music tastes, but also in terms of fashion, lifestyle, and politics (Bennett 2001). Music is used by adolescents as one means to move away from family and into society and culture more generally.

Frith and Goodwin (1990) argue that the study of music is rooted in sociology. In particular, the sociology of music is essentially about two non-musical concerns: mass culture

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[3] Some studies suggest there are gender differences in time spent with music. Girls, particularly during adolescence, spend more time listening to music than do boys (Brown et al. 1990; Coleman 1961; Greenberg 1973; Lyle and Hoffman 1972; Roberts and Hendricksen 1990).

and the study of youth. Music consumption and performance are not inherently passive leisure pursuits, but are more active, creative, and complicated than often recognized (Christenson and Roberts 1998; Frith and Goodwin 1990; Hall and Whannel 1990/1964). Adolescents can use music for a range of intentions: to create us-them distinctions with other groups, gain status, offend dominant culture, claim public space for oneself or group, resist authority, and express political attitudes (Christenson and Roberts 1998; Lull 1987; Riesman 1990/1950). Music is a central component to the development of youth's creation of their own forms of culture (Corsaro and Eder 1990). Lull argues adolescents use music to "assert their personalities and learn about things that their parents and the schools aren't telling them" (Lull 1987:153). In these instances, youth are creating culture away from the auspices of adult authority, and typically use media and popular culture as a key means for doing so (Brake 1985; McRobbie 1991).

McRobbie (1991) stresses the impact music (and subcultures therein) may have on adolescent lives. Music subcultures may alter life trajectories during adolescence "or at least … sharpen their focus by confirming some felt, but as yet unexpressed intent or desire" (McRobbie 1991:xv). Regardless of whether it radically influences the direction of adolescent lives, music nonetheless comprises a shared set of symbols and meanings for consumers to use to make sense of and organize their world (Hall and Whannel 1990). In this sense, within youth culture, music can function as a cultural system much in the manner that religion or political ideology can (Durkheim 1915/1965; Geertz 1973a).

Gendered Music, Gendered Musicians

When we look at musical fandom—who listens to music—gender appears to have only minimal influence. Women are just as likely as men to be fans of bands and may even listen to music more so than men (Bielby 2004; Coleman 1961). Women also spend more money on

music than do men (Coleman 1961). In light of these trends, one may expect "girls [to] be as inclined, if not more inclined, to engage in popular music, not just as listeners, but as performers" (Bielby 2004:5). However, the reality of women's musical involvement is quite different. Historical trends (or perhaps stereotypes) of music fandom contend that "male fans buy a guitar; female fans buy a poster" (Bayton 1997:40), implying that men and boys attempt to become rock stars themselves, while women and girls instead fantasize about romancing the stars. These gender differences also appear in the composition of rock bands, both historically and today. It is in this aspect of music—participating in the creation and performing of music in bands—that gender influences men's and women's experiences in music.

By and large, musicianship is heavily stratified by gender. Indie rock music has not been studied to the extent other genres have been examined, but researchers have found indie rock scenes to be gender stratified (Bannister 2006; Cohen 1997). The more extensive research on other genres of music show clear patterns of gender stratification as well. For instance, rock music in general is recognized as masculine (Cohen 1997; Frith 1981; Frith and McRobbie 1990; Leblanc 1999). The rock attitude—tough, brash, defiant, and sexually indiscreet—is more closely aligned with traditional masculine gender norms than to norms of femininity (Frith 1981). Moreover, rock instruments are personified as "men's" instruments (Clawson 1999). The guitar, the drum kit, the bass—all are heavy instruments, figuratively and literally, that are understood as masculine. Rock critics and fans rely upon Freudian imagery in discussing the guitar, which is sometimes seen as a cultural extension of one's manhood (Frith and McRobbie 1990).

In addition, a majority of musical performers are men (Cohen 1997; Frith 1981). Despite feminist movements and the increased involvement of women in the production of many forms

of culture, women still play only limited roles in bands today (Clawson 1999). For instance, although the number of women musicians has increased recently, they still hold token status as musical performers. And women musicians often are hired *because* of their gender, but for a limited, and distinctive, type of role within the bands. They tend to hold less visible and less prestigious roles in rock bands (Clawson 1999). For example, women are overrepresented among bass players, an instrument with little status in rock culture. Women musicians are apt to be sexualized, in terms of their appearances and expected behaviors (Bayton 1997).

Other trends, such as the recent increase of women-fronted (and the still infrequent all-women) bands and the moderately successful Lilith tour of the late 1990s to showcase women musical performers, seem to indicate a change in music participation as of late. For one, this change does seem to illustrate a more gender-balanced outcome in the population of contemporary musicians. More women today are playing instruments, forming bands, writing music, and actively participating in rock. However, women's rock nevertheless remains highly differentiated from traditional (read: men's) rock. Women musicians cluster more at the pop rather than the rock end of the genre continuum (Coates 1997:52).[4] The music they write and perform is not as aggressive as men's, nor is women's music considered "authentic" (Coates 1997:52). In this sense, their music is feminized, in that it adheres to traditionally feminine characteristics of soft, pretty, polite, and civil. While women musicians challenge the status quo

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[4] Coates (1997) argues that genres are not so much about the sound of music. Rather, they are tied to gender conventions. Rock, traditionally categorized as masculine, is more emotionally and musically straightforward. Pop, in contrast, is considered artificial, "prefabricated," and more in line with feminine leisure, such as dancing and "mooning over teen idols" (Coates 1997:53).

by entering male-dominated domains, women musicians simultaneously maintain traditional notions of gender by differentiating their music from that of men.[5]

Of course, women musicians demonstrate a range of musical stylings in their song writing and performances. Some women are quite masculine in their music, creating music that is loud and aggressive. Culturally, the more aggressive women musicians, such as Patti Smith, Bikini Kill, and Sleater-Kinney, are ridiculed as manly or as dykes. Even women musicians whose music is not particularly aggressive are critiqued as man-haters. Liz Phair, whose album *Exile in Guyville*[6] is largely a critical of traditional masculinity, and more aggressive riot grrl acts such as Bikini Kill have borne the brunt of cultural criticism because of their musical content. Both the public and other musicians deem these women man-haters on the basis of their lyrics. "Kill Rock Stars," punk band NOFX's rebuttal to Bikini Kill's Kathleen Hannah, epitomizes cultural reactions to empowered women in rock:

> You've been crowned the newest queen.
>
> Kinda like the punk rock Gloria Steinham.
>
> You can't change the world by blaming men.

Cultural conceptions of women performers with non-normative feminine gender identities reveal the degree to which music is framed by and interpreted using traditional gender norms. Just as feminine women are framed culturally by their adherence to gender norms, women musicians who challenge these norms attract attention for their nonconformity to gender roles, not for their

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[5] Or, one could argue, listeners maintain traditional gender arrangements in their evaluation of women's rock.

[6] Phair has admitted on numerous occasions that this album is not only a reference to the Rolling Stones' 1972 album *Exile on Main Street*, but is also a song-by-song response to the collection of songs—and the men in them (Phair 2003).

music per se. Because their music breaks gender boundaries, these women are castigated as the "other"—not as men, not even as women, but instead as gender deviants, as lesbians (de Beauvoir 1952).

The gap between women's participation in the musical fan culture and their participation as committed performers leads to my research questions in this dissertation. Given that both adolescent women and men enjoy musical culture and participate in it about equally as fans, why is it that most musical performers still are men? Second, to what extent is the life course of musicians tied to identity development? Because work is intimately tied to one's identity—one's gender identity in particular—how do life course pathways shape gender identity development among musicians?

The Life Course, the Young, and Gender

Life Course Development for the Young

Although life course and life stage theories differ somewhat in their characterizations of the young adult period, many theorists concur that identity formation is one of the critical tasks, perhaps the prime concern, of the teen years (Clausen 1986; Kinney 1993). These years are a period of both self-exploration and self-expression (Clausen 1986). Peers are critically important and may ease the adoption of fellow teens' identities (Coleman and Hendry 1990; Erikson 1968). First, they support independence and hasten the break with adult culture and the family[7] (Coleman and Hendry 1990). They also allow opportunities for their peers to adopt pseudo adult roles (Coleman and Hendry 1990). The significance of peer culture intensifies as children spend a greater portion of their time outside the family home and in institutional settings, primarily

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[7] The influence of the family should not be considered null in importance, however, as adolescents prefer family council for important, long-term decisions, despite their desire for independence during this life period (Coleman and Hendry 1990).

schools, with their peers. As they age, however, adolescents' leisure interests shift from institutionally-organized to commercially-organized activities (Coleman and Hendry 1990). Peer culture, therefore, has an increasingly greater impact as boys and girls progress through adolescence.

Recent theorists, however, have suggested that identity development is most critical during the early adult years (Arnett 2000). While various identities can be easily tried out and just as easily discarded during adolescence, identities undertaken during early adulthood are typically more serious endeavors and have the potential to become lifelong aspects of adult identities. As a result, the testing out period in early adulthood, while still uncertain, is a critical point of identity development. It is during this period that young adults are beginning to solidify their adult status and make decisions on their career and family lives. As such the transition from adolescence to adulthood is particularly key to understanding identity development and how commitments to work are negotiated.

Life Course Differentiation by Gender

Of course, the life course is not a static, uniform pathway for individuals coming of age today. And while researchers have examined the extent to which race and social class influence experiences over the life course (Leik and Goulding 2000; Rosenberg 1975; Zajicek et al. 2006), many overlook the gendered component of the life course as they affect women and men, girls and boys. Past studies suggest that gender once provided distinctive life course pathways for men and for women (Levinson 1978; Levinson and Levinson 1996). Women's typical route to adulthood is through marriage and parenthood, while men attain adult status by building a career. Today, the influence of gender is more complex. Some scholars suggest women are socialized to pursue both work and family commitments in their attainment of adulthood. For men, work may

be less central to securing proper adult masculine identities than it was in prior generations. However, evidence suggests that gender continues to shape the life course, though in more complex ways. The few contemporary scholars who have added a gendered lens to their analyses typically highlight ways gender is salient to the lives of older populations (Calasanti and Slevin 2001; Connidis 2006; Hatch 2000; Joyce and Mamo 2006; McMullin and Berger 2006).[8] Despite recognizing the missing gender component of life course work, there is still relatively little known about how gender particularly affects women and men in young adulthood.

Examining women's life course experiences may explain gender stratification in a range of social institutions, such as leisure, academic, and work settings (Kmec 2002). As a result, gendered experiences in these structures may influence outcomes in adulthood (Ruble and Martin 1998). Women's experiences over the life course are characterized by *gender splitting*, the rigid boundary between the feminine and the masculine in everyday life, which affects their familial responsibilities, work expectations, and individual identities (Levinson and Levinson 1996:38). At each life period, cultures "shape (and sharpen) differences in the interests and activities" of boys and girls, as well as men and women (Clausen 1986:58).

Extracurricular activities can act as a springboard for the successful transition to adulthood by influencing leadership skills development and self-esteem, as well as warding off negative influences that can prove detrimental in later life (Eccles and Barber 1999; Furstenberg et al. 1999; Larson 1994; Willits 1988). However, participation in extracurricular activities seems to have a stronger impact for boys than for girls (Glancy et al. 1986). Men who participate

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[8] Researchers, for instance, suggest that the later adult years are the most gendered times of life for individuals (particularly women) in contemporary society. In most cases, women's devalued status as women has significant consequences to their economic situations and social lives. Science and technology (Joyce and Mamo 2006), inequality in the labor market (McMullin and Berger 2006), and intimacy (Connidis 2006) are a few aspects of social life that are influenced by gender and old age.

in extracurricular activities during high school have higher levels of educational attainment and occupational prestige in adulthood (Glancy et al. 1986). Gadbois and Bowker (2007) suggest self-esteem increases for boys who participate in athletics, while it increases for girls in non-athletic activities. Research on extracurricular participation suggests the identities adolescents develop in high school are not temporary and often carry on into adulthood (Barber et al. 2001). Extracurricular activities, as past research illustrates, may have consequences beyond adolescence.

Many of the distinctions in women's life courses stem from experiences in the family. Ideas of what constitutes gender-appropriate careers are ingrained early in the life course, as are occupational orientations for each gender (Bruckner 2004). In general, contemporary women encompass a "hybrid status" in that their lives include both public and private lives (Bruckner 2004). Because of women's greater likelihood of balancing work and family commitments, they experience a greater number of life changes and role transitions than do men (Hatch 2000). In comparison to men, women, due to their different set of familial responsibilities, are thought to have more nonlinear lives in comparison to men, and they evaluate their lives using different criterion (Settersten 2003:36). Women's work histories over the life course are more chaotic and disrupted due to family obligations and expectations (Becker-Schmidt 1997), and women may have emotionally-intense conflicts between work and family that are less apparent among men (Blair-Loy 2001).

Women and girls' life course development as gendered beings may be more complicated than are those of men and boys. In the current era, femininity and normative feminine gender roles may be in greater flux than masculinity, and appropriate feminine gender identities may be less clear (Blair-Loy 2001; Coleman and Hendry 1990). Furthermore, masculine behaviors have

traditionally been more highly esteemed (primarily in the labor market), and girls may be at odds as to whether to adopt these valued characteristics or to retain traditional forms of femininity (Coleman and Hendry 1990). Women and girls are forging new types of gender roles and relationships in their personal and their work lives, but the struggle to do so is not simple (Blair-Loy 2001). Adolescent girls' participation in delinquent subcultures may also be partly a rebellion against conformity to traditional gender expectations (Coleman and Hendry 1990).

In addition to the interplay between gender and life course development, researchers have also largely ignored the extent to which the life course of musicians is tied to gender identity development. A number of other life course researchers have examined the trajectories of men and women in a range of vocations. However, what is studied far less often are individuals in non-professional careers. Many of our understandings of the life course may be specific to those individuals in traditional or professional careers. Musicians' careers are less structured and less formalized, and hence, may provide new understandings of life course development. One might argue that musical careers, especially in indie rock, are less "scripted," and participants might have greater agency than in strongly normative careers with clearly identifiable structures and benchmarks of success and failure (Merton et al. 1957). At the same time, the non-institutionalized nature of informal careers, particularly the lack of career "signposts" within them, may simultaneously complicate navigation within these careers.

<u>Significance of the Study to the Literature</u>

In this study I argue that music is an important milieu in which contemporary adolescents and young adults work out issues related to gender identity. My focus is not on consumers—the typical focus of prior research—but on performers: young people who make important commitments to music performance during the adolescent to young adult transition. Some of

these people envision music as a potential future career, but many of them do not. By studying those who are intensely involved in, and strongly committed to, musical culture, I hope to gain a better understanding about how participation in popular culture influences the process of development, especially the development of gender identity. I explore the extent to which culture operates as a conservative force, immersing participants in a culture built upon conventional gender roles and relationships and encouraging them to develop identities that conform. I also analyze the extent to which music culture operates as a transformative force, encouraging participants to resist, innovate, and create new ways of "doing gender" and new forms of gender identities that may affect lives far beyond the years spent as a musical performer. I also explore how contemporary women and men accomplish a non-normative transition to adulthood. Their meaning, enactment, and accomplishment of adulthood is in contrast to previous generations' expressions of adulthood attainment.

Organization of the Study

In the next chapter, I review prior research in the general areas most influential to this study. First, I review research in the sociology of music, including women's participation in music scenes, ways in which musicians enact gender, and strategies used to make music a site of gender resistance. I review the research literature on the sociology of adolescence, particularly the impact of peer culture and family life on adolescent lives. I present work on the transition to adulthood, with an emphasis on the significance of early adulthood. I review theoretical perspectives on age norms and the extent to which they vary by gender. I then discuss the primary tasks for successful accomplishment of adulthood. I move next to an overview of two dominant perspectives of aging: life stage and life course theories. I discuss the assumptions of both perspectives and weigh which helps better understand musicians' experiences in their

transitions to adulthood. I conclude by justifying my selection of the symbolic interactionist approach to the life course as the most promising framework from which to examine musicians' lives.

In Chapter 3, I discuss my data collection and analysis. I provide an overview of how I recruited musicians for inclusion in this study. I discuss my identity and the extent to which it gave me an insider status within the music scene. I also detail my data analysis. I present my data stories in the next three chapters. In Chapter 4, I sketch the general life course trajectories that enabled musicians to pursue music as a vocation in adulthood. In this chapter, I trace musicians' life course developments chronologically, beginning with experiences in early childhood and adolescence and moving to their transitions to adulthood. In the latter part of this chapter, I focus my attention on the identity construction of musicians. Here I review how being a musician came to be a central aspect of some musicians' identities, while it was wavering for others. I also discuss ways that the musicians' identities were in conflict with other aspects of their selves, particularly their adult and work identities. In Chapters 5 and 6, I examine the gendered life experiences particular to men and women musicians, respectively. A more nuanced picture of life course experiences as musicians is presented with particular attention paid to women's lesser presence in the music scene. In Chapter 7, I conclude with theoretical implications of this work in terms of the life course, gender, and identity.

It is my intention for this dissertation to inform us about more than simply the lives of local-area indie rock musicians. My aim is to illustrate how lives are meticulously planned out for some, while they take unexpected turns for others; how early experiences stick with individuals, how others break with their past to create novel futures, and how still others

recollect their pasts to make sense of their present; and how, despite our best intentions, the

social identities over which we have no control can advantage some and constrain others.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Examining musicians' experiences over the life course can provide insight into the ways in which culture and gender intersect to provide particular life course pathways that allow certain individuals to pursue this nontraditional line of work. Researchers who have investigated music-making typically examine the experiences of musicians in the here and now. There is little work that provides a detailed account of *how* they come to pursue music in adulthood. Musical performance offers a key setting to understand a range of sociological issues of the life course and gender. In particular, it offers a site to understand the meaning of musical performance for the development of young women and men and the role gender may play in it.

My project focuses on pursuing musical performance as a career in early adulthood, the meaning of musical performance for the development of young women and men, and how these processes might differ by gender. To address these questions, it is necessary to review briefly several lines of theoretical literature that have not frequently been conjoined.

In this chapter, I review literature on gender stratification in music, adolescent and adult development over the life course, occupational socialization, and the development of self and identity over the life course. Throughout this review I pay particular attention to gender as an influence on musicians' experiences and on experiences of young adults generally. I begin by examining work scholars have conducted on music in social life, with special emphasis on those who have considered gender as a major factor. I then discuss in more detail research on the adolescent and young adult periods in personal development, the age groups on which my

research is focused. I first discuss adolescence and the influence of peer culture and family during this life period. From here, I move to a consideration of aging and the life course. I concentrate specifically on the transition to adulthood and the primary developmental tasks of early adulthood. Next I review and contrast two competing theoretical perspectives on aging: life stage and life course theories. I then elaborate the theoretical frame I use to examine musicians' life course developments, particularly during their transition to adulthood. I conclude by discussing the contributions my research will make to various subareas of sociology more generally.

The Sociology of Music

Music has historically been studied by musicologists and historians, and only recently by social scientists. In the last decade, social researchers have come to see the social significance of music to daily life and have begun investigating the social aspects of music more thoroughly, and some have emphasized the gendered aspects of gender. The sociological interest in many ways parallels the rise of music as a central feature marking youth culture in the U.S. and many other Western countries. Social scientists, in general, examine three broad aspects of gender stratification in music: men's domination in music, the status of women musicians, and ways traditional performances of gender are both enacted and resisted in music settings.

Male domination

Researchers find virtually all music subcultures, including hard rock, "alternative" rock, independent rock, heavy metal, punk, and conjunto, to name a few, are male dominated (Clawson 1999; Cohen 1997; Leblanc 1999; Rafalovich 2006; Valdez and Halley 1996; Walser 1993). The dominance of men (as musicians and as fans) in music is similar among various genres. While musical genres may be distinctive from one another, the findings and theoretical

implications for various types of music are consistent. For instance, Leblanc (1999) traces the emergence of the punk subcultures in North America and Britain, both heavily rooted in masculine norms. Punk is male dominated in two ways. First, numerically, men outnumber women in punk scenes, constituting two-thirds to three-fourths of punks. Women's representation in punk bands is even more limited, I will show, than in the indie music scene which is the focus of my study. Second, punk norms are highly masculinist. Appropriate methods of dress among punks are masculine, as are behavioral expectations. Early punk was immersed in misogyny, as bands "[put] forth unabashedly sexist lyrics and publicity" (Leblanc 1999:47). Much of the masculinist roots of early punk continue today, as the subculture "remains a predominantly white, masculine youth subculture" (Leblanc 1999:64).

Rock music is structurally a male domain as well (Cohen 1997). First, bands in this genre are filled overwhelmingly with men, and many were constructed with the explicit goal of exclusion of women. Cohen (1997:21), for instance, describes the Liverpool rock scene as one created "apart from women." Everyday life in this music scene is constructed as masculine. For example, conversation in the scene is "insider-ish" and sexist, easing men's entrance and participation. What's more, because creating music could potentially be associated with traditional forms of femininity—being expressive and creative rather than stoic and unemotional—men in this subculture may be even more determined to exclude women's participation, lest women's presence "feminize" the subculture.

Second, men's domination of music also takes the form of their domination of the marketing components of the music industry (Cohen 1997). Men are overrepresented in most business roles in the industry. Men fill a majority of positions in recording and distribution companies (Cohen 1997). They are more likely than women to fill production roles. In contrast

to women, men are also more likely to work in recording studios as producers and engineers. They also outnumber women in securing recording contracts from record labels. Men thus have substantial control over the products and images generated by performers of both genders in musical worlds. As a site of commercialized cultural production, the music industry is highly gender stratified.

Women's Participation

Despite the history of male domination of rock music cultures, women are increasingly participating in them today as both musicians and members of the scene as fans. When they do participate in bands, women are likely to be backup singers in bands. They are often expected to "sing, not play" instruments (Groce and Cooper 1990:224). In the instances when they do play instruments, they perform the less valued and less visible instruments (e.g., the bass in the back of the band) (Clawson 1999). However, women rarely are the guitarists, who traditionally are positioned at the front of the band. Both men and women musicians, in their attempts to explain why women have a narrower range of instrumental specialization, often revert to stereotypical and essentialist notions of gender. Since the bass is part of the rhythm section and in large part lays the musical foundation and (rhythmically and figuratively) "supports" the band, bass players are seen as being more collective in orientation in their affiliation. And because women are considered more selfless and collectively oriented, they are assumed to be well suited to play the bass. Also, because women are supposedly more attuned to the earth and enjoy dancing, they are considered more appropriately suited to play rhythm instruments such as the bass.

Bayton (1997) looks even earlier in the life course to understand why women rarely play the guitar. One of the "first steps in learning the electric guitar force a young woman to break with one of the norms of traditional 'femininity': long, manicured, polished fingernails must be

cut down" (Bayton 1997:39). Another barrier for women's learning to play the guitar comes from friendship networks. The learning of rock music is typically transmitted through informal networks. Again, because rock is male-dominated and elementary-aged and middle-school children often self-segregate in their friendships by gender, girls are quite unlikely to make friends with other children who know how to play (and can informally teach them) the guitar. Cohen (1997) states that British musicians are most often exposed to musical instruments by male relatives. While there is debate as to whether families or friendship networks are primarily responsible for influencing musical instrument interests, the results are the same: boys learn how to play instruments from other men in their social circles, while girls are excluded from such experiences.

In studies of young women who participate in the über-masculine punk subculture (though rarely as musicians), the participants imply that their gender ideologies and their histories of sexual abuse and other violence inspired them to seek out and enter the punk subculture (Leblanc 1999; Roman 1988). Some punk girls (and this is the term used by the members of this subculture, even though some have attained adult ages) state that they reject traditional notions of femininity, in particular the normative standards of beauty and the centrality of romantic relationships in women's lives (Leblanc 1999). Others express a fondness for androgyny in both women and men. As such, they felt comfortable within the (somewhat) gender subversive punk subculture and joined in wholeheartedly. Their interest in punk culture may be the result of their dissatisfaction of the gendered expectations for women drawn from their largely white and middle or working-class backgrounds.

However, upon joining the punk subculture, girls are often subjected to contradictory expectations. "It's hard to be a punk and be a girl," one participant concedes (Leblanc 1999:135).

As punks, they are expected to be tough and adhere to the traditional punk attire and norms. However, as girls, they are expected to retain a degree of femininity, be attractive, and be sexually available to men. As such, it is difficult to manage the contradictory identity of a "punk girl," and within this culture girls rarely achieve status equal to men (Roman 1988). Many are innovative, however, and create new forms of femininity within the culture. These girls successfully merge punk styles with femininity to create a distinctly new identity for them and other punk girls. This gives rise to a new position in the punk subculture, one that is distinctive from mainstream and punk cultures, a position Leblanc calls "trebled reflexivity" (1999:160).

Reminiscent of Collins' (1986) "outsider-within," girls in these positions have a unique perspective on their social worlds. As punks, they challenge mainstream notions of behavior. As girls, they challenge the norms of femininity. And as punk girls, they challenge the masculine norms of the very subculture in which they participated. Other research on young women's participation in punk suggests that the refusal of some to adhere to the most masculine norms in the culture provides an only limited politically effective means of resistance (Roman 1988).

Roman (1988) suggests social class background also influences strategies of resistance in the punk scene. Middle class punks are more likely to engage fully in punk norms and participate in slam dancing (in which punks aggressively push and slam into each other, often getting physically hurt doing so). Working class punks, however, choose to not participate in these physically aggressive acts so as to avoid being targets of physical or sexual targets in the pit, the center of the floor where slam dancing is centered. In general, punk girls carve out their niche in the scene, while often avoiding the most masculine and harmful aspects of the scene. They are punks on their own terms, largely distinct from the masculine version.

In their study of women rock musicians, Groce and Cooper (1990) find, like Leblanc's (1999) punk (largely non-musician) girls, women rock musicians have a contradictory experience in the bands in which they perform. On the one hand, being a woman musician enhances their band's appeal. Both musicians and their audiences seem to prefer mixed-gender bands. However, as women, in their interactions with their audiences as well as with their bandmates, these musicians face a complex set of problems that their male counterparts do not. First, women musicians are well aware of the importance of their stage personas. Their physical appearance is oftentimes more important than their musical performance. When approached by fans after their performances, women musicians are more often complimented for their hairstyles than for their musical abilities (Bayton 1997). Moreover, the audience's sexual intrigue with them made it difficult for them to be treated as "real" musicians. Women musicians are often subject to verbal harassment from their audiences (Bayton 1997). Chants of "show us your tits" are common, suggesting that the only appropriate role from women in this culture is if they are nude and showcasing their bodies to male audiences (Bayton 1997). As a result, they are rarely taken seriously as musicians.

Problems related to gender often arise within the band as well. Men band members often want their women bandmates to portray sexualized identities on stage (Groce and Cooper 1990). Additionally, men songwriters often pen songs with sexist lyrics that women have trouble agreeing to perform. Finally, women musicians often receive lower monetary compensation in comparison to their male counterparts. Thus, research suggests that women have more difficulty pursuing music careers seriously because of sexist responses from both fans and men performers.

Gender Enactments in Music

Despite the male domination of most music subcultures, musicians (not to mention fans) enact gender in a variety of ways. Most often musical performance has the "both/and" quality of simultaneously affirming and challenging gender hierarchies. Cohen (1997) characterizes indie rock as exhibiting a range of masculinities. Men in these bands "suggest a masculinity that is rather soft, vulnerable and less macho, less aggressive and assertive, less threatening or explicit than that promoted by many styles of heavy rock and metal, rap, or funk" (Cohen 1997:29).

Similarly, Schippers' (2000; 2002) analysis of an alternative rock scene finds that gender equality is key to behavior norms in this subculture. Norms in this music scene challenge traditional norms of men's actively pursuing women sexually in bars and clubs (Schippers 2000). During interactions that could be construed as sexual, bar regulars reprimand the men instigators with direct confrontation or through the use of humor to let them know such acts were not acceptable. In contrast to other public settings, women can visit these venues without becoming the objects of men's sexual desire (Schippers 2002).

The primary outcome of this type of social organization is that both women and men are able to engage in *gender maneuvering*—strategies members use to transform the rock culture into one that is not sexist, or at least less sexist than other social arenas (Schippers 2002). Essentially, this setting allows people to do gender in new and alternative ways—that is to say, to construct new meanings and performances of femininity and masculinity. In these social worlds, music provides a fluid arena where multiple forms of gender performances are created and partially legitimated.

The punk subculture, however, adheres to more traditional modes of masculinity. Punk codes and norms are extremely masculine (Leblanc 1999). Punk boys are often hypermasculine,

apparently in order to compensate for challenges to their masculinity. Punks are often tough and willing to engage in physical violence if provoked (Leblanc 1999). Furthermore, authenticity in the punk subculture is equated with those who are best able to approximate the masculinity of the ideal punk through their ideology, behavior, and appearance. Punk authenticity implies that women cannot become "true" punks. However, as previously discussed, punk girls have created a new space for themselves in the masculine subculture. As such, they enact new forms of femininity through their combining "traditional" punk masculinity with aspects of femininity.

Gender Resistance

A comparison of research by in various genres of punk, alternative rock, and indie rock suggests that gender performances vary by genre and that music offers a site for experimentation in constructing new gender identities (Cohen 1997; Leblanc 1999; Schippers 2002). Participation in some music subcultures challenges traditional gender expectations and norms for both men and women. Cohen (1997) argues that the Liverpool rock scene offers "the possibility to explore alternative male behaviors and identities that challenge or subvert existing conventions" (Cohen 1997:30). In some ways, this music scene is also a form of resistance against traditional gender expectations men struggle to meet. Committing oneself to music may lend itself to a distinctive masculine identity, as this lifestyle challenges traditional markers of adult masculinity, such as steady, stable, traditional work as key to masculinity.

Punk girls are often explicitly political in their participation in punk music (Leblanc 1999). Many join as a way to challenge cultural norms of femininity. Furthermore, their participation leads to the creation of new forms of femininity. Even those whose gender rebellions may be ineffective still receive benefits. For these girls, punk is liberating and

provides them "the freedom and strength to [express themselves] in the face of cultural proscriptions against creating rebellions to gender norms" (Leblanc 1999:164).

Participation in music, as fans and particularly as musicians, not only produces change at the individual level, but can engender macro-level change as well. Music cultures can alter acceptable modes of behavior between men and women, as evidenced by Schippers (2000; 2002). Male privilege is not only challenged, but also largely dismantled in alternative rock settings. Men are well aware of what is appropriate and what is not in their interactions with women in these settings (Schippers 2000). For example, Schippers (2002) suggests that the atmosphere or culture of the bars where such music often is performed do not structure gender interactions in them. Rather, these interactions are more influenced by the given night's band lineup and audience. On nights during which alternative (and more feminist) bands perform, men present do not disrespect women (or other men for that matter). On other nights, however, when less feminist and more masculinely-charged bands perform, the crowd's behavior dramatically changes. Male privilege reemerges, in that men no longer give women space and once again revert to objectifying and otherwise disrespecting them.

In sum, scholars demonstrate the ways in which music can complicate normative expectations of gender in some arenas and reinforce them in others. Music can instigate individual level change in participants, particularly in terms of behavior and identity. It can also alter, at least temporarily, the gender interactional norms of behavioral settings (Cavan 1966). Thus, it can produce temporary or perhaps more permanent macro-level effects in which norms are altered.

Up to this point, I have reviewed ways music affects the lives of its participants, many of whom are in the early periods of life. To more fully develop how music is tied to aging, I now shift my focus to social science literature on the life course.

Key Periods over the Life Course

The Sociology of Adolescence

Peer Culture

Although I will show that many who become indie rock music performers began their involvement with music in childhood (see Chapter 4), it is during adolescence and early adulthood that the most intensive involvement with music is likely to take place. Musical involvement becomes intertwined with more generic processes of adult identity development that affects all age peers and that may also diverge by gender.

Adolescence and leisure go hand and hand, as adolescents in the U.S. and other developed countries are assumed to have a greater amount of free time than other age groups and than adolescents had at other points in history. Leisure is also associated with affluence, including the ability to free adolescents from subsistence-related work and to allow them to provide them with resources that permits voluntary consumption. And leisure activities can be considered one aspect of *peer culture*, a "stable set of activities or routines, artifacts, values, and concerns that children produce and share in interaction with peers" (Corsaro and Eder 1990:197). This conception of peer culture implies a more active role of youth. Far from simply imitating the adult world, within the frame of peer culture, youth have the agency to create cultures of their own that may be innovative and contrary to adult cultural forms (Brake 1985; Corsaro and Eder 1990; Messner 2000).

What is distinctive about what Coleman (1961) terms *adolescent society* is that young people have sufficient autonomy in adolescence to create friendships and peer associations not mediated by parents, teachers, or other adults (Corsaro and Eder 1990; McRobbie 1991). Participation in youth culture "provides cognitive material from which to develop an alternative script, kept secret from, and in rebellion with, adult authority" (Brake 1985:191). As such, it allows adolescents to interact with peers outside the confines of the adult world. Increased interaction with peers in school settings is a key point in development in that these social settings provide children their first opportunity to produce their own unique culture (Corsaro and Eder 1995). These peer groups, which may reinforce or challenge messages from parents and teachers, become very influential to many youth of both genders (Brake 1985; McRobbie 1991). In contemporary culture, peer groups are increasingly experienced through media and popular culture forms, music included (McRobbie 1991), and musical performers often become central actors in innovating culture that is rapidly appropriated by youth.

In their study of adolescents, Coleman and Hendry (1990) explain the implications of adolescents' participating in extracurricular and other leisure activities. Extracurricular activities, particularly athletics, are more greatly valued than are academic accomplishments (Brown and Lohr 1987; Coleman 1961; Goldberg and Chandler 1989; Williams and White 1983; Corsaro and Eder 1990). Participation in extracurricular activities helps adolescents become more visible in their social worlds (Eckert 1988; Eder and Parker 1987; Lesko 1988). For one, leisure activities increase the range of choices available to youth (Kinney 1993). These options become opportunities for youth to try out new and various identities.

However, specific leisure activities are pursued by a select few. Participation in activities and hobbies, academic and non-academic alike, may be structured by gender, race, class, and

other social factors (Corsaro and Eder 1990). Sports are historically gendered activities, though girls are increasingly participating in them today (Adams and Bettis 2003; AAUW 1991; Messner 1990; Sabo and Panepinto 1990). Music is a particular leisure pursuit that adolescents use to distinguish one clique from another (Frith 1981). Though peer culture in these settings is created and maintained by peers outside of the adult influence, it often reproduces traditional adult culture and inequality by valuing the same attributes and accomplishments as larger society (Corsaro and Eder 1995).

Gender influences friendships and peer culture. Friendships are strongly segregated by gender (Shrum, Cheek, and Hunter 1988), although cross-gender friendships become more common during the high school years (Hallinan 1990). Girls' friendships were once characterized as more restrictive and exclusive (Lever 1976). However, recent research finds friendships are becoming more similar to each other (Walker 1994).

Youth culture has been historically "concerned with the problems of masculinity" (Brake 1985:163). It allows boys more so than girls to explore wider constructions of their gender identities. One reason may be that girls have been under stricter supervision than have boys (Frith 1978). In this sense, boys have had greater autonomy to explore alternate venues to participate in a wider range of peer activities and, hence, experiment with more forms of masculinity. Recently, however, girl culture has broadened once feminine activities to include aggressiveness, competition, risk taking, fearlessness, and other characteristics typical of boy culture (Adams and Bettis 2003).

Finally, boys and girls use their gender-specific youth culture in competition with one another. Girls and boys often use the same cultural symbols in competing ways in which one group may reinforce while the other challenges normative conceptions of gender (Messner

2000). For example, Messner (2000) illustrates how children have vastly different intentions for and understandings of gender in using the same cultural product, in this case Barbie. As such, peers may intentionally reinscribe popular culture initially patterned by industry or adults with their defiant understandings of gender. For example, Urla and Swedlund (1995) report that some young girls mutilate Barbie's hair or body or play with her as a weapon, rather than as a representation of conventional sexualized femininity.

Family

Not only does peer culture affect what youth value, but parental occupation influences "important qualities" in children (Clausen 1986). Similar to Kohn's (1969) classic research on social class and family, characteristics and orientations that parents value in their children vary by social class. Working class parents seem to prioritize conformity in their children, while middle class parents value self-direction. Other research suggests this influence is not simply a one-way street, as individuals and their families influence one another reciprocally (Coleman and Hendry 1990). These parental preferences may vary by gender of child, although many of the classic studies focused primarily on boys. It also may be the case that such studies are dated and that social class exerts less influence nowadays over socialization of youth.

There is little research on family responses to adolescents' interest in music performance. Although a different genre altogether, the conjunto music culture is intimately structured by family (Valdez and Halley 1996). During childhood and adolescence, women and girls are actively discouraged from learning to play instruments and joining bands. Music playing is seen as incompatible with women's familial responsibilities.

While early childhood socialization in the family may have effects in individuals, later experiences, opportunities, and constraints may be stronger influences for outcomes in

adulthood. With this in mind, a life history analysis "makes it possible to chart the variety of life paths women take and helps uncover the factors, both structural and psychological, that lead them down their divergent paths" (Gerson 1985:38). To examine the various life paths, I now focus on transitions from one life period to the next, with a particular emphasis on young adult experiences.

The Transition to Adulthood

Focus on Young Adult Period and the Transition to Adulthood

My focus is on experiences with music and identity development during early adulthood with an emphasis on gender. Although scholars have broader research agendas today, historical studies of the adult period in the life course have tended to focus more on men than on women (Levinson 1978). This is perhaps due to the assumption of men's lives being more dynamic in their transitions from dependent youths to autonomous providers in adulthood. Women's transitions from early to late life periods, in comparison, have been regarded as less clearly defined, less severe, and less time-bound—and hence less fruitful to analyze (Murtry 1978). Today, of course, women are increasingly participating in the labor force and subsequently included more often in life course research (Shanahan 2000). Researchers also focus more extensively on specific life transitions that normatively tend to occur during the early adult period: establishing a career, marrying and establishing a career, affiliating with a political party, and the like (George 1993; Rindfuss et al. 1987; Shanahan 2000).

My focus is on life course development of musicians, particularly in terms of identity development during the early adult years of life. This period of life is particularly relevant for examining identity development in terms of gender, adult status, and career. First, during this period, individuals are transitioning to a more independent period of life (Shanahan 2000). It is

often the first point in life during which people make their break with the family (Levinson 1978; Levinson and Levinson 1996). Second, this period is seen as a testing-out period of adulthood during which individuals begin to explore and decide upon their future careers, relationships, and families (Keniston 1971; Levinson 1978).

Each society prescribes a set of transition norms to adulthood (Hogan and Astone 1986; Neurgarten et al. 1965). Historically, in developed countries the transition to an adult identity has been characterized by the markers of completing education or training, starting a job/career, leaving home, getting married, and becoming a parent (Shanahan 2000). People typically internalize these normative markers of transition to adulthood, and use them to measure and assess their own lives.

Given the fluidity of adulthood in the contemporary world, however, are these normative timetables important during the transition to adulthood? Scholars have not always agreed on this point. Perhaps yes; because late adolescence is the most intense period of socialization, cultural guidelines should be most influential at that point. Or perhaps no; older generations have stronger age norms than do the young who are more individualistic in their life decisions. Gendered age norms have shifted today as well. In contrast to the past, both men and women feel in control of their lives and able to make "active choices" that impact their futures in ways they favor (Anderson 2005). Likewise, a "new individualization" in the life course has emerged since the 1960s (Shanahan 2000). The typical trajectories to adult status—completing college, starting a career and family—are now "shattered" (Shanahan 2000:671). They are today characterized by "flexibility, choice, and impermanence" which, in turn, makes the attainment of traditional adulthood more imprecise and ambiguous (Shanahan 2000:671). All in all, the transition to adulthood has become more varied, and new pathways to adulthood have developed. Individuals

today may take on a more "planful competence" (Clausen 1991a). Today's young are more invested in making life decisions that are in line with their individual goals and values (Clausen 1991a; Shanahan 2000).

The Major Tasks of Adulthood

The adulthood period, particularly the transition to adulthood, is the key time for identity development (Arnett 2000). The development of identity is, of course, a lifelong pursuit, but it is crucial during young adulthood. And while adulthood attainment is culturally specified, there is substantial agreement as to the life components that are necessary to justify one's attainment of an adult status. The major markers include separating from the family of origin, economic autonomy, starting a career, and starting a family (Arnett 1998; Levinson 1978). Similarly, adulthood is characterized by the accomplishment of major tasks. The accomplishment of adulthood is typically characterized by psychological factors, especially the development of an appropriate adult identity, gaining a sense of independence, and embarking on a career track (Arnett 1998).

1. Identity

In theorizing aging over the life course, influential scholars such as Erikson (1950 and 1968) have argued adolescence to be the key point for identity development. However, recent scholars challenge these assumptions, instead arguing that identity development during the early adulthood years is more important (Arnett 2000). This shift may reflect the cultural pattern in the U.S. and many other developed countries of delayed entry into adulthood, in comparison to other historical eras, in which middle class youth in particular stretch out education and preparation for careers and postpone marriage and parenthood more so than in the past (Fussell and Furstenberg 2005; Hagestad 1988; Kreider and Simmons 2003; Fields 2003).

Researchers also argue over the extent to which identity is mutable. Psychological life span theorists posit that individuals develop a stable self over life with a continuity of identity and core values over time. In contrast, sociological perspectives see individuals as having multiple selves that are prone to change over time (Gergen 1991). In particular, identity development over life focuses on three key themes (Clausen 1986). First, identity is centered on one's individual values as to what is important in life (Clausen 1986). Second, activities to which men and women devote time and effort to can also impact their future adult identities (Clausen 1986). Sociologically-oriented life course theorists see society and personality as mutual influences in lives of individuals, as individuals can be shaped by social contexts as well as the reverse (Kohn and Schooler 1973 and 1982).

Finally, important people whose perspectives individuals value can be key to identity development in adulthood (Clausen 1986). Persons who are emotionally close to young adults have the greatest power to affect identity development, but individuals can also be influenced by more distant cultural figures, such as celebrities, sports stars, political leaders, and the like (Giles and Maltby 2004; Raviv et al. 1995). In occupational spheres, mentors and role models can influence the development of professional and career identities (Peluchette and Jeanquart 2000). Identity is subject to change over the life course, particularly during transitions to subsequent periods of life. However, individuals often engage in identity work in which they realign their current self with the past (Gubrium et al. 1994; Mead 1934).

2. Independence

Theorists argue that the principal task of young adulthood is of moving into the adult world and building a stable life structure (Arnett 2000; Erikson 1950; Levinson 1978). This is primarily accomplished by separating (both physically and somewhat emotionally) from the

family of origin. After successfully separating, individuals are able to fully attain adulthood through completing school, entering the labor market, and starting a family (Erikson 1950). Gaining an independent identity allows young adults to create a life that is coherent and consistent with their individual life interests. This period involves experimentation and testing out of various possibilities. As such, some argue it is a time of "tension" between the individual and society and is the individual's "refusal of socialization" (Keniston 1971:9).

3. Career

Building a career is a third key component to adulthood (Arnett 2000; Coleman and Hendry 1990; Levinson 1978). One of the central characteristics of becoming an adult is starting a career and becoming economically independent (Coleman and Hendry 1990). Although in the past, career-building was more central to the transition into adulthood for men than for women, it is becoming increasingly important or women, who now are likely to work outside the home much of their adult lives and who increasingly are viewing paid work as a career rather than a job (Arnett 1998; Reskin and Padavic 1994). During early adulthood, individuals begin to explore career paths that they anticipate to be satisfying, though they may be initially ambiguous (Levinson 1978). As such, young adulthood is the prime time during which men and women begin trying out unusual work and educational possibilities (Arnett 2000). This period, because it involves exploration, can often include several false starts, and can be a time for disappointment and disillusionment (Arnett 2000). However, because such explorations are provisional, changing paths is still usually feasible during this period, especially if one has not taken on family obligations (Levinson 1978).

Perspectives of Life Transitions to Adulthood

The two most influential theories of aging are (psychological) life stage and (sociologically-oriented) life course theories. While both attempt to explain life outcomes and attaining of adult status, they rest on different assumptions on transitions to adulthood, social structure, and agency. I outline the tenets of each theoretical perspective next.

Stage Theories of the Life Course

Life stage theory conceives of life as comprised of a relatively ordered sequence of stages (Levinson 1978; Levinson and Levinson 1996). These researchers, often psychologists, emphasize age-related maturation and its role in pushing individuals from one developmental stage to the next. Here I focus on the early stages of Levinson's (1978) theory, because nearly all (24 of 28) of my participants fall into the age range Levinson labels the *novice phase*, that is between 17 and 32 years of age. The primary general task of this major life phase is to "create a life structure viable in the world and suitable for the self" (Levinson 1978:72). Creating a viable life structure is made possible through the "components most likely to be central" in life, particularly through work, relationships, and even leisure (Levinson 1978:44). Levinson maintains "leisure may also have a central place, when it serves important functions for the self and is more than a casual activity" (Levinson 1978:44). Music, of course, easily fits into this conceptualization of a central leisure activity.

The major tasks of the novice phase include 1) forming a dream 2) forming mentor relationships, 3) forming an occupation, and 4) forming love relationships. The successful attainment of adulthood is ensured by accomplishing these four tasks. Levinson insists that all of the men in his 1978 sample followed these stages, though some with more success than others and with differing priorities across the four major tasks.

One social characteristic that may particularly mark development is gender. Levinson and Levinson (1996) recognize the distinctive aspects of women's lives and updated their theory in *Seasons of a Woman's Life*. They find that women had the same basic sequence in their life cycles. However, gender has major implications to their lives and their experiences in each stage. Central to their theory is the concept of *gender splitting*, the rigid divisions between men and women in daily life (Levinson and Levinson 1996). Levinson and Levinson contend that gender splitting takes four basic forms: 1) public (men) vs. private (women) domains, 2) within marriage, the homemaker (woman) vs. provider (men) responsibilities, 3) cultural conceptions of "women's" work vs. "men's" work, distinguished by appropriate lines of work for each gender, and 4) the development of feminine vs. masculine identities.

Women, unlike men, must negotiate these divisions when making decisions throughout their lives, particularly in regard to their educational, career, and family decisions. Gender splitting is the strongest when women select homemaking, the domestic sphere, pursue "feminine" lines of work, and develop a traditionally feminine sense of self (Levinson and Levinson 1996). In other cases where gender splitting is weaker, women are more likely to pursue interests in sharp contrast with women of previous generations, their mothers in particular. These women find a greater range of alternatives from which to choose and simultaneously pursue both career and family ambitions (Levinson and Levinson 1996), or they may devote themselves primarily or exclusively to their work. In general, the career women maKe stronger efforts to overcome the splitting of the masculine/feminine dichotomies. They have a more developed Anti-Traditional Figure, as well as a greater range of alternatives to their lives.

Early in *The Seasons of a Man's Life,* Levinson proposes that researchers use a more comprehensive approach in examining social lives:

> We need to encompass both self and society, without making one
>
> primary and the other secondary or derivative (Levinson 1978:47).

While his take on research suggests a sociological bent, his framework fails to incorporate this very proposition. In sum, life stage theory suggests that all individuals, regardless of their life interests and career paths, follow the same sequence at about the same age. It is only by successfully meeting the four tasks that individuals successfully attain adulthood.

Critiques of Life Stage Theories

Levinson's theory and other life span theories are critiqued for a number of failings. Recent scholars, particularly those with a sociological focus on the life course, critique Levinson's work as overly deterministic (Dowd 1990; Elder 1994 and 1998; Gubrium et al. 1994; Hermanowicz 1998b; Holstein and Gubrium 2000). First, life span theories are essentially stage models, postulating an orderly flow of development (Ryff 1985). They are rigid, unidirectional, and restrictive assuming all stages must be followed in sequence (Ryff 1985). Life span theories assume a universal unfolding of development, regardless of time, culture, and identity.

Levinson treats life stages as "objective features" of the social world, ignoring how the stages themselves are socially constructed and can be used as a "descriptive vocabulary" for people to make sense of their lives (Gubrium et al. 1994:2). Stage theories ignore the context of one's historical and biographical background that may influence the life course (Hermanowicz 1998b; Settersten 1999). Contrary to Levinson's theory, however, there is no single sequence of stages that encompass the life course. Likewise, the course and timing of development is not

universal (Dowd 1990). All of the stages Levinson discusses may not be necessary for development through the life course. As it stands, he allows no room for alternate sequencing of the stages or of the possibility of skipping stages altogether. Levinson also neglects the possibility that one might "regress" to earlier stages.

A related failing of life span theory is its reliance on normative expectations which recent scholars consider misleading (Arnett 2000; Hogan and Astone 1986; Shanahan 2000). Not all individuals meet adult expectations at the "right" times (Hogan 1985). Such off-time transitions—for example, becoming a parent earlier than usual or a college freshman later than usual—can have both negative and positive consequences in people's lives (Cooney et al. 1993; Neugarten et al. 1965). Furthermore, in the United States and other Western countries, individuals are increasingly delaying and avoiding marriage and parenthood, and those who make such choices do not meet these theories' criteria of adulthood (Hogan 1985). Consequently, life span theories deny that unmarried, childless individuals have reached adult status. Additionally, early life course theory overemphasizes ways in which the life course is structured *for* individuals (Settersten 1999). There appears to be no sense of agency on individuals' behalf. This perspective also does not account for (much less allow for) the interplay between the individual and structure.

Levinson's original work is criticized as ignoring gender differences over life (Ryff 1985). His theory is developed with a male-only sample, and critics charge that it extends to men's experience and male development only and force readers to "see life through men's eyes" (Gilligan 1979:432). Although recent work by Levinson and Levinson (1996) more explicitly focuses on women's experiences over life, critics suggest that they only half-heartedly incorporate women into the life course and are lacking theoretical power to understand women's

lives (Calasanti and Slevin 2001). For one, this update of life stage theory adopts the "add women and stir" approach to existing research paradigms (Calasanti and Slevin 2001). Men are still the reference group in these studies. More often than not, such perspectives examine the extent to which women fit (or more often, do *not* fit) a model that is built to fit the contours of men's lives.

Life course theories, developed more by sociologists than by psychologists, attempt to overcome some of the criticisms leveled at life stage theories. They do so by elaborating the ways in which social and cultural milieu influence the development of women and men who reach critical transition periods at various historical times and in different social locations.

Life Course Theories

Life course theories are more flexible than life-stage theories regarding the pace and form of development, allowing greater variability over the life course. Of particular significance is that the life course is "tempered by the 'locational' status[es] (e.g., gender, race, cohort) and resources (e.g., social, psychological, or economic) of an individual or group" (Settersten 1999:11). Furthermore, life experiences are particular to the moment in historical time in which they are experienced (Ariès 1962; Riley 1987; Ryder 1965). Culture, the economy, and time-specific cultural norms affect lived experience and options for the future. These approaches assume that people's current position in life is at least partly influenced by previous life experiences and the historical era they experience (Elder 1985; Riley 1987; Ryder 1965). They are also affected by central themes in popular culture that are dominant during certain periods. To be clear, experiences early in life do not determine where one ends up in adulthood; rather, the *responses* to early experiences do. Brannen and Nilsen (2002) argue, for instance, that the

unfolding of time is increasingly chaotic today, and connections between the past, present, and future are more disjointed.

Sociological life course theorists emphasize "agency within structure"—ways the life course is constructed by the interplay of individual agency and the social world, not solely determined by particular life stages (Brandtstädter 2006; Settersten 1999:223). Individual agency is important, but structural constraints are also influential in people's life outcomes (Bruckner 2004; O'Rand 1996a). Levy (1996:83) argues that "life courses are actively constructed *and* passively endured." Similarly, "motives and interests are important for why people do things but do not determine the outcome of their actions" (Bruckner 2004:17). Life course perspectives can shed light on how people react to obstacles and opportunities in making life choices and, as such, provide a link between the complex interplay of agency and structure (Bruckner 2004; Emirbayer and Mische 1998; Hitlin and Elder 2007; O'Rand 1996a, 1996b).

Life course theories also incorporate contextual components of the life course in their assumptions. Life course perspectives differentiate between long- and short-time change. The former is discussed in terms of *trajectories*, and the latter in terms of *transitions* (Elder, Modell, and Parke 1993). While the two concepts are related, "transitions are always embedded in trajectories that give them distinctive form and meaning" (Elder 1985). Transitions, the short-term experiences, have different meanings and consequences depending on the life stage at which they occur. Take job loss, for instance. For young, relatively dependent individuals in the early stages of life, job loss may be more of an inconvenience than a major life disruption (subject to one's social class background). For older, more independent individuals, losing a job can have much more drastic consequences and can be more tightly linked to identity and self-worth.

Last, the life course is comprised of multiple trajectories that are largely interdepedent (Settersten 1999). Work, family, and educational trajectories are distinctive in some respects, but can vary together or, at the very least, influence other trajectories. Major events affecting entire generations—for example, war, depression, or economic prosperity—can leave life-lasting marks on young people who come of age as they occur. Central themes in culture prevalent during an era may have the strongest impact on youth and young adults, who are the primary creators and consumers of popular culture. Cohort theorists (Riley 1987; Ryder 1965) suggest that if young people are going to break sharply from the norms and values of their elders, such a break is most likely to occur during the young adult period.

Individual-level factors may be important in development over the life course. For some people, leisure activities may act as *subjective careers*, a line of activity that may be quite separate from one's occupational life, but strongly linked to one's identity and self-worth (Evetts 1996). Subjective careers need not be career-centered in the traditional sense, in that these activities may be private, hidden from outsiders, and of little or no economic value (Evetts 1996; Stalp 2006; Stebbins 1970). At the same time, such activities are of extreme personal value because of the positive contributions they provide to an individual's sense of self. Currently, the influence of subjective careers as musicians has only been studied only in relation to men (Becker 1963; Stebbins 1971). In general, though, the limited research on subjective careers suggests they are more often undertaken by individuals, usually women, in middle adulthood and midlife (Stalp 2006). Although they may occasionally become occupational careers, that is not the typical trajectory for a subjective career, which can operate as an escape or diversion from other, less intrinsically satisfying careers or from overwhelming demands of family life (Stalp 2006). Subjective careers allow people to maintain another, perhaps more creative and flexible,

identity as they faithfully fulfill the role requirements of other roles in which they may be only partly invested, in terms of identity. However, there is little we know about embarking on subjective careers during early adulthood. Subjective careers, whether pursued over a life or for only a few years at a point of transition, may make transitions to new periods less stressful. They may also help individuals maintain images of multiple selves and possibilities, even in the face of outward conformity to expectations.

A unique aspect of life course studies is that they bring "an awareness of connections between widely separated events and transitions" (Elder 1985:34). Furthermore, analyzing these interconnections allows one to understand how events can alter long-term trajectories. These connections can be made by focusing on the following four factors: "(1) the nature of the event or transition, its severity, duration, and so on; (2) the resources, beliefs, and experiences people bring to the situation; (3) how the situation or event is defined; and (4) resulting lines of adaptation as chosen from available alternatives" (Elder 1985:35). These connections also illustrate development as a lifelong process (Corsaro and Eder 1995). While the early years are sometimes considered crucial to development—and indeed they can be—experiences later in life can be equally, if not more, consequential. At the same time, the meaning of the present is still partially dependent on life history (Elder 1985:34). The life course frame facilitates an examination of the "long term," (the lifelong patterns of life, consistencies in behaviors, and experiences over time), as well as the "short term," (particularly any breaks or major changes that alters individuals' directions).

The life course perspective holds that "multiple influences shape the contours of human growth and development, linkages between social change and lives provide micro-theories or explanations regarding the influence of social change, and people represent both the agent and

consequence of the changing life paths" (Elder and Caspi 1998:77-78). Additionally, this perspective captures the complexities of socialization and development across generations and different historical periods. In his work on cohort analysis, Ryder (1965) theorizes that key events experienced by a cohort have the capacity to impact the entirety of their lives. Such events give each cohort its "distinctive character" that flavors their current and future life experiences. In particular, music represents a cohort effect in that it marks generations. Although less concrete than historical events such as wars or depressions, music still has the potential to mark generations. Consider music of the 1960s. We tend to think that the themes of this music—the protesting, anti-war anthems—sticks with the generation that came of age during that time for the rest of their lives. The music people grow up with marks their concerns, their political interests, and their life perspectives. And as music shifts with each generation, so do the defining elements of each generation.

The recent cohort of musicians has experienced music that was somewhat more open to participation by women (Clawson 1999). While age and context is important in understanding one's life experience, what is often overlooked is how historical events endure with people throughout their lives, influencing their world perspective, their values, and potentially their actions.[9]

Occupational Socialization over the Life Course

In addition to cohort effects, one additional facet of life that particularly influences people's experiences in the work place is occupational socialization. My research focuses on musical performers, many of whom pursue music as an occupation, or did so at some point in

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[9] Scholars discuss the Age, Period, Cohort Problem in previous life course studies (Alwin and McCammon 1999; Glenn 1976; Oppenheim et al. 1973; Palmore 1978; Rodgers 1982; Smith et al. 1982; Wilson and Gove 1999). While aspects of these issues to inform my work, untangling the APC Problem is beyond the scope of this project.

their lives. For contemporary people, musicians included, socialization does not occur only in childhood. Scholars claim adult socialization may have as great an impact on people's lives as early events do (Brim and Wheeler 1966; Lutfey and Mortimer 2006; Mortimer and Simmons 1978). For one, individuals experience greater changes (in terms of numbers and their intensity) in adulthood than during the childhood years (Brim and Wheeler 1966; Cottrell 1969). The majority of adult socialization occurs in the context of formal organizations, such as professional schools, the workplace, the military, organizations, and professions (Hermanowicz 1998a and 1998b; Mortimer and Simmons 1978). The structure of these organizations, professional schools in particular, socialize the inductee to internalize career norms and learn new roles they will take in the near future. They also shape career expectations and prep individuals with appropriate work identities (Becker et al. 1961; Hermanowicz 1998a and 1998b; Merton et al. 1957). At the same time, peers in these settings act as powerful socialization agents that augment the efforts of the formalized institution (Brown 1991; Rosow 1974; Ventimiglia 1978). Scholars link these aspects of adult socialization to the life course. When the socialization culminates in crisis, individuals may respond by shifting to lesser goals or perhaps changing their career altogether (Haug and Sussman 1967; Brim and Wheeler 1968; Hiestand 1971).

Because nontraditional careers, such as those in music, are less formalized and have fewer formal organizations for training, these careers do not have normative benchmarks that help to define good and bad progress or success and failure. Hence, occupational socialization may be more informal, more tied to peer-to-peer socialization with others in this line of work. Some reconceptualizations of socialization address these issues. For instance, Long and Hadden (1985) emphasize the "showing" component of socialization. Showing involves experienced members introducing novices to the new social world, demonstrating what skills and

competencies are required for success and initiation to the world, and stressing accountability (Long and Hadden 1985). This conception implies the showing component of socialization as applicable to careers with a less formal training structure. It also suggests the role of mentoring in assisting novices to successfully enter these worlds (Levinson 1978; Long and Hadden 1985).

In Kanter's (1977) discussion of the ambiguous jobs in management, she highlights the role mentors play in helping new managers deal with uncertainty on the job. Doing so assists the new employees in securing their positions and convincing others that they are competent in their jobs. Mentoring relationships also has effects on protégés' identities (Wright and Wright 1987). Mentors bolster their mentees' self-confidence and may facilitate new talents in them. Among men who are interested in artistic and creative careers, but simultaneously working in traditional jobs to pay the bills, mentors are crucial in assisting their protégés to deal with the resulting conflicts. For individuals in these situations, having mentors ease their transition to a higher commitment to their creative endeavors (Levinson 1978). Researchers have illustrated the significance of mentoring relationships, and they seem particularly essential for success in nontraditional careers.

Identity Over the Life Course

Theoretical work on transitions from one life period to the next also emphasizes the centrality of identity construction during these processes (Arnett 2000; Calasanti and Slevin 2006; Erikson 1959 and 1968; Gove 1985; Hogan and Astone 1986; Ryff 1985). As individuals age, their social identities undergo drastic change (Calsanti and Slevin 2006). Historically, theorists suggest that adolescence is the period of the most intense dynamic identity transitions (Erikson 1968). This may be unique to industrialized societies, since these societies provide a prolonged adolescent period in contrast to other worlds and historical time periods. However,

recent scholars argue instead that the young adulthood period is more prone to drastic identity change and negotiation (Arnett 2000).

Other theorists, particularly those writing from a social psychological perspective, stress the role of social contexts in the development of self and identity (Brake 1985; Mead 1934). They construe identity as the "who" or "what" one is, often the most public aspect of self. In contrast, the self-concept may be a more appropriate concept for a life course study. In contrast to sociological understandings of identity, the self-concept is its "sum total" of who one is (Gecas and Burke 1995). It is the continuity of the person, one that is "composed of various identities, attitudes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences … in terms of which individuals define themselves" (Gecas and Burke 1995). Blumer's (1969) approach to identity underscores identity as a product of social interaction. Hence, various identities can be "imagined and tried out" (Collins 1988:269, Gergen 1991).

Of the social psychological perspectives of self and identity, the orientation best suited for this study is the biographical-historical approach to the self. This orientation considers the temporal aspects of the self, emphasizing how identities unfold over time (Gecas and Burke 1995). Likewise, the sociological biography includes both one's past and one's imagined futures (Hewitt 1989). The biographical-historical approach to the self utilizes the biographies as "life stories that reflect the disposition, intent, and memory of the storyteller and, like history, are often rewritten" (Gecas and Burke 1995:44). With this approach, the priority is not on the accuracy of recollected details from one's past, but in understanding how individuals make sense of their lives and attempt to create continuity and coherence of them. Likewise, individuals decide on their personal biography by assessing their life situations and meanings of success and failure (Hatch 2000; Hewitt 1989). These definitions may be a product of socialization and the

development of self. Vygotsky (1978) suggests individuals internalize aspects of social structure in their developing a self.

Of course, identity in the general sense is often bound with gender identity in contemporary society (Gecas and Burke 1995). Goffman's (1959) classic work argues identity to be a product of the situation. Accordingly, music settings may act as settings that invoke the enactment of innovative identities and may share this characteristic with other sites of performance (e.g., theater, dance). In a similar vein, Butler (1990) argues that gender identity exists only through performance. Rather than having a core gender identity, individuals attempt to convince others (not to mention themselves) of their gender identity through their behavior, dress, talk, and other performances. Butler's (1990) work is particularly relevant for musicians since they consciously perform and sometimes also explicitly manipulate gender identities. Rock music is a cultural site in which gender traditionally has been performed with reference to masculine norms (Coates 1997). When women enter these worlds, they are constrained by the rules of gender performance created primarily by men. Moreover, Cohen (1997) argues that music scenes are physical sites in which gender is performed. In rock music scenes, men "do not just act out buy physically embody ideas about masculinity" (Cohen 1997:34).

For the most part, gender scholars today agree that there is variation within the categories of both femininity and masculinity, and there is no single form of each (Connell 1987; Connell 1995; Kimmel 2000). Variable forms of masculinity, and femininity, may exist simultaneously in a cultural arena and compete for dominance (Connell 1987). The concept of performative gender identity concept allows for analysis of multiple aspects of identity that range from the very masculine to the very feminine and include a bending of the two. It also allows for the possibility

that gender performances vary over time and place and may vary in the degree to which they are linked to one's core self (Goffman 1959).

For both women and men, then, gender is less structured and more flexible in the world of music performance than other social settings. Perhaps this is true of all forms of performance. Participants in the music world are more critical of traditional conceptions of gender (Schippers 2000 and 2002), inviting both performers and audiences to enact gender in nontraditional ways. There is room for stretching the boundaries of and testing out new forms of gender identities. Nevertheless, there are structural limits on what types of performances are acceptable within particular cultural contexts. While music and other performing arts may allow individuals to play with contemporary gender roles more so than conventionally structured careers, gender still sets parameters on what will be considered credible performances. Audiences, promoters, booking agents, and other bandmates all make judgments on what are acceptable gender performances. Considerations of gender not only complicate identity enactments, as discussed here, but also complicates understandings of the life course, an issue I discuss next.

Culture, Gender, and the Life Course

While early scholars interested in aging and the life course take a biological, time-ordered perspective to aging, sociologically-oriented scholars pay more attention to the influence of external forces, particularly culture and peers, both of which affect the pace and direction of development. Aging, though biological, is significantly impacted by social factors. Throughout history, life stage distinctions, ages of appropriate transitions to subsequent age statuses, and age norms have varied. The meaning of being a certain age also changes over time and place (Furstenberg et al. 2004). As such, aging is culturally constructed, not universal and immutable

(Arnett 2000). The timing of development, the dilemmas that one faces at certain life stages, and norms about appropriate ages for certain key transitions all are culturally defined.

Theorists argue the life course is undergoing a "process of destandardization, both in terms of the prescribed order of its phases but also in terms of the linearity of its progress" (Brannen and Nilsen 2002:514). Prescribed social transitions are being transformed in contemporary culture. Adolescence lasts longer and, as a result, adulthood is delayed. Because individuals often have not met the traditional criteria of adulthood, they do not see themselves either as adolescents or entirely as adults (Arnett 2000). While this liminal period can be stressful, it can also have positive consequences. Young adulthood today is:

> A time of life when many different directions remain possible,
>
> when little about the future has been decided for certain, when the
>
> scope of independent exploration of life's possibilities is greater
>
> (Arnett 2000:469).

The weakening of cultural constraints culminates in increased agency of individuals in their lives (Giddens 1994; Shanahan 2000).

Not only does culture affect the life course, but scholars also recognize that the life course diverges by gender (Hogan and Astone 1986). With the delay and avoidance of family responsibilities today (Kreider and Simmons 2003; US Census 2005), scholars argue that the life course is less gendered today than in the past. Others, however, suggest that the life course continues to be gendered.

Age norms regarding appropriate ages for attaining adult status have historically impacted women's and men's lives differently. These norms vary by gender, in that the appropriate ages for completing one's education, starting a career, starting a family have

diverged by gender (Hogan and Astone 1986; Neurgarten et al. 1965; Neurgarten and Datan 1973; Neurgarten and Hagestad 1976). Likewise, women experience more role transitions than do men, leading to increased stresses for women but also perhaps better developed mechanisms for adapting to transitions (Hatch 2000). Men are the "true planners" in mapping out their futures, having strong and secure ideas as to what they imagine their futures hold (Brannen and Nilsen 2002). Women, in contrast, have fewer and less clear expectations and may find it difficult to decide what is and is not preferable (Coleman and Hendry 1990). Women are less apt to place their own aspirations at the center of life planning but rather to develop contingent plans that accommodate the needs and interests of others.

In comparison to previous generations, today's young adults have more open-ended life plans (Anderson et al. 2005). However, studies suggest this willingness to be more fluid in determining life outcomes is somewhat stronger for men than women (Anderson et al. 2005). Women's less well-developed expectations may have to do with the gendered divisions of what is appropriate for women and men (Levinson and Levinson 1996). Men and women have different social meanings of age and, hence, different guidelines to measure their progress in life (Hagestad 1991).

However, the "destandardization" of the life course results in life transitions becoming less prescribed for all contemporary young people (Brannen and Nilsen 2002; Furstenberg et al. 2004). Changes in the social structure may make gender less influential over the life course (Brannen and Nilsen 2002), as both women and men in contemporary society are devoting more hours to work than in the past and women have moved into many professions with well-defined, timed benchmarks and rigid demands for heavy work hours that once were reserved exclusively for men (Reskin and Padavic 1994; Shanahan 2000)

In sum, gender works differently in the life course today than it did in previous decades. However, these changes likely do not mean that gender has no consequence to the lives of men and women today. Gender may have a somewhat less deterministic effect in young people's lives today, though it clearly still impacts lives across the life course.

Theoretical Frame: Symbolic Interactionist Approach to the Life Course

Given the focus of this project, the most promising theoretical frame to examine issues of life course development of musicians is the symbolic interactionist approach to the life course. Contemporary researchers suggest that the symbolic interaction perspective "provides a useful and important theoretical foundation" for life course studies (Hatch 2000:181). Perspectives in this line move away from life course stages and toward the interpretive processes (Gubrium et al. 1994). Blumer's (1969) foundational perspective of symbolic interaction borrows from Mead (1934), applying each of his central premises particularly to the life course. First, multiple meanings for the life course exist. These meanings emerge through interaction. The life course is open to interpretation by the individual, as the meanings of the life course emerge from interaction with others (Holstein and Gubrium 2000).

Biographical work entails individuals selecting and highlighting what they consider defining aspects of their pasts (Gubrium et al. 1994). Individuals, in an attempt to create a coherent life story, selectively draw from the past to understand their present (Maines et al. 1983). Doing so enables one to maintain a consistent and stable self-concept (Unruh 1989). Bielby and Kully's (1989) concept of *self narratives* highlights the attempts individuals make to portray their lives as having direction, as opposed to being the result of chance, in an attempt to construct a stable identity.

Theorists argue that transitions to adulthood are of particular interest since turning points are likely to occur in this time period (Settersten 1999:141). *Turning points* are times in life where trajectories make major (and presumably permanent) shifts (Denzin 1987; Settersten 1999). Whether the turning points are actual shifts or simply perceived as significant is irrelevant (Clausen 1993), since the perception of a shift in and of itself creates new possibilities and the potential for new identities.

Essentially, this sociological perspective assumes that individuals *actively* assign meaning to their past experiences (Holstein and Gubrium 2003). Furthermore, this perspective focuses on how individuals "assemble and give form to and *use* images of the life course to make sense of their lives" (Holstein and Gubrium 2000: ix). Sociological life course theories allow for agency in the life course. Far from being passive actors over the life course, individuals interact with their environment and can be proactive in constructing the life course (Brandtstädter 2006; Hitlin and Elder 2007; Settersten 1999). However, several theorists note that individuals, while agentic in constructing their life courses, do so "within the opportunities and constraints of history and their social circumstances" (Elder 1994 and 1998; Marshall and Mueller 2003:11). Lastly, this perspective is less deterministic and instead depicts the life course as more open ended (Dowd 1990).

Conclusion

Despite its promise as a lens for understanding the lives of young women and men musicians, life course developmental theory has rarely been applied to the study of music. Although earlier versions of life stage and life course theories are critiqued as masculine-biased and constructed solely around lives of men, newer versions of life course developmental theory provide frameworks for understanding similarities and differences in the experiences of women

and men. These theories also allow for greater incorporation of aspects of social structure affecting youth at particular times and places, such as persistent gender stratification in the world of music.

Past research on musicians focuses largely on commercial aspects of the musical world or the social organization of musical bands. From these studies we know quite a bit about how men still dominate musical performance and how music-making is still a "man's world" (Clawson 1999; Cohen 1997; Leblanc 1999; Schippers 2002; Valdez and Halley 1996). But other important aspects of gender in the world of music still are ignored. We know little about life course trajectories of women and men who perform music, including how they came to be musical performers. And we know even less about how the experience of performing music affects the life course trajectories of the young women and men who make this a major focus of their lives in the influential young adult period. Gender can influence one's opportunities and placement as a musical performance, but being a musical performer, I will argue, has the potential to influence one's development, including one's development as a woman or a man, in lasting ways that stretch far beyond the young adult period.

To understand the complex impact of musical performance on the lives and gender identities of youth, it is important to discover the subjective meanings that they attach to their involvement in music. By exploring the origins and subjective meanings of their involvement in music, I expect to be able to better understand how individual agency and social structure are intertwined in a cultural arena that is especially salient for many during the young adult period, thus addressing age-old but persistent questions in sociology and social psychology. I also expect to gain a more nuanced understanding of how gender—both masculinity and femininity— operate in the particular social arena of indie rock music, which has been studied far less than

other forms of music. This music has a reputation for being more fluid and flexible with regard to gender, and more gender-equitable than other forms of music such as hard rock or punk that are clearly male dominated and built upon a masculinist culture. Comparing and contrasting the experiences of women and men who participate heavily in this world will allow me to assess not only how gender affects opportunities and constraints, but also how the experience of musical performance is bound up with the formation and transformation of gender identity.

In this chapter, I have reviewed research on stratification in music, adolescent and adult development, and identity construction over the life course. The lines of literature presented in this chapter may, at first glance, appear disconnected from one another. In most research up to this point, they indeed have been. However, in my study I draw on this literature to understand an unexamined aspect of social life: the life course trajectories of young women and men who pursue musical performance in indie rock bands in early adulthood. In the remaining chapters, I will briefly refer to ideas presented in this chapter.

In the coming chapters, I will also be suggesting a trajectory that musicians tended to follow. Their trajectories are not entirely uniform, as they diverge on the basis of gender, adolescent experiences, and parental complications. Music performance is not a selective or a structured "career." At the same time, while musicians' trajectories cannot be understood from the traditional occupational socialization literature, there is still a structure to their experiences and similarities in their life course trajectories. There are somewhat normative patterns and rules learned, not in formalized training programs, but in peer contexts.

Frith and Goodwin (1990) see music as a window to examine social phenomena beyond simply music. This project adheres to their viewpoint by using music as a means to deepen current understandings of gender, identity, work, and the life course. At its most basic level,

music, as a site of cultural production, is a key site for examining the various ways gender influences experiences in wider cultural settings. First, this study uncovers how gender affects access and participation in music over the life course. While it is a leisure pursuit for some and a career objective for others, music, despite its informal career status, is not equally open to all. Second, this study illustrates the various ways in which gender is enacted, recreated, and challenged by both women and men in this setting. The cultural site of indie rock provides particular tools for individuals to play with gender in nonnormative ways. Third, it addresses the ways in which participation in music affects gender identity development during adolescence and young adulthood. It also provide clues as to how these experiences may stick with the musicians throughout the remainder of their lives, forever altering their understandings and enactments of gender in future settings. Fourth, it illustrates how commitment to music in early adulthood is influenced by gender. My analysis highlights ways gender can act as an opportunity or a constraint in pursuing music. Last, this study addresses ways in which individuals make sense of their lives and the meaning gender has in them. To truly understand experiences of gender in the indie rock scene, I use the narratives of the musicians themselves. Their stories illustrate the ways they negotiate the tightrope of gender in music.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND DATA

<u>Entering the Field</u>

Upon moving to Athens for graduate school in 1999, I immediately began attending shows at local venues. Little did I know, five years later, I would begin developing this leisure interest into a sociological research project. In many ways, my attendance at local shows proved invaluable in developing this project, as it was an early form of participant observation and introduction to the field (Geertz 1973b). Although these initial outings are not an explicit part of my analysis, they were essential in helping me gain familiarity with the scene, norms, and people involved in the local music scene.

The data I use to answer the questions posed in this dissertation came directly from the local music scene in Athens and reflect a life history, narrative approach. This approach is well-suited for this particular study of the life course trajectories of musicians. First, I am interested in their experiences over the life course that the musicians see as key to their pursuing music in adulthood. Second, rather than examine the objective features of their life histories, I am primarily interested in, as are most life course researchers, the musicians' reactions to their experiences. Third, the symbolic interactionist approach to this study requires a focus on how the musicians create meaning and coherence in their lives.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the methods and data I use in this project. I start with a discussion of life course theoretical underpinnings that suggest an appropriate methodology for this project. I discuss my identity, as it pertains to the data collection. I illustrate

my role as an outsider-within and the benefits that developed from this position. I then discuss the significance of the setting in which I conducted this study. I briefly discuss the historical significance of Athens, Georgia as an ideal setting for a study of musicians. From here, I move to a discussion of my data collection procedures. I discuss the criteria for inclusion in this study and the methods I went through to about participants. I then describe the characteristics of my sample. I conclude with a discussion of my data analysis.

Theoretical Models for Life Course Studies

Elder and Caspi (1990) outline two models for studying the effects of particular historical events on the life course. Settersten (1999:13) argues that the two models are "helpful in thinking about the connections between earlier and later experiences more generally." In Model A, a specific life "outcome" is the focus. Researchers attempt to link past events to one's outcome in recent life. Model A is inherently retrospective. Researchers using this frame "move backward through time, building into our model past events that may be directly linked to our outcome" (Settersten 1999:13). This model demands a retrospective study to appropriately analyze present-day outcomes.

Model B focuses on a specific event experienced at an earlier point in life. The model then traces how life subsequently unfolds after this event, both in terms of immediate proximal outcomes and distal outcomes much later in the life course. By using this model, researchers attempt to understand the ways a specific life experience "plays itself out over time" (Settersten 1999:14). Model B could theoretically be accomplished using a longitudinal design in which individuals with a similar starting point or experience are followed over time to see how these events unfold in the future. At the same time, Model B could be used in retrospective studies.

However, it would require finding a population that had the experienced the same event at the same approximate period in the past.

While some consider Model B to be superior in attempting to understand the "full range of consequences" brought about by the experience (Settersten 1990:14), I instead structure my study using Model A. First, my focal point is the current life situation of a particular population: individuals who are pursuing music as a career in early adulthood. Model B would require me to investigate individuals with particular early experiences in common—people who would likely be in different places in adulthood, as not all of them would necessarily end up pursuing music as a career. Second, my focus is on life outcomes, particularly career decisions of pursuing music. In this sense, I am most interested in examining ways these outcomes are linked to early events, as Model A requires. Last, Model A is compatible with the symbolic interaction theoretical orientation. Allowing people to piece together the entirety of their lives, how they see their past as linked to their current situations, allows participants to engage in more meaning-making than would be allowable using Model B.[10]

Self

As is the case with all qualitative research, my identity likely had an effect on my data collection. Here I discuss my identity and presentation of self I used to gain access to and trust of prospective participants in the scene. I show how my outsider-within status provided me entrée to this population.

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[10] Model B is more appropriate for issues beyond the scope of my study. In particular, an alternative study using this model would likely answer the following research questions. First, the model could easily examine how nonmusician individuals with early experiences similar to those of the musicians opt out of a music career trajectory. Second, a focus on how early life experiences manifest in the future would lead to an interesting comparison of musicians and non-musicians. Though this is not the focus of this research project, future studies would benefit in adopting this framework to provide a deeper understanding of these aspects of musicians' life course trajectories.

Particular populations are more difficult to gain the trust of than are others. Gaining entrée, developing rapport, and establishing trust are key to obtaining reliable data. Musicians, of course, are not as difficult to access as are vulnerable populations such as prisoners or drug dealers (Adler 1993). However, musicians are in some ways a "hidden" population that is likely not accessible to all. Early on, I realized I did not have complete insider status to this population from the onset (Baca Zinn 1979; Hertz 1997; Stalp 2006). I did, however, have much in common with the musicians, despite my not being actively involved in the production or performance of music.

Similar to the musicians with whom I spoke, music has been an important part of my life since early childhood. I play a few instruments and used to perform in bands and write songs of my own. In these ways, I could relate to their backgrounds and stories of their early experiences with music. However, I was not a musician at the time of my data collection, a potential barrier with which I had to deal.

In "Flirting with Boundaries," May (2003:447) questions how his identity may "negatively affect" his research on the party scene in Athens, Georgia. During the early part of my data collection, I began wondering the same about myself. I was worried that I was too much of an outsider and that I would not be able to build rapport with the musicians, much less even get them to agree to an interview. To overcome the potential obstacles of gaining access, I adopted several tactics to demonstrate my familiarity with the scene and begin to develop trustworthiness with them. In particular, I presented a particular identity to the musicians, though not necessarily a false identity. For instance, I attempted to demonstrate my familiarity with the local music scene. Other times, however, the musicians made assumptions about me, assumptions that I believe helped bring me closer to the musicians and get better data from them.

Inevitably, either at the start or tail end of the interview, musicians would typically ask if I was a musician myself. I informed musicians that I did perform in bands in the past and though I still play music on my own purely for leisure, I am not a "real" musician. Other times musicians would assume I was a musician. Several musicians, after our greetings, would ask me, 'What band are you in again?' After two different interviews, these musicians told me of friends of theirs who were looking to start a band and asked if I were interested in auditioning.

Although not a musician myself, I am particularly fond of many local bands in Athens. I regularly attended shows and have attended and volunteered for AthFest, the yearly summer music festival in Athens, for the four years prior to this project. Before interviewing the musicians in my sample, I made sure to become somewhat familiar with their music. I had also seen all but one of the bands perform before interviewing them. I attempted to establish myself as an insider to the music scene, primarily as a fan.

Perhaps most centrally, I would inform the musicians from the onset that I was a freelance music writer whose work was published in *Flagpole*, the local newsweekly in Athens. During the early part of my data collection, I wrote album reviews and occasional stories on local bands for the paper. In my email correspondences with musicians, I would send them links to my work, archived on the *Flagpole* website. By doing so, I was attempting to establish that I was not simply "some academic" who wanted to study them, but an insider who was familiar with the scene and their music in particular. This strategy was successful in most cases.

In sum, my status was that of an "outsider-within" (Collins 1986) to this scene, an aspect of my identity that makes this project plausible in terms of understanding the scene and obtaining access to (as well as the trust of) my participants. I was not a true insider, a benefit in other ways. Because I had not participated actively in bands to the extent my participants did, they were

likely to be explicit in their telling of "how things are done" in bands. As such, I obtained richer data.

The Significance of the Setting

Using the temporal and contextual components of the life course perspective allows me to pay particular attention to musicians' location in history. With this framework, I am able to situate people contextually—in a given place and time in history. At the same time, I am able to take the unique dynamics of their context into account. For instance, young musicians today experience a world already impacted by the 1970s "moment of opportunity for women," a time scholars believe initiated the inclusion of women in bands in more central roles (Clawson 1999:195). Also, the 1990s were marked by two distinct movements of women in music. First, the Lilith Fair was the first music festival celebrating women in music. Though the tour was promoted as including a diverse array of music by women, some critiqued it as including only mellow and, in a sense, traditionally feminine artists. Second, the Riot Grrrl movement, led primarily by Kathleen Hanna and Bikini Kill, promoted louder, more aggressive music by women (not to mention a more active role in music for women) that had been characterized only by men up to this point (Leonard 1997). That said, participation in bands today may be quite different from the past given the lived histories of today's musicians.

I also situate the musicians in a specific place: Athens, Georgia. In her analysis of subcultural identities in music culture, Kruse (1993:33) argues that "college music is associated not just with college radio, but with particular geographic sites: the earliest and most famous scene was Athens, Georgia from the late 1970s through the mid-1980s." Contrary to her suggestion that the scene diminished during the later part of the 1980s, Athens is still clearly the music hub in the Southeast.

Recently claiming the top stop on *Rolling Stone*'s 2003 ranking of college music towns and profiled in Jenny Eliscu's (2005) *Schools that Rock*, her guide to the U.S.'s best college music scenes, Athens has a reputable music scene known the world over. Athens' biggest historic claim to fame is R.E.M. Other influential bands of late, such as Neutral Milk Hotel and Of Montreal, both of which have national followings and receive the attention of mainstream press, got their start in Athens. In addition, a number of up-and-coming bands call Athens their home. There are, by my estimate using *Flagpole's Guide to Bands*, approximately 250 bands that reside in Athens, a majority of which fit under the umbrella term "indie rock."

Generally speaking, Athens is a music-centered town. For a town of its size, there are numerous venues in which bands perform, several recording studios, and an overall heavily music-centered atmosphere. The history and status of Athens only make this setting ripe for a study of musicians, but also suggest ways geographical contexts may play a role in social life.

Interviews

I used a purposive sample of locally available musicians for this study. In my recruitment of musicians for this study, I intentionally tried to oversample women. With the exception of two bands, I literally contacted every local band I knew of in which women were members. Overall, my response rate was good. However, due to the scant numbers of women in the local scene, there are more men than women in my sample. Because of limited resources, I was restricted to local bands for this study. Nevertheless, given the ranking of best college music town, Athens was an excellent site for this study.

Musicianhood, as will be discussed in depth in Chapter 4, is a subjectively-defined occupation. However, I set specific criteria for inclusion in my study. The parameters of my criteria by no means suggest that musicianhood is attained only through exhibiting these

characteristics. I, however, wanted to ensure musicians included did have a lengthy experience with their bands and would have particular experiences to discuss in the interviews.

My criteria included the following. Musicians had to be members of current bands listed in the *Flagpole Guide to Bands*. This is a yearly publication that requires bands themselves to submit a description and short biography of their band. The bands in which musicians performed must have released at least one CD recording. Their band must have been currently "active," conceptualized as one that rehearses with the full band regularly, performs in public venues regularly, and occasionally goes on tour. I did not limit my sample to include only the lead performers in the bands or primary songwriters. Instead, I included all members of bands, regardless of their instrument of specialization or contribution to songwriting.

I initially planned to recruit two broad categories of musicians that fit these criteria: 1) those who were intensely committed to music and were pursuing it as a career and 2) those who participated purely for leisure purposes with no intention to make a career in music. I soon realized these categories were not clear-cut, nor were musicians completely firm as to whether their career plans focused entirely on performing music. I shifted my conceptualization to one of a continuum of commitment, rather than an either/or phenomenon.

My recruitment process encompassed two main techniques. I recruited most participants through the online networking tool, MySpace.com. This site, created by in 2003, is a social networking tool used by nonmusical populations to build friendship networks and meet potential dating partners. MySpace has expanded to include independent artists as of late, the most common of which are musicians, comedians, and filmmakers. Most bands today use MySpace as a tool to promote their band and increase their fanbase and contacts. After creating their band's profile, the bands can post MP3s their music, add a tour calendar, and provide links to buy their

merchandise. One of my participants, Nico Cashin of Psychic Hearts, raved that "MySpace is a revolution for music." MySpace.com eases contacts and opportunities that would otherwise not be possible. Bands often cited MySpace as making touring a reality for them. For instance, bands often send messages to their nationwide network of "friends" asking if anyone can help book a show in a particular city or provide overnight housing for them.

In my initial contacts to the bands through their MySpace websites[11], I typically introduced myself as a graduate student doing a dissertation on musicians. I then briefly explained the sorts of questions I would ask, estimate the time length, and then asked if they would be willing to meet with me. I concluded by mentioning my familiarity with their band (but only when I was familiar with it) and by providing links to my writing archived on *Flagpole*'s website. I received responses from nearly all bands I contacted. Most expressed their interest in being included in the project and were "flattered" I wanted to include them in my study. Some of them denied my requests due to their hectic schedules, but most set up times to meet with me.

My second recruitment technique was to approach band members at their shows. I quickly learned this was not the best approach due to the nature of the setting. Band members were typically distractingly occupied on nights they were performing. They were responsible for loading their own equipment onto the stage, doing sound checks before performing. They then had to unload their equipment from the stage quickly to allow the next band ample time to set up their equipment and perform sound checks. On the occasions that I did approach bands in public to request interviews, they most often expressed interest. They typically refused to set times for interviews and instead asked me to email them (at their band's personal website or, again, through MySpace) to schedule the interviews.

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[11] See the Appendix for a sample message in its entirety.

In total, I conducted interviews[12] with 38 musicians—10 women and 28 men. If they so desired, I used the real names of the musicians and their bands. This, of course, was approved by the UGA's Institutional Review Board. The interviews were semi-structured and intensive and taped in their entirety. The interviews lasted between 55 and 290 minutes, and the average interview was 75 minutes. I interviewed the musicians in places they felt most comfortable. In most cases, this was in their homes, coffee shops, or restaurants. I interviewed a few at their practice spaces, immediately after their band rehearsals.

Life course interviews often take one of two forms: retrospective and prospective orientations (Settersten 1999). In general, I adopted the retrospective account method, though the tail end of my interview schedule did touch on prospective orientations. I was primarily interested in how these individuals were able to pursue music over other career options. By focusing on their past experiences, mainly in music, but also in academic settings, athletics, and other work settings, I was able to gauge how the musicians were recollecting on their pasts to make sense of their current situations.

Common critiques of the retrospective account hinge on the accuracy of the stories told by participants. Since participants in these studies discussed experiences long past, there is the possibility that their stories may be inaccurate, imprecise, or invented (Settersten 1999). However, these problems became less relevant to this study given the orientation of it. The symbolic interaction component of my methodology required participants to engage in meaning making of their past and present experiences, as well as their past and present conceptions of their selves. The symbolic interaction orientation, in general, is less concerned with the "hard truth" of people's stories, but more attentive to ways people create meaning and coherence in

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[12] See the Appendix for the interview schedule.

their lives. Likewise, I am preoccupied less with the accuracy of their accounts, but more interested in how they are assembling the entirety of their lives and creating meaning in their lives, pursuits, and identities over time.

As mentioned, the concluding section of my interview schedule did include a prospective orientation (Settersten 1999). I asked the musicians what directions they anticipated their lives would take from here. I was interested in the extent of their commitment to music as a career, as well as to their identities as musicians. These questions were able to uncover musicians' ideas regarding their short-term and long-term futures.

Because this is a retrospective life course study, I chronicled the entirety of their musical lives, from early childhood to the present. I started interviews by asking, "Looking back on your life, when did you first realize you were interested in music?" Every single musician responded with a story from childhood. I took this as the starting point for the rest of the interview, moving into questions on learning instruments, joining bands, and the like. I also included questions on nonmusical experiences, particularly their academic and extracurricular experiences in school. After this, I asked questions about their transitions to early adulthood. I asked the musicians to tell me about what their career interests were at this point in life and what directions their lives took after high school. I then explicitly asked how they ended up in Athens and about their experiences with music there.

About three-quarters into the interviews, I asked the more sensitive questions. This was for two reasons. First, I wanted to developed rapport before asking such questions. Second, the chronological organization of my interview schedule required these questions be asked near the end of the interview. These questions, however, were hardly controversial. They were focused on gender and music, particularly if they saw a gender imbalance in the music scene and, if so, why

they believed it existed. I then asked about gender identities of musicians and whether the musicians believed they were in any way distinct. All musicians were willing to respond to them, though they knew they could refuse to answer any question at any point in the interview.

I concluded the interviews by asking about their plans for the future in terms of music and other careers. My final question was then one of three options that I decided myself. If the musician with whom I was speaking was the primary songwriter, I asked if s/he had a most significant song. For the musicians who did not contribute to songwriting, I asked either about their favorite memory in their band or a moment in their band they were most proud of.

Of course, the interviews often took unanticipated turns. I always let the musicians discuss any issue at length, allowing the participants to largely direct where the interviews went (Davies 1999; Esterberg 2002). Some of these tangents were useful in my analysis. While the interview schedule was organized chronologically for the most part, as were the responses, the musicians themselves often made clear links between their early experiences and their current positions in life. A few musicians commented that the chronological nature of my interview schedule helped them map out their musical histories and connect their past experiences to their present situations. They, like the theoretical framework I use in this study, did not see their early experiences as deterministic, but they did make connections between them.

Sample characteristics

The thirty-nine musicians with whom I spoke were in many ways similar in their identities. A total of twenty-nine men and nine women constituted my sample. They ranged in age from 22 to 37 and a majority of them were between the ages of 22 and 29,

The musicians were a fairly well-educated group. Over forty percent (16 of 38) of them had at least one college degree in hand. Of this group, four had graduate degrees. Nine were

currently enrolled in college. All but one of the musicians had a high school degree. Only one musician dropped out before completing her high school degree. This person did eventually obtain a GED a few years after dropping out of high school.

None of the musicians with whom I spoke made their living entirely from their participation in bands and hence had other jobs. The only musicians who did not work full time were five musicians who were full-time college students and one who was a stay-at-home father. Of the remaining thirty-two musicians, exactly half (16 of 32) were employed in white-collar jobs. Typically, these were university jobs. Another third (11 of 32) were employed in the service sector. These musicians were servers in local restaurants and coffee shops and/or bartenders. The remaining five musicians were employed in nonperformance fields of the local music industry. They typically worked for recording studios, promotion companies, and record labels. Nearly all of the musicians came from middle class backgrounds. Most (32 of 38) were admittedly middle class. Only six of them suggested they came from working class backgrounds.

Musicians were somewhat unique from the larger population in terms of their marital status. One-quarter (7 of 28) of the men were married. Of the 10 women in my sample, two were married. No musicians had children. Four of the musicians with whom I spoke, Jason and Kay of Casper and the Cookies, as well as Mandy and Eric of Heros Severum, were married to each other. While these were the only two couples in the same band, other musicians had histories of dating their current or former bandmates.[13]

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[13] Contrary to my expectations, the disintegration of the in-band romantic relationships did not seem to always lead to one of the members leaving the band. In only one instance did the collapse of a relationship prompt one of the band members to leave the band. While I probed for details, the remaining member of the band, a man, did not suggest the end of their relationship was the primary factor in the woman leaving the band.

<u>Data Analysis</u>

I simultaneously collected data, transcribed interviews, and analyzed data for the first several months of this project. Going back and forth between the field and retreating to write helped me get a feel for emerging themes in my preliminary data (Glaser and Strauss 1967). This process gave me the opportunity early in my data collection to revise my interview schedule for subsequent interviews. I added questions on a few initially unanticipated issues and rephrased others that proved problematic in early interviews.

I transcribed all interviews myself using two techniques. The first seven interviews were transcribed by hand. I transcribed the remaining interviews using Dragon NaturallySpeaking voice recognition software. After programming my voice into the program, I was able to transcribe the interviews "hands-free." As Dragon NaturallySpeaking increasingly learned my voice, the program saved time in comparison to the traditional "pause-type-play" method. Both methods, however, helped me absorb the details and begin to uncover recurring themes in my data before analyzing the data.

I analyzed the data using Atlas.ti qualitative data management software. This program assisted in my organization and systematic analysis of the data. I coded my data in a dual method. I created highly-specific codes for themes in the interview data. I also created more general (or generic) codes that overlapped a number of the specific codes initially created. The generic codes were in large part umbrella categories for the voluminous number of specific codes I generated.

The dual-coding procedure allowed me to conduct two types of analyses. My analyses resemble, but are not identical to, Straus and Corbin's (1998:117) discussion of properties (the general characteristics of a category) and dimensions (the "location of a property along a

continuum or range"). First, by examining the generic codes I was able to get an understanding of the prevalence of particular themes and how similar the musicians' general experiences were. For instance, I created a generic code for the age at which musicians learned their first instrument. However, I simultaneously created more precise codes for what instruments the musicians first learned. While this may seem redundant, it eased my analysis. I was easily able to compare data on the musicians who learned their first instrument in elementary school with those who learned theirs in high school. From there, I could then easily see what specific instruments musicians were most typically exposed to at particular points in the life course.

Atlas.ti also allowed me to sort data by demographic variables such as gender, age, social class, as well as by music-related variables such as instrument specialization, songwriting contribution, and level of commitment to music. Doing so allowed for a more fruitful analysis of ways gender, age, and other factors were tied to musical experiences among my participants. I organized my data chapters by the primary and recurring themes that developed through my analysis.

Finally, I attempted to keep true to my participants' voices (Hertz 1997). Consistent with other researchers, I avoided extensively "cleaning up" the dialogue (Esterberg 2002). I made only minor alterations to their dialogues, such as omitting "uh"s, "um"s, and sentence fragments in their speech, which would prove too distracting in reading excerpts of their talk.

The musicians with whom I spoke were passionate about their lives and the music they created, as will be apparent in coming chapters. Music was central to their lives and, as will be demonstrated, central the development of their identities and outcomes in adulthood. While the "respondents' voice is almost always filtered through the author's account," I tried to be true to their ideas throughout (Hertz 1997:xii).

CHAPTER 4

MUSIC AND IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN EARLY ADULTHOOD

In this chapter, I examine musicians' experiences and identity development as experienced in early adulthood. I consider ways musicians believe they are marked by music in the context of other developmental issues. I also discuss how their experiences with music affect self development, identity, and gender identity. It is during the young adult time that this aspect of musicians' identities forces them to confront particular dilemmas of adulthood. They must negotiate how prominent music will be in their adult lives and what sacrifices they are or are not willing to make to continue to invest heavily in musical performance. Those who doubt their commitment to music do so partly because they cannot integrate a musician identity into their emerging adult identity. Others who successfully resolve conflicts between the musician and other important identities continue to pursue music in adulthood. Regardless of the path they take, nearly all see their foray into musical performance for a period of their lives to have a meaningful impact on the adults they have become, or are becoming.

Young Adulthood and Life Course Development

As I outlined in Chapter 2, scholars have examined the transition to early adulthood and the strategies by which young adults negotiate identity, work, and gender. Historically, adulthood has been accomplished by meeting the tasks of leaving the family of origin, starting a career, getting married, and starting a family (Furstenberg et al. 2004; Levinson 1978; Shanahan 2000). However, normative measures of adulthood have shifted over time. Young adulthood today is more speculative and less tightly characterized by a set of explicit core components (Anderson et

al. 2005; Shanahan 2000). Instead, the transition to adulthood is a more tenuous process, one without clear boundaries or specific requisites (Furstenberg et al. 2004).

Scholars today view the transition to adulthood as central to identity development for contemporary women and men (Arnett 2000). The young adulthood period is one of experimentation, both in terms of trying out new identities, as well as potential careers. As such, the key tasks of adulthood including shedding the adolescent self for a more fully adult (and stable) identity, attaining an independent status apart from the family, and building the foundation for a lifelong career (Arnett 2000; Clausen 1986 Coleman and Hendry 1990). These dilemmas of securing adulthood are compounded by culture and gender that can act as obstacles to the attainment of an adult status (Giddens 1994; Hogan and Astone 1986).

There has been contention over which theoretical perspectives best explain men and women's outcomes over the life course. Life stage theories theorize development to occur in specific, ordered, and largely time-graded phases (Levinson 1978). Development is universal, as gender, culture, and historic time are said to have no clear impact on development. According to these theories, adulthood is secured by meeting a set of specific tasks, particularly forming an occupation and starting a family. These theories are critiqued as too rigid to adequately explain development over life (Ryff 1985). Second, life stage theories address gender in only cursory ways (Calasanti and Slevin 2001; Gilligan 1979; Ryff 1985). They also rely too heavily on normative expectations as a measure of one's attainment of adulthood (Arnett 2000; Hogan and Astone 1986; Shanahan 2000).

Life course theories, however, see development as more complex and open-ended due to the impact of culture, gender, economy, as well as identity locations (Settersten 1999). At the same time, while the outside world may influence life trajectories, life course theorists do not

argue that they wholly structure the life course (Bruckner 2004; O'Rand 1996a). Instead, people's reactions to constraints can differentially affect their life course experiences. Life course theories argue for "agency within structure," as individuals make do given the constraints in which they may find themselves (Settersten 1999).

Last, musical careers are far less structured than are traditional ones. Pursuing a career in music is self-directed and less controlled by institutions. Nontraditional occupations rely more heavily on occupational socialization to recruit, prepare, and train individuals for their career trajectories (Becker 1963). Occupational socialization also builds occupational identity and initiates the acceptance and internalization of norms appropriate to the career (Becker et al. 1961; Long and Hadden 1985; Merton et al. 1957). In general, this is accomplished through mentoring relationships with experienced workers in the field (Long and Hadden 1985). In these ways, examining this population of musicians may uncover cultural and gendered factors, rather than structural and organizational factors, that facilitate and impede mobility in this occupation.

Transitions to the Musician Identity

Here I examine aspects of musicians' identity development over the life course, particularly the processes by which men and women adopted musician identities. The musicians with whom I spoke recalled the ways their identities as musicians unfolded over time. They spoke of their identity development as musicians in two ways: they discussed the time period during which they first felt like musicians and the events that instigated these recognitions. Their experiences suggest ways the processes diverges by gender.

Age and Musician Identification

For the musicians with whom I spoke, the development of their identities as musicians occurred during three points in life, each of which varies by gender. The time at which musicians

adopt the identity of musician varies, although adolescence was the most frequent time for such an identity to emerge. A few musicians (7 of 38) respond that they have always "felt" like musicians from as far back as they could remember. This population, though small, is dominated by men. For these musicians, there is no turning point or critical event during which their identities shifted to include musician as a core part of their identity. Rather, it is something they have always felt as a part of themselves. Murder Beach's Chris says:

> I always thought I was a musician even before I could play
>
> anything. So there wasn't really any grand realization as far as that
>
> goes. It was just sort of, life conformed to whatever unconscious
>
> idea I had of myself.

Similar to the other musicians with lifelong affiliations with the musician identity, Chris does not believe his musicianhood rests on learning an instrument, writing songs, joining a band or some other specific marker event. It is a more internal and self-defined realization. These lifelong musicians also suggest their musicianhood to be intrinsic, almost inherent, in that this life is what they are destined for.

The second set of musicians have specific turning points in their lives during which they began identifying as musicians. This identity shift occurred very early in childhood for some musicians, while it came about more recently for others. Again, a majority of the musicians with this experience are men. These musicians cite early childhood as the age during which they first identified as musicians. They had influential musical experiences during the elementary school years, often learning their first instrument or performing in public for the first time. Although they had a long road ahead of them to master their instruments and further their musical expertise, they became focused on music early in life.

Most musicians with whom I spoke first began identifying as musicians during adolescence. These nine musicians cite their transitions from childhood to adolescence as being accompanied by a corresponding transition to musicianhood. When I ask Davey when he first "became" a musician, he says:

> I've never really thought about that. Once I started playing the
>
> drums, after I had been playing about a year or so and felt I had a
>
> grasp of what I was doing, I considered myself a musician then,
>
> once I knew it wasn't just a passing fad.

Unlike other musicians, Davey does not cite his first experiences with music as the point during which his identity as a musician began to develop. At the same time, these musicians do not dismiss their early childhood experiences with music as frivolous, but they do stress that the majority of children who learn instruments early in life give up on them soon afterwards. They see themselves as different from other children in this regard. For these musicians, it is not until commitment to music and acquiring expertise of an instrument occurs that the musician identity can truly develop. And by the teenage years, these musicians felt they had enough of a say in their extracurricular musical activities for their interest in music to not be a simple fad, but a permanent aspect of their identity.

Donovan too first identified as a musician early in high school during his audition for a rock band. This was his:

> First time playing with other people in a setting that wasn't just
>
> reading music with a band director telling you what to do.

Donovan's independent learning of music without the supervision of band directors or any adults for that matter was crucial to his developing his identity as a musician. Other musicians are similar in citing peer-structured music settings as instigating their developments as musicians.

Many musicians suggest that learning and performing music in school-structured settings such as the high school band or choir were not influential in developing their identities as musicians. A few musicians even suggest that structured musical experiences temporarily alienated them from music altogether. Jason, for instance, said he "realized I just wanted to play by ear. I didn't want it to be work." These experiences are more common among men, since very few women participated in rock bands during the high school years.

A handful of musicians admit that their identities as musicians did not develop until fairly recently in early adulthood. When I ask Roy, age 30, when he first felt like a musician, he responds:

> I'm tempted to say this year actually. But that's just because
> everything came together this year. I started playing more by
> myself. When I moved here with my friend Dave, we never really
> got anything off the ground, and we kinda parted ways. So I spent
> a few years just writing songs and screwing around. The last
> couple of years I really started to play out more. And when I came
> to Athens this spring and started playing with An Epic at Best, I
> hadn't played in a band in years and years, so it was really a very
> solidifying experience. I'm doing something constructive for a
> change.

Roy is one of the few men in my sample to note that taking on a public role with one's music is needed to establish a musician identity. The perspective is more common among the women whom I interviewed. While Roy has played in bands and written songs for many years, it wasn't until he began performing in music venues that his identity as a musician more fully developed.

Women musicians in particular remember first feeling like a "real" musician after their first show in Athens, after which members of the audience and members of other more-established local bands commended their performance. It is public performance and recognition from the outside that solidifies the musician identity for these individuals. While some of them have felt like musicians for several years, comments and praise by outsiders help them to firm up the identity of musician.

The remaining eight musicians still have not fully developed their identities as musicians. A larger percentage of women than men (a ratio of 5:3) fit this category, but it also includes some men. These musicians are clearly uncomfortable adopting the identity of a musician as their own. I ask Julie when she first felt like a musician:

> Julie: I don't think I really do feel like a musician, even now.
>
> Michael: No?
>
> Julie: I mean, when I think of myself, I don't really think, 'I am a
>
> musician.' … I guess I know a lot of people who really are
>
> musicians, like who have gone to school for music, and I consider
>
> them to be musicians. I consider what I do to be just for fun.

Julie feels that she is missing a core component of what it takes to be a musician. For Julie and other musicians, these critieria include formal training, the ability to earn money from their music, or many years of experience with music. These musicians do not consider musician to be

a core aspect of their sense of self, despite the fact that all have reached their mid-twenties by the time I interviewed them. For example, midway through the interview, Matt interjects:

> The premise of this whole thing, calling me a musician, might be
>
> kind of iffy. I never learned how to play other people's songs
>
> really well. As soon as I started playing, I started making up songs.
>
> I still can't play other people's songs very well.

As his comments suggest, because his repertoire is limited to his original compositions, he is barred from being true musician. His ideas are in contrast to other musicians who cite composing original music as the core requirement of being a real musician.

Sam focuses on what he considers to be his limited mastery of music as barring him from musicianhood:

> I don't know guitar technique, I don't know keyboard technique. I
>
> do know a lot about music theory. A lot of what I learned, I learned
>
> from a friend of mine in high school. But I don't apply it when I
>
> play music. I think most people who are professional musicians
>
> would think it was a fucking joke that someone like me would say
>
> they were a musician.

In particular, Sam compares what he considers his simplistic or minimalist music expertise to more "professional" musicians. His depiction of what constitutes a musician is clearly constructed in relation to non-rock musicians.

The musicians demonstrate that there is not one clear path to the development of the musician identity. Nor is there a clear marker event or rite of initiation prescribed by culture that grants one legitimacy as a musician. Musicians do not undergo occupational socialization that

individuals in more traditional career paths do (Hermanowicz 1998a and 1998b; Mortimer and

Simmons 1978). Their informal training and preparation for the music world—largely devoid of

educational institutions—is not accompanied by a normative set of expectations as to how to

succeed, how to become the "right" type of musician, and so on. Although certain events such as

learning instruments, writing songs, or performing publicly are important to some persons in my

sample, the meaning of such events is individually interpreted. Variable ways and times of

identity development are intertwined with the young adult period. My data suggest that the

transition to adulthood among musicians takes place within a looser age structure than is typical

among those in traditional careers. Up to this point in musicians' lives, traditional age norms do

not seem to constrain their ideas of whether they have "made it" to a professional musician

status. At the same time, these pathways are gendered. Men start identifying as musicians early

in life, while women's identification as musicians is delayed and, in some cases, not yet attained.

Moments Instigating Identifying as Musicians

A range of events and musical moments instigate the musicians' adopting the musician

identity. The events, however, do not always correspond to the ages at which my interviewees

initially said they first felt like real musicians. For some, there is a disjunction between an

internalized image of oneself as a musician and the willingness to claim such an identity in a

more public setting. For musicians, identity development as musicians is created through social

interaction in specific settings and with particular individuals (Settersten 2002).

For most of the musicians, acquiring musical proficiency is key to their adopting the

identity of musician, a necessary but not sufficient step toward adopting a musician identity. For

instance, mastering the instrument influences some musicians to take on the musician identity.

Gaining knowledge of and learning advanced skills on the instrument helps some musicians to

feel as if their interest in music was more than cursory. Penning their first song also validates

their sense of musical prowess. There often is a lengthy apprentice period in accomplishing such

goals, but this period is informally structured and frequently also self-guided.

In particular, many musicians come into their own once they begin composing original

music. Twelve of the musicians with whom I spoke cite their initial attempts to compose original

music as the key events that led to them adopting the musician identity. McKenna remembers:

> I started writing full songs and had no idea that I was even capable
>
> of doing that. And then once I started doing that, that's all I wanted
>
> to do. … And [for] the first time in my life I felt like I was
>
> unloading who I really was. That's when I really started feeling
>
> whole as a person and as a musician.

For these musicians, writing music makes their musician identity "seem more real." It also leads

to the realization that they not only have drive and talent, but that they more importantly have the

prerogative to claim the label of musician.

Unlike the musicians discussed above who cite self-identified markers as marking their

transition to true musicianhood, others do not adopt these identities themselves. Rather, having

outsiders label them as musicians is powerful enough to convince the musicians that they are

capable musicians. For instance, Zach recalls first feeling like a musician when:

> I was in high school. The private school I went to, not a whole lot
>
> of people played music. No one really cared about secular rock. So
>
> automatically, I kinda got pinned, not like an outsider, not like that
>
> weird kid, but just as the kid who does that. And I didn't mind.
>
> Technically, that *is* what I did with all of my free time.

Only the men have such experiences, however. In no instance does a woman interviewee recall being identified by others as a musician before that identity was firmly established within themselves. Perhaps because the women lack such external validation more so than men, they have a more difficult time claiming the identity of musician for themselves.

Other musicians cite their first music-related landmark events as turning points that lead them to identify as musicians. They mention joining their first band and their first public performance as triggering their musician identity. Sam's first public performance with an early band in Athens had a lasting effect on his identity. It was during this performance that he began "impressing more than my friends" and therefore "must be doing something right." Mandy's adoption of the musician identity is similar:

> I think the defining moment was when I entered that talent show
>
> and played that a cappella song. That was just sort of out of
>
> character for me, being very quiet and I'm still very quiet, to get up
>
> in front of people and just sing. And people didn't expect that out
>
> of me.

While their bandmates adopt the musician identity through songwriting, some women musicians suggest they "feel more like a musician when I play shows" or "the times that [they're] am on stage." Consequently, public performance is an instigating factor for women in particular. Perhaps showcasing one's musical talent in a public—and masculine—setting makes the identity more genuine for women.

A few others who identify as musicians later in their young adult lives cite tangible events as marking their transition to becoming musicians. A few musicians, all of whom are men, focus on the economic aspects of music. Benji, though he had mastered his instruments

early in adolescence, did not identify as a musician until he received monetary compensation for his performances. He thinks he first became a musician:

> … in high school. I guess when people were actually calling me to come play jobs for money. I started doing musical theater, playing bass for orchestras [in high school]. I guess when I started getting a paycheck I felt like [a real musician].

Other musicians are similar Benji in identifying "getting [their] first paycheck" for music as the moment they became serious musicians. Not only had they developed excellent playing skills, but they were good enough to demand economic compensation for it. This is a turning point at which musicians realize this previously "leisure-only" activity could translate into money, and hence a potential career option. Men are the only musicians to highlight the economic aspect as instigating their identifications as musicians, similar to artists in other studies who measure success through objective and economic criteria (Becker 1982). This may be tied to conventional constructions of masculinity being centered on the provider role (Coltrane 1996; Kimmel 1996).

The musicians who adopt the musician identity relatively recently in life focus on events in early adulthood that spark these identifications. These musicians often cite writing and recording their first collection of songs as solidifying their identities of musicians. For some of these musicians, no one ever heard these early recordings, but merely having them on tape was sufficient to establish an identity as a musician, not to mention key to further developing their skills for future musical projects.

Others, particularly women, mention specific events experienced with their current band as leading to the realization of their musician identity. For some, it is merely becoming intensely committed to music during adulthood that led to this. Kay refers to her move to Athens,

specifically to devote more time and energy on her band, as the turning point during which she felt like a musician.

Other musicians allude to business aspects of their current bands and other non-music responsibilities they had as leading to their development as musicians. Cora, for instance, cite her tasks for her band, Pushbutton, as leading to her professionalization:

> It wasn't until like last fall that it actually sunk in, dealing with the
>
> shows and doing all that, performing and having to kind of be a
>
> diplomat in a way. I think that that's how [Pushbutton lead singer]
>
> Chris sees me a lot of the time as far as my position in the band.
>
> I'm always socializing, talking to people about what clubs to play,
>
> what bands to play with, knowing kind of what's the thing. I felt
>
> taking on that role fits with my personality because I think I am
>
> sort of a social butterfly. … But as far as taking that role myself, it
>
> was probably last year. I think last October or September when I
>
> took on most of the booking and stuff.

Occupational socialization in music clearly influences their identifications with the musician identity. My data show there are clear patterns to adopting the musician identity, but these transitions may be less distinctive than for people in other traditional careers. For instance, there are no timed transitions that are tied to age in the music world. While individuals in the business world may have a somewhat rigid "timeline for success" for moving up the corporate ladder, such age- and time-graded meters are less clear in the music world. The gauges for musical success are more fluid, but not entirely absent. Despite the more fluid timeline for

success among musicians, a number of them still found their lives stressful. It is particularly stressful for the "older" musicians.

Gender undoubtedly affects individuals' claiming identities as musicians. Women and men's identities as musicians are generated through interactions with their bands though in divergent manners. First, women have different experiences that help motivate them to self-identify as musicians. External verification, either by friends, peers, or anonymous audience members, seems key to the process. Men's identities are affected by social interaction, but in different ways. For men, economic compensation and public performance of the musician identity are extremely important.

Second, the career timelines are different for women and men musicians as well. Women have shorter timelines for success in comparison to men. The women not only started later, but they also have shorter self-imposed time periods in which they expected to achieve success. Women expect to reach a suitable level of success by a particular age, while men's expectations are more ambiguous. If women do not meet their expectations by a particular time frame (corresponding to their reaching their thirties, most often), they are likely to define this as the appropriate time to disengage from the music world. Third, research finds that men typically have higher education and career expectations than do women (Dornbusch 1989). However, women musicians with whom I spoke seem more eager to reach the next level of success with their bands in comparison to men. Women believ their hard work would soon pay off and success is "just around the corner." In these ways, women are more optimistic—and also more driven.

<u>The Transition to Early Adulthood</u>

In addition to discussing how their identities as musicians develop, the musicians also explain their taking on of adult identities. Here I examine the transition to adulthood and the corresponding dilemmas they face that influence their negotiations of music, career, and adulthood. I consider how gender affects these processes as well. All the musicians whom I interviewed work to balance their lives as musicians with other life obligations, particularly education and establishing a career. For some, pursuing music and developing a career are synonymous, while for others the involvement in music conflicts with other educational and career goals.

Nearly all (37 of 38) the musicians with whom I spoke completed high school, although one is a high school dropout who later earned her GED. At this point, their departure from adolescence, they begin planning for their future adulthoods and begin to confront dilemmas of adulthood. In particular, they must determine how prominent music will be in their adult lives. In general, they go down one of two paths: either the educational path to pursue additional education in a university—a path in which music is not initially central—or the musical path in which they immediately begin pursuing a career in music. Liminality is a common experience for musicians in young adulthood. Because they are young, they see a range of options for their futures and often are not absolutely prepared to commit to (only) one of them.

Moving to a College Music Town

Both the education-focused and music-focused individuals in my sample made the decision at some point to move to Athens, Georgia, a college town known for its reputable music scene. There are two main sets of concerns that led musicians to make the move to Athens: education and music.

Over half of the musicians moved to Athens after high school for a combination of two main reasons. A minority of the musicians (6 of 38) moved to Athens primarily to complete their college degrees from the University of Georgia. Almost half (17 of 38) moved to Athens for the music scene itself. Some came from nearby Atlanta, while others came from as far away as Utah, Michigan, and New York. Roy discusses his move from the Midwest:

> [My first band and I] lived in a pretty rural area in Michigan. There
> wasn't really any music scene. We were gonna move to a bigger
> [music] city. That's how I ended up in Athens. Most of the people
> [in my band] didn't move with us. We were sorta serious [about
> pursuing music]. … We knew about Athens. We were really big
> R.E.M. fans. So we decided really quickly that we'd move there.
> But it was really just for the music [scene in Athens]. We didn't
> have any real goal in mind.

Thirteen other musicians moved to Athens for a combination of the two previous reasons.[14] These musicians moved to Athens because of the opportunities in both music *and* college. Bryant's band, Cinemechanica, wanted to move to a city with a more vibrant music scene. One member of the band, however, had not yet completed his college degree. Thus, their options were limited. The needed to find a town that had both a respectable university and a reputable music scene—and Athens fit the criteria to meet all group members' (musical and academic) needs. Other musicians had different routes to Athens. Adam recalls applying to UGA because he "fell in love with Athens" his senior year of high school:

---

[14] The remaining two musicians were born and raised in Athens, but did cite the music scene, rather than educational opportunities, as prompting them to in their hometown.

It was in my head that Athens had a great music scene. I was like,

'Well, if I want to play in a band while I was in school, I want to

move to Athens.' I didn't even know what my major is going to be.

I just checked something off on the application at that time. I got

really into school later on. I definitely came here with the intention

of knowing I can be in a band. As long as I do well in school, I can

play music.

Julie was attracted to UGA more for Athens' music scene than for any degree program offered

by the school. She anticipates:

I probably wouldn't have been in bands if I lived someplace other

than Athens. … I kind of came here because I knew that there was

a music scene and there were bands that I liked that were playing

here at the time that I came to college.

Like other musicians, Julie believes she would not have pursued music had she moved to a town

other than Athens. The central reason many musicians applied to UGA was because of the music

scene. As Donovan pointedly stated, "The reason I'm here is because there are bands that play

every night." And by enrolling in UGA, musicians were able to make music an easier aspect of

their lives: they satisfied their parents' wishes for them to attend college, and they were able to

make music on the side. These musicians work to negotiate appropriate life paths to satisfy both

their own personal needs and those of their parents. Appeasing parents' wishes to pursue higher

education helps the musicians to simultaneously pursue their passion for music. Furthermore,

only three musicians pursued higher education to study music. For most college-bound

musicians though, I see continuities with their experiences earlier in life during which they did not see formal educational music programs as central to their involvement in music.

Tensions with Coming Adulthood

All of the musicians in my study have transitioned from adolescence to adulthood. In much of their talk, they mention how they have or are currently experiencing adulthood as musicians. To begin, many musicians discuss the musician and the adult identities as conflicting with one another. They also cite particular tensions with which they were dealing in negotiating their adult identities.

Tensions with Parents

One of the central themes characterizing the adolescent and early adult period is establishing an identity independent of one's family of origin. Achieving a balance of independence and connection with parents can be a critical task. In the modern world, youth of middle class origin in particular often remain financially if not emotionally dependent on their parents well into their twenties. This seems to be the case with the musicians with whom I spoke as well. A few admit that their parents would help them financially from time to time. Two others disclosed the "dirty little secret of indie rock," namely that many bands are funded by financially-secure, middle class parents.

For musicians, resolving dilemmas of adulthood sometimes is complicated by parental mistrust of their involvement in music. Parents' displeasure with their children's investing time and energy in music is common among the musicians with whom I spoke. In discussing former band members who left the band to pursue other career options, experiences of parental tension regularly emerge. Mandy has this to say about a drummer who left the band:

> Our first drummer Jeff, he was in his thirties, and his family
>
> constantly pushed him to have a career and stop this band stuff. …
>
> His parents were like, 'You need a career.' … He got interested in
>
> [respiratory therapy] and decided that that would be a good career.
>
> But in order to go to school and become a respiratory therapist, he
>
> thought, 'I can't do the band. I have to focus on this.' It was
>
> completely amicable. He was like, 'I want to start doing this now,'
>
> so he left to do that.

Although he implied to his band mates that his change of heart was his idea ("I want to start doing this now."), it seems as if his parents influenced his decision to pursue a more secure career.

Even among musicians who persevere with their music career, many of them discuss how one or both of their parents would regularly ask them when they were going to "ditch the music." Despite their parents' objections, they continue performing with their band. Of course, these musicians are adults and are, in contrast to other musicians, independent of their parents' economic contributions, factors that facilitate their continuing with their career of choice. Still others' parents are somewhat less concerned about their children's vocational pursuits, so long as they are financially secure.

These predicaments seem to be greater stresses for women than for men. Women musicians suggest their parents are more concerned about their futures than are men's parents. This trend is somewhat surprising given cultural assumptions of men's expectations for being the provider, but men seem not to have parents who are overly concerned about their sons' futures.

This, however, may be due to men's increased independence (yet another masculine trait) and separation from their parents.

Tensions of Aging

Musicians in their thirties often feel that they are the "geezers" of the local music scene. They question whether it is appropriate for someone in their thirties to be performing music. Or is it instead something that should be reserved for the young? Jay says he first felt old:

> Once [I] hit 30 in this town. Everyone stays the same age and you
>
> start feeling [old]. And just being in rock bands, when you see all
>
> the bands in magazines that are five years younger than you, I just
>
> remember always looking up to them. Now I'm just like, 'Oh my
>
> God, I'm on the other side of the fence.' It doesn't get any easier to
>
> do. But reality wise, if you look at a lot of the people out there,
>
> most people don't do much of worth until they're around our age.
>
> And if you do, in a writer's life or any field, it takes a while to get
>
> to the top of your game.

Like other musicians beyond their mid- to late twenties, Jay wrestles with transitioning into a fully adult status and his identity as a musician. The transient population of college students in Athens means the audience consistently remains youthful. Once one cohort of students graduates, it is replaced with a new population of college-aged fans. As Jay and other musicians age, the audience stays the same age in this "la la land" that is Athens. While this realization can be disheartening to the aging musicians and create a disconnect between the musician and audience, they are realistic in understanding success takes time and consequently age.

Women particularly seem apprehensive of growing older as musicians. One half-jokingly asked, "How sexy would it be to be a forty-year-old woman to be on stage?" Another woman in her early twenties suggests that if she is not successful by age thirty, she will likely quit music. These thoughts illustrate how women distinguish adult femininity as incompatible with musical performance. Furthermore, she is invoking appearance and not simply talent as an issue for successful, lifelong women musicians. Women's apprehension with maintaining a musician identity while growing older illustrates how aging femininity results in a loss of power, and impacts women earlier in life than men (Calasanti and Slevin 2001:193).

As such, women and men seem to attach different social meanings to age and use different guidelines to measure progress in life (Hagestad 1988). In contemporary society, individuals hold strong to age norms, the best age at which to do something. Likewise, culture dictates prescriptive and proscriptive age norms, the idea that individuals should do certain things, but not others, at particular ages (Settersten 1997). According to my data, there are more proscriptive norms for women than for men. Not only is it rare for women to play music, but it is also unbefitting for older (adult) women to persist in this line of work.

From the perspective of life course theory, and in most domains of contemporary society, they are clearly in the early adulthood period. However, within the world of alternative rock music, they recognize themselves as reaching old age in this occupation, usually without having attained the level of success they had desired. They thus face dilemmas that life course developmental theorists more commonly identify as the crises of middle age.

Tensions of Familial Responsibilities

The adult-musician identity is also complicated by familial responsibilities. The prototypical "family man" is one who provides for his family (Coltrane 1996; Kimmel 1996).

Similarly, a suitable masculine gender identity is tied to the extent to which a man can provide

for his entire family—the more of the lion's share of the family income he can bring in himself,

the better, in terms of securing a valued masculinity. Patrick relates how family pressures have

impacted his life as a musician. When I ask whether he feels any pressure to do something

different with his life, he responds:

> Sure. Absolutely. My parents, they remember the ten years I was in
>
> Five-Eight where I was poor, while a lot of their friends' kids were
>
> becoming the lizard men who sell stock or used cars or whatever.
>
> I've always taken an anti-materialistic approach to life. I have step-
>
> siblings who drive cars that cost more than the house I bought.
>
> That comparison of, 'You must be doing well. You have more
>
> money.' For me it's, 'You must *not* be doing well. You don't have
>
> any money.' That pressure never quite goes away. There's also a
>
> desire to have kids, for me to have kids is a lot stronger in my
>
> parents than it is in me. I think I want to have kids, but I don't want
>
> to do it right now. And they see music as an impediment to that
>
> because of the lack of financial security in being a musician. So
>
> yeah, the pressure exists, but I'm a grown up.

The pressure is even stronger for Patrick's bandmate who, in contrast to Patrick, does have

parental responsibilities. Patrick says of his bandmate:

> And Noah, he fights a daily battle of poverty. He's a father. He's
>
> got a nine-year-old son. He has never really beaten those voices

out of his head that say, 'This is no way to make a living. You're

stealing from your son's future.' It's constant.

Their statuses as a culturally-masculine musician is at odds with the masculinity required of the

father-provider role. The various tensions of adulthood are handled in one of three ways, as I

discuss next.

Reconciling the Dilemmas of Adulthood: Music, Career, Adult Identity, and the Future

On-time and off-time transitions, those that occur at age appropriate and inappropriate

times respectively, can contribute to and complicate identity in complex ways (Settersten 2002).

On-time experiences, in general, are easier to manage. For those with whom I spoke, going to

college, devoting significant amounts of time to musical performance, and delaying familial and

other responsibilities are more readily accepted when undertaken during their early twenties. For

those who continue to take part in music beyond their early twenties, however, these

commitments to music have "off-time" consequences that are much more difficult to manage. As

a result, the musicians often react in one of three ways: 1) by leaving the musician identity

behind, 2) by staying in the music world, but downgrading musical performance as a career, or

3) by renegotiating the musician identity to correspond with a normative adult identity. Like

other individuals with multiple and contradictory identities (Williams 1995), the musicians enact

similar strategies to come to terms with the complex identities they had.

On-Time Musicians

Musicians who committed to music during their early twenties easily reconcile their

identities as musicians with their adult status. Because music is not putting them off-time with

appropriate expectations for individuals their age, they can easily pursue music without great

tension. For instance, most of their similarly-aged peers, whether they pursue music or not, are

also delaying family commitments and responsibilities. Because men and women in their early twenties are increasingly delaying marriage and family, delaying these tasks for music is not a source of tension for musicians.

Extended Adolescence

While in college, many musicians are easily able to simultaneously pursue higher education and music. Their few responsibilities and much leisure make it easy to balance both. Families are supportive for the most part until they imagine music is becoming more important than education and finding a traditional career. Throughout college, Navid has been able to easily balance his schoolwork with his band. Nearing graduation, however, an uncle questions him about his life trajectory:

> The closest thing to a grilling I ever got was when we were on our
> first tour. We had a day off, so we went to Chapel Hill [North
> Carolina, another college town with a reputation for a good local
> music scene] so I could go to my cousin's graduation party. My
> uncle who is a heart surgeon, also pushing for me to go to med
> school, was like, 'So what do you think you're going to do with
> this music?' And I said, 'Well, I'm in college now. I don't have
> any real responsibilities. This is my own time when I can have that
> sort of fun without any real consequences, so this is for me, for
> right now to have a good time.' That's what I told him.

Navid's older family members see the college years as the time period to set the foundation for his future. He is doing so by completing college, but he sees this period as his "own time" free from responsibility. For Navid, this period of life is the optimal time to perform music without

consequence. While the social meanings of age are social constructions, Navid's family is adhering to their generation's age categories that apparently contrast with Navid's assessment of appropriate age norms. Navid is challenging age norms, and his family is clearly uncomfortable with it.

Other musicians currently enrolled in college have decided to pursue music with little tension. Zach rationalizes:

> You only live once. You should try it, if you have the resources
>
> and the ability. I'm just going to kick myself if I don't.

Like other musicians in college, Zach has the resources, both in terms of time, finances, and limited responsibility, to test out a career in music.

Off-Time Musicians

Leaving Music Behind

Some musicians react to the tensions of adulthood by starting the process of leaving the musician identity behind. In most cases, it is to more fully secure a normative adult identity. Some musicians are beginning to mute the musician identity, citing it as no longer central to their identities. They stress that music is an important part of their transition to adulthood, but that it is something they would dedicate less time to in the future. Instead, they intend to focus on their careers and the new turns their lives are beginning to take. Music had been an important part of their identity at one point in their lives, but now they are moving on. Others, like Nico, set self-imposed timelines for a successful musical career:

> Do I think this is a phase? You know, maybe when I'm like thirty-
>
> two I'll be tired of it, but right now I'm enjoying it. I don't want

kids until I'm in my thirties. I don't want to get married until I'm

in my thirties. Right now I'm just on my own.

Like other musicians her age, Nico realizes that early adulthood is the ideal (and perhaps only) time she will have to give music a chance. Delaying marriage and parenthood allow her the flexibility required to pursue a career in music. However, these musicians still imagine it to be a temporary project nonetheless. Older musicians have similar sentiments, particularly those with no family and no plans to start one in the near future, but they consider themselves a "bit more realistic" in realizing music may not end up as their lifelong career. In general, these musicians are tentative in their expectations for committing to music for the entirety of their lives, but they simultaneously see it as part of the experimental, testing-out phase of early adulthood.

Other musicians, slightly older than Nico, express similar experiences. These musicians, a few years beyond the college years, are actively planting the seeds for their next project. Brion, realizing he now wants to compose symphonies, applied to and was accepted to a program for music composition. Others are in the process of applying to other graduate programs. One, surprisingly, is planning to move to New York to start a career as a comedian.

Musicians are attentive to age appropriate social roles and are made aware of being early, on time, or late in transitions to successful adulthood (Elder 1975). In general, the musicians are aware they are late in adopting an adult identity in comparison to many of their traditionally-oriented peers. Work is a marker of where they *should* be (Roth 1963; Sofer 1970). And since a number of musicians are far from being financially stable, they are feeling the stresses of an unattained aspect of traditional adulthood. As a result, some begin to abandon the musician identity.

De-emphasizing the Musician Status

The second group deals with this dilemma by stressing that music is key to their life, but being a musician is not. They, therefore, intend to continue to participate in the music world, but in roles other than as a musician. They are simultaneously building a more normative career while remaining a part of the music world.

These musicians, most of whom are beyond their college years, often have family pressures that shifted their expectations and dreams of musical perseverance. Musicians, a number of whom are men, are battling these ideas of salary, family responsibility, and masculinity in their lives as musicians. For some musicians, like Davey, it impacts their career aspirations:

> Michael: Ultimately, would you like to make a career out of music
> or is it a hobby?
> Davey: If you had asked me that question when I was late teens,
> early twenties, I would have definitely wanted to make it more of a
> career. Now that I'm married and have responsibilities and a job, it
> is probably more of a hobby. … It's definitely a lot harder as you
> get older and you have more responsibilities: you're married or
> have a job or whatever. It's a lot different than when you're
> eighteen and you don't have a lot of responsibility. I guess if you
> really want to do it, you will make sacrifices or make time for it.

The added responsibilities that have arisen as he has further entered adulthood limit his interests in music to a hobby. Surprisingly, familial obligations are bigger stresses for men than for women. This is likely due to the fact that none of the women I interviewed currently have

children and none are contemplating starting a family, while some men do have children or are considering having them soon.

These musicians see a more promising alternate career in music outside of their bands. Typically, they are building careers in the production aspect of music: as recording engineers, producers, or by starting record labels. Others work for music promotion companies. They suggest these careers are more realistic, more professional, more stable, and less stressful. In a word, these careers lend themselves to a more adult-like status by virtue of their being more closely aligned with traditional careers. For instance, Eric tell me:

> I am certainly more of a professional with the studio. I take it for
> granted what I've accumulated, the knowledge that I've picked up
> over the years. People come in and record with me, it's their first
> time in the studio, I realize, 'Yeah, okay, I've got something to
> offer. I'm not totally full of crap here. There's something to it.'

He stresses he is a professional, and that his service is valued. Other musicians with similar sentiments emphasize the more stable income and the training and experience that makes these careers not only more promising, but also more in line with a normative adult identity.

A few others suggest that this is the route to take. In discussing her early days in the music scene, Mandy emphasizes the main lesson she learned from her mentor who runs a small record label herself:

> One time when I helped her get a show here, she did say, 'The
> more realistic idea when it comes to music is that you will, through
> your contacts, find a career instead of being able to play music and

tour and earn a living,' which is really just not feasible. You don't

earn a living touring. You don't usually earn a living being in a

band.

Mandy learned that to be successful, she should use her band to network for a more promising

career in another aspect of the music business. Doing so will also help her to attain a more

appropriate adult identity. By emphasizing the business skills they are developing through their

experiences in bands, musicians are setting up their redefinition of the adult role.

In general, liminality is especially event among these musicians. Many of them are

clearly interested in testing out music as a potential career, while others see the advantages of

pursuing alternate careers. During this time period, the musicians are straddling the line between

these options.

Persistent Musicians

The last set of musicians realistically foresee themselves pursuing music throughout the

remainder of their lives and hence see the musician identity as one they will carry on throughout

adulthood. Benji self-defines himself as "a lifer as far as music goes," as do others. He and other

musicians attempt to reconfigure the musician identity to make it more compatible with the adult

identity. Because they successfully did so, they are able to continue pursuing music in adulthood.

They accomplish this in four main ways.

Reconciling Age

The "rock is youthful" conception of age complicates the responsibility required of being

in a band. For many musicians, music is not something that was simply fun. Rather, it is

something they take quite seriously and therefore treat as they would a professional job.

Commitment, responsibility, devotion, and hard work are required to make the band successful.

These qualities, however, are not aligned with—and are often in opposition to—traditional notions of youth. These qualities help them emphasize ways their musician identities are comparable with their statuses as true adults.

For one, musicians are forced to come to terms with the age division between them and their younger band members and audiences. They have to recognize the generational difference that is growing and also secure their place within this young cohort. And sometimes they alter the band lineup, replacing youthful, irresponsible members with older, responsible members who will treat the band seriously (i.e., in a way more consistent with adulthood). In discussing lineup changes in her band, Mandy recounts a series of drummers who joined and left her band:

> Dustin, he was in his early twenties, still sort of going through that,
> you know how in your early twenties you're not necessarily the
> most responsible person? You're very carefree. … He just lived
> this carefree lifestyle. And we were past that point. I think it was
> just a clash of ages. There's not really huge difference in our age,
> but where we were at in life, where I was at in life, here I am
> playing in this band, I have this job that you could make it into a
> career if you wanted to. I want to keep the one job as steady
> employment, at the time thinking about the possibility of
> eventually buying a house, which we now have. Partying was not
> really all that interesting to me. I had sort of gotten past that,
> whereas he was still into the partying and lack of responsibility
> though. And any time we would want to get more responsible
> actions out of him, he would lash out against that. … He didn't

> want any responsibility, I would say. So it just sort of ended up
>
> being, it got unpleasant.

The number of years between Mandy's age and that of her drummer is not great. However, the social meanings of age are very different. She has attained a more adult status (accompanied by stable employment and owning a house) while her drummer is adhering to a status closer to adolescence than adulthood. Their social age difference far exceeds their chronological age different, and they are not compatible with one another. Having a stereotypical bandmember, one who embodies the party lifestyle, makes the musician identity less compatible for Mandy. Releasing him from her band helps her to reaffirm her musician identity.

Fortunately, her band found a replacement drummer who is a perfect fit for them. She describes her new drummer, Davey, as a perfect fit for the band, due not only to his skills on the drums, but also to his heightened sense of responsibility:

> He is older. He's married. His wife is a physician's assistant and
>
> has a career. They have a house. They have a responsible lifestyle
>
> and it's more in line with us, than with the sort of carefree young
>
> twenty-year-old hormonal male. [laughs] Basically I don't think
>
> there's anything wrong with that necessarily, but we're just sort of
>
> past the stay-out-late, pay-your-bills-late, and work-to-get-your-
>
> bills-paid-before-the-power's-cut-off [lifestyle]. We're not wanting
>
> to be anything like that anymore, where [Dustin]'s sort of on that
>
> mindset, the whole lack of responsibility.

In comparison to her previous drummer, Davey is more suitable because he adheres to a normative adult identity. He is responsible, married, and less interested in the party atmosphere

of the music scene. Eric, Mandy's bandmate and husband, corroborated the tensions in finding a permanent drummer for Heros Severum. He too sees Davey as the best drummer with whom he has ever worked, and, like Mandy, credits this partly to his dependability and adult status.

Redefining Music as a Business

During the adolescent period, it is culturally appropriate to assume a musician identity. But there is pressure to move away from it in adulthood because it is normatively inappropriate to be an adult and a musician. To contend with these dilemmas, musicians enact strategies to preserve their adult identity with a varied version of the musician identity. Some reconstruct their identities as musicians as more in line with business culture. Rather than simply rock stars, the musicians see themselves as savvy business people. This shift from the performance of music to the business of music is more in line with appropriate adult roles.

Instead of focusing solely on writing new material and the party scene associated with participation in bands, the musicians redefine their skills as musicians as compatible with adult identities. In particular, they see music participation as a way to hone their business acumen in terms of promoting, booking shows, touring, and securing record contracts. These musicians see themselves as distinct from the younger, less experienced (read: more adolescent) bands in Athens. In sum, the musician identity is indeed affected by social pressures. External constraints over which they have no control impact their confidence in their identities as musicians, but they react against these constraints by changing their internalized sense of the musician identity to be more consistent with a normative adult identity.

Emphasizing an Adult "Alter Ego"

Many of the musicians also work to create an alter ego more consistent with normative adulthood and enact this identity from time to time. Although musicians were economically

compensated for the work they do in their bands, none make enough money solely off of musical performance that cover their living expenses. Most of the musicians (32 of 38) have other jobs in addition to their work with their bands. (In fact, the only musicians who did not have another job in addition to their music are full-time college students.) Many of them work in white-collar office jobs, some for various departments on the university campus, and others in the service industry. For those in the white-collar jobs in particular, their musician identity often conflicts with their work identity. For instance, the musicians' white-collar coworkers assume musicians to be incompatible with an appropriate office work identity. A few musicians suggest that their coworkers with "children and what would be considered to be a normal existence, they sometimes seem to get more favoritism than me." A number of musicians find it difficult to balance both work and music, since both lines of work have equally taxing demands. Despite these stresses, this type of work also provides a more normative backdrop for their adult identity.

Others emphasize their heightened sense of responsibility and obligation. They also see themselves as wiser, more patient, and having a stronger work ethic. In contrast, they often discern their younger peers as not yet having reached these points. They distinguish themselves as having developed and matured in positive ways, even though this development is not always understood or appreciated by others outside the musical world. In these ways, their identities as adult musicians are more elaborate than those of younger, less experienced individuals in the music scene.

Emphasizing Alternate Versions of Adulthood

Others persist in maintaining their musician and adult identities by diminishing particular aspects of traditional adulthood. They avoid such complications of normative adulthood by choosing not to have families and professing little interest in conventional family life. And men

are not alone in this. Women too cite the toll that creating a family would have not only on their responsibilities, but also on the devotion to music they would feel comfortable maintaining with a family to support. Mandy, for instance, has known all along that having a family has never been a strong priority for her:

> Having kids has never interested me. Maybe one day, although I doubt it. Some people find having a family to be very fulfilling, but I find this fulfilling. ... And they say, 'Are you gonna have kids?' And I don't really want to have kids. It's hard to tour around with children. And I've never really had any interest in that before and a lot of people, they wanna get married, have a child, have a house, and that sort of thing, live a very traditional lifestyle, whereas me, no.

Mandy is aware that starting a family is the normative role associated with adult femininity. By emphasizing the irrelevance of this aspect of adulthood to her life, she is attempting to construct a new version of adulthood. Although her decision is not that of the majority of women, who do desire to have children, she is part of a growing segment of the population of young women who also anticipate remaining childless by choice (Gillespie 2003). In that regard, her choice is less atypical than it might have been in an earlier period.

In sum, musicians work to make their musician identities compatible with identities as adults. By redefining music as a true career—and one as equally demanding as more traditional careers—it is easy for many to accomplish. They also recognize their lifestyle as distinct from, but not incompatible with, traditional adult identities, particularly in terms of their lessened

family focus. However, because these trends are common to increasing numbers of young adults today, it does not diminish musicians' adult status.

Musicians' Speculations on Alternative Life Paths

Up to this point, I have traced the actual lived experiences of musicians and the directions their lives have taken. However, in discussing their present lives, the musicians often speculate as to what their lives would have been like had they not developed an intense interest in music. In these discussions, they emphasize ways their lives have been marked by music in the context of other developmental issues.

The musicians, as is undoubtedly the case for people in other careers, make decisions in their lives about music that affect other aspects of their lives, particularly other potential career trajectories that they decided against. A few of them are direct in stating that they made clear, conscious decisions for music at the expense of other career goals they had. Some musicians unquestionably have had to decide between a "good, stable" job that would require less time for their bands and jobs that offered more flexibility but less pay, benefits, and status. Many select the latter, clearly prioritizing music over building a traditional career.

Other musicians begin to decipher how their less dramatic, incremental decisions regarding pursuing music may affect their lives as well. For instance, Julie's following comments illustrate how she only recently began considering how her band has impacted her life:

> Julie: I was thinking actually about this interview and your topic
> before I came out here, and it's not really something that had
> occurred to me before, but when I started thinking about it, how

different would my life be as a grown up if I wasn't playing music,

if that wasn't important to me at all? What would I be doing?

Michael: That's one of my questions. Very good.

Julie: I hate to think that this would be the case, but probably if it

wasn't important to me, I would have moved away from Athens,

and I would have some sort of soul-sucking job at X Corporation

in Atlanta and live in the suburbs in some little house. I don't think

that I would ever be happy doing something like that, but it's nice

to think that having this thing that's important to me has maybe

saved me from just falling into the normal, what-you-do-when-

you're-done-with-college type of, you know, get a job and have

kids. … I think, if I wasn't playing music and if it wasn't important

to me at all, I would probably be somewhere else. I wouldn't be

here.

Michael: So was that an intentional decision once you graduated,

to stay here?

Julie: Yeah.

Michael: Yeah?

Julie: Yeah. I didn't say, 'I'm going to stay here and continue to

play music because that's really important to me.' But I think,

were I not playing music and if that wasn't important to me, I

probably would have moved away. ... And it's really weird to think

about it because … when something like that is important to you,

you don't necessarily consciously think, 'This is going to make my

life different in so many ways,' but it really does.

Similar to Julie, other musicians, particularly those who had recently graduated from college,

imagine that they would likely be in a more traditional and professional career were it not for

their current band. Some of them envision they would have pursued teaching, medicine, or

veterinary careers.

The most common response, however, is that the musicians believe they would have

missed out on an extraordinary experience were they not in bands. They ruefully imagine that

they would be "stuck in boring [lives] doing boring job[s]". Other believe that they themselves

would be much more mundane people. Bryant asks himself:

What's the rush? Why do I have to rush and go to grad school right

now and save money for a family? I mean, come on. It's kinda

boring. And all my friends who have taken that path, they all seem

boring to me. And I really cherish having something to really be

excited about and be into. It's so great [to be] outside of the 9 to 5

job. I just really enjoy it.

The musicians' lives are far from perfect and often include (economic) struggle. They are

uniform in seeing their present lives as outweighing the alternatives. In sum, they imagine they

would have taken a more traditional route to adulthood were it not for the impact music has had

on their lives. They also recognize their lives as somewhat off-time, but simultaneously redefine

their decisions as appropriate decisions in line with contemporary adulthood.

<u>Conclusion</u>

For the musicians with whom I spoke, their transition to adulthood is a time of excitement and tension. They are open to limitless possibilities as to how music may affect their lives. A number of them make significant breaks with tradition, with their pasts, and with their peers and families. They are taking new directions in life, but not all of their experiences are unproblematic.

Tasks of Adulthood

The musicians have met the tasks of adulthood of securing an identity, independent status, and career, though in creative ways. They have secured adult identities in ways that both resembled and challenged normative attainment of adulthood. First, their identities are centered on the activities they see as most important to them—music. This is in clear contrast to normative adulthood in which individuals center their identities on traditional careers and/or family.

Second, they separate from the family of origin to gain an independent status. In today's world where the boomerang generation is increasingly becoming the norm (Mitchell 2006), not one musician has moved back to their parents' home. They are also economically autonomous, though to varying degrees. Those still in college may have received some financial assistance from families, but I cannot say for certain. All of them have jobs, and a few are homeowners.

Third, they are laying the groundwork for their adult career. For many, it as centered on music. They rationalize it as "real" work and as a path to true adulthood, not simply something for fun and games. Others however are beginning to shift their priorities away from music and toward more normative career expectations.

Dilemmas of Adulthood

Many of the musicians recognize they are off-time in comparison to their non-musician peers. For some, it is a point of contention, while others are able to successfully negotiate this tension without much hassle. The musicians respond to these stresses in three ways.

Those who are clearly uncomfortable being off-time in their life trajectories begin diminishing the importance of music to their lives. They instead begin planning new directions back to normative adulthood. Others are shifting away from performing music, while focusing toward music production. They are starting their careers as producers, audio engineers, promoters, or other music-related opportunities that provide more stable employment, while allowing them to stay connected to the everyday interactions within the world. Still others remain strongly tied to music as a lifelong career and consider their musician identities to be a core part of their adult identities. They recommit to music and redefine their roles to fit a more adult self.

Normative Timetables in Music Careers

Musicians' experiences over the life course suggest that timetables are looser in music than in traditional careers, but still heavily structured in contemporary society. It may be increasingly common to test out possibilities, and delay responsibility today, but at the same time, it is expected (by parents, peers, and the musicians themselves) that these early adult endeavors in music will be temporary. The musicians embrace a new individualization to explore and take time for themselves before reaching "full" adulthood. However, the normative expectations remain clear: build a career, attain stability, and leave behind adolescent desires.

CHAPTER 5

MEN MUSICIANS' GENDERED LIFE COURSE EXPERIENCES IN MUSIC

In Chapter 4, I traced the life course trajectories of musicians, starting from early childhood, moving through adolescence, and ending with their current situations in life and music. A majority of the musicians with whom I spoke followed a similar set of pathways that enabled them to pursue music in early adulthood, although some were more committed to music as an occupation than were others. Here, I highlight the experiences that are particular to men in my sample. Focusing on men's experiences in isolation from women's suggests aspects of the life course that enable men to more easily pursue music during adolescence and adulthood. Aging across the life course is also tied to development of masculinity, both for the musicians with whom I spoke and society at large. As men discussed their adolescent and early adulthood experiences with music, they illustrate ways masculinity complicates (and is complicated by) their career interest in music.

<u>Men's Early Years in the Life Course</u>

Learning Instruments

Very early in childhood, nearly two-thirds of the men (17 of 28) began learning to play their first musical instrument. Similar to a number of women, they were first exposed to musical instruments early in elementary school, presumably the earliest point at which learning an instrument in possible. The piano was the instrument on which all but one of the men started; and for most of them, it was at the suggestion of their parents. For a few men, one of whom paused mid-story saying, "Oh yeah, I totally just disregarded the fact that I played piano," the instrument

is so far removed from their current repertoire of instruments that they forget it is the instrument on which they started. Most of the men quit the piano after a few weeks (and none continued with it for more than a year) for various reasons. The men who quit the piano after a few weeks typically did so due to their dislike of the instrument. Some men "remembered hating it and not wanting to do it" and had parents who acquiesced to their desires to quit. For the men who played the piano for up a year, the strongest factor that prompted them to abandon the piano was the opportunity to learn a new instrument, primarily the guitar:

> Michael: And once you got your guitar, did you just pretty much
>
> ditch the piano and say, "Forget this"?
>
> Brion: Yeah, yeah. I think I may have played it for another year or
>
> so, just privately from some lady who lived in the neighborhood.
>
> And then I just went, 'Fuck it, I've got to do this [the guitar].'

This trend may be tied to the fact that the piano was almost always the suggestion of the parents. Boys were not hesitant about informing their parents that they did not enjoy the instrument and wished to quit or, more often than not, switch to another one. As discussed in Chapter 4, musicians often negotiated with their parents in getting musical instruments. Parents typically wished for their children to learn classical instruments such as the piano, but would often agree to their children's wishes to get a different instrument given they demonstrated their commitment to the first instrument. However, the men were more likely to seek out new instruments on their own, instruments their parents often wanted to stall. Despite the men not enjoying the piano enough to commit to it, however, a number of them did remorse that they did not persist with the piano during childhood. As will be discussed later, a few of them mourn the advantage mastering the piano could have given them in their current bands, particularly in terms of songwriting.

Ten of the remaining eleven men in my sample learned their first instrument by the end of their middle school years. Four of them began their musical experience on a woodwind instrument, either the saxophone or the clarinet, in school-structured music programs. Another four musicians started on the guitar. Adam, for instance, began playing the guitar after receiving one from his parents for his fifteenth birthday. He is one of the men with the latest start to music among those with whom I spoke. Although he is one of only four men in my sample who still plays the first instrument he learned in his current band, he is also among the minority of men who, as a boy, started his musical path very much on his own, far removed from school-structured music programs and the influence of parents.

By the time the men had completed middle school, over ninety-five percent (27 of 28) had learned at least one instrument. They devoted a significant amount of their free time to practicing their instrument, learning songs, and, for some, beginning to write original music of their own. These factors triggered many of them to start their first band during high school or even as early as middle school, an issue I discuss later.

Extracurricular Activities

During high school, the men were involved in a number of extracurricular activities. A third (8 of 28) were involved in athletics. These men participated in football, basketball, baseball, soccer, wrestling, track and field, and even gymnastics during their high school years. Some (3 of 28) were involved in at least two different sports. The men with athletic experience during adolescence suggest that their participation in school-structured athletics is a rite of passage for adolescent boys. Zach's participation in sports as a teen is extensive:

> Zach: I played sports my whole life: baseball, basketball, football
>
> in junior high. I was pretty involved in other things besides music.

Michael: Did all that continue into high school too?

Zach: Yeah, it did. I liked those things, and I played them, but it

wasn't too much of an option really. Once I got to a certain age,

you were kind of expected to play freshman year basketball and

things like that. I think even if I didn't want to do it, I would have

been sucked into it.

Zach suggests that sports are a typical rite of passage for adolescent boys. He suspects that he would have participated in them regardless of his personal interest in trying them out. While he does not suggest who would have "sucked [him] into it," (although other research suggests it could be his father, siblings, friends, or other peers), his discussion implies that athletics are a typical way to demonstrate and adhere to traditional forms of masculinity during adolescence. Even non-athletic men suggest this was the case as well in their discussions of not being a "normal kid" due to their not participating in sports during their adolescence. Sports, as others suggest (Messner 1990), are one key way to attain a suitable masculine gender identity for boys. However, other activities allowed adolescent boys to secure a masculine gender identity, though perhaps one less valued than the sports-centered version.

In comparison to athletic participation, even more men (16 of 28) participated in school-structured music activities. Nearly all of these men played in the school band for at least part of their middle school and high school years, while two of them played in the symphony. Looking back, very few of them remember enjoying their experiences in the high school band. They describe their quitting the band as the result of the "boring" structure of the program, their being "terrible" at their instrument, or just "hating" the experience. Their initial interest, they stress,

stemmed from their general interest in music and desire to learn an instrument, even if it wasn't the instrument of their first choice.

Despite their not being completely satisfied with their music experience in schools, a number of them did not regret trying these activities out. In fact, eight of the sixteen musicians cite their participation in school-structured music programs as eventually helping them with their other musical projects in the future. Zach learned both the saxophone and the guitar during the same time period in life:

> Michael: Did you start playing the saxophone before the guitar?
>
> Zach: Right around the time that I started playing the saxophone was when I was noodling around on my dad's guitar. So I would say both really. And that was cool because it actually taught me music, how to read music, how to play and read music, so that was good. I haven't released any of that for my guitar, playing guitar. But yeah, that just got me more into the knowledge of music.

Learning music theory in school spurred his learning curve on the guitar. While he (and other musicians) cannot say for sure, Zach assumes that learning academic music theory did advantage him with other instruments. This was particularly the case when Zach and other musicians gave up school-sponsored music programs and attempted to teach themselves how to play other instruments. Having even a limited introduction to music theory (being able to read music, understand chords, develop a sense of rhythm, etc.) no doubt makes learning an instrument on one's own more feasible. Forwarding even later into the life course, Benji cites how his music school education has advanced his music writing for his band Boulevard. Though he long abandoned his consideration of pursuing a career in classical music, he does not have any regrets

since he "learned a whole lot in music school that really helped [him] as far as arranging goes and writing."

The most glaring contrast to women is the overwhelming number of men (24 of 28) who devoted their spare time to playing with friends in garage bands. Regardless of what extracurricular activities in which they were involved, almost every one of them played music with their friends during after school hours. For many, it was more important to them than high school band, particularly since most of them quit the school band well before graduation while continuing their participation in garage bands. For others who persevered with athletic or academic extracurricular activities throughout the entirety of their high school careers, none of them found it difficult to balance both academic extracurricular activities with their personal rock bands even though they "took up so many after school hours."

In general, men's extracurricular activities are somewhat more limited in variety in comparison to women's broader range of activities. This may have to do with the narrower range of activities that enable the construction of appropriate masculine gender identities in high school (Kinney 1993). Most men participated in activities in which they could display masculinity in terms of physical activities or the mastery of an instrument. The stricter forms of "acceptable" adolescent masculinity may limit boys' participation to only a few extracurricular activities. Narrow extracurricular options from which boys may select precipitate narrow acceptable constructions of masculinity. Furthermore, they cite their past (though often limited) experience in school-structured music programs as essential to their learning other instruments, writing and arranging songs, and giving them a "head start" in rock music.

The First Rock Band

The men have varying times at which they joined their first rock band. One-third of the men (9 of 28) started playing in bands during the middle school years. Brion's first experience playing in a band early was in middle school:

> Brion: In the sixth grade I started a band. … I knew that I wanted to make a band. Jimi Hendrix made me want to play guitar, but then I was really into skating because my best friend's bigger brothers who were in high school were all skaters and really into punk at the same time, so the first band that I made was just punk rock. Punk rock is obviously easier for a beginner to play. It was a punk band. So I did it with my best friend, their little brother, a drummer who has been my best friend who lived down the street from me. … Two really good friends. So in the sixth grade we had made a band together.
>
> Michael: That seems really early to start a band together.
>
> Brion: Yeah, yeah. And we would write songs together.
>
> Michael: You actually wrote your own songs?
>
> Brion: Yeah, we would write all our own songs. We never played anybody else's. And I think seventh grade, sixth grade we may have played at some school function, maybe a dance or something, and [we were] horribly mediocre back then. And then in seventh grade we did a talent show, and all the parents were supportive of it. So yeah, a really early start.

Looking back, Brion realizes, perhaps in contrast to other musicians with whom he is acquainted, that he did have a very early start in playing in a band as a child. Similar to other men's stories, Brion's early start is contingent on two aspects of his adolescent life. First, he received and began learning his first rock instrument, the guitar, early in life. By the time he was in early middle school, he had mastered the instrument well enough to join a band and begin composing his own songs. Though Brion remembers his first band as "horribly mediocre," he is among the musicians who had the earliest start in performing in bands. Furthermore, by the seventh grade, he had two public performances under his belt. Second, Brion was involved in a network of peers who played instruments as well. Forming a band requires involvement in social networks with peers who play instruments themselves.

Though Brion's extensive experience early in life was not typical of all men, his experiences do highlight general features of men's early lives that contrast with women's. First, adolescent boys were typically involved in peer groups in which their friends played (or were in the processing of learning) instruments. By virtue of these friendship circles, boys could more easily recruit (or be recruited by) other boys to form a band. During women's adolescent years, they were not likely to have a number of friends who played instruments as well. Hence, they were less likely to start their first band during adolescence.

Over half of the men (15 of 28) joined their first band during high school. Zach said he was:

> Around 14 or 15 when we started a band. It was like a
> neighborhood kind of thing. My friend lived next door and my
> other friend lived next door. He played bass, the other played
> guitar, our other friend Dave played the drums. We tried to write

our own songs, we'd also play cover songs. And we played one of

our friend's fifteenth birthday party. We thought we were rock

stars. Once we did that, started our band, pretty much that was

when I really started getting into it all the time, constantly.

Constructing the band was sometimes a matter of convenience, as the boys often recruited others

in their neighborhood who happened to play instruments themselves. Zach formed his first band

with his close friends, but other men suggest that their first bands were comprised of

acquaintances, not necessarily friends to whom they were closely attached. Similar to Lever's

(1976) study of sex differences in childhood play, the adolescent boys in my study suggest that

the structure of their leisure activities (in this case music) dictate that they broaden their social

circles to include greater numbers of potential playmates to allow the boys to fill all requisite

roles.

While not all of them were "that serious" about their rock bands in high school, four of

the five of them did perform in public with those bands. By high school graduation, twenty-four

of the men had been in at least one rock band, and over half had performed publicly at least once.

Only a minority of men (4 of 28) with whom I spoke started their first band after high school.

Perceived Future During Adolescence

Over half of the men had fairly clear ideas of what their parents hoped they would

become upon establishing adulthood. Typically, most musicians' parents (15 of 28) imagined

their sons would achieve professional occupations in engineering, business, medicine, or

teaching. Only two of the men believed their parents anticipated them attending art school after

high school graduation. These men displayed an interest in and knack for art during adolescence,

apparently good enough to warrant a possible career in the arts. The remaining men (12 of 28)

maintain their parents had no clear expectations as to what they hoped their children would pursue in adulthood.

The only people, man or woman, who had parents who expected them to pursue a career in music were two of the men: Benji and Davey. While their parents anticipated music in their sons' futures, they did not explicitly foresee their sons becoming rock stars. Rather, Benji's parents imagined the possibility of him attending music school and becoming a music teacher. Benji and Davey are also the only musicians whose lives turned out most similarly to their parents' expectations. Benji did get his degree in music, as well as in education. After college graduation, however, his life took a stronger turn into the rock music scene.

Looking back on their expectations of adulthood during their adolescence, the men themselves had a range of dreams they expected to pursue as adults. Over one-third (10 of 28) of the men originally had dreams of attending college and securing professional jobs in, for example, medicine, dentistry, law, and psychiatry. During their years in high school, however, just over half of the men (15 of 28), in contrast, did foresee themselves pursuing a career in music. Here Benji discusses the extent to which he considered a career as a classical musician:

> Benji: It was there [at the magnet school] that I was able to start
>
> getting into the orchestra, the string program, which is what
>
> ultimately led me to UGA to study classical music.
>
> Michael: This was after you learned the guitar?
>
> Benji: Yeah. I was taking classical lessons with the guitar. That's
>
> what I auditioned with to go to this magnet school. That was
>
> seventh grade. The string teacher there was like, 'You know what,
>
> I really need some bass players in the orchestra. The bass and the

guitar go hand in hand.' That's what happened. I was like, 'Okay, I'll give it a shot.' I started playing string bass. I kept the two going. I'll always love classical music. And for a while I thought I could do that professionally, but I think somewhere deep inside I always knew that I just wanted to play rock and roll.

Michael: There was a time when you thought classical music was your future?

Benji: Yeah, in college. That's what I studied. I studied double bass. … I thought, 'Maybe I can do symphony work for a living.' But it's such a cutthroat nature, playing in an orchestra. I don't think I would change anything because I learned a whole lot in music school that really helped me as far as like arranging goes and writing. I make money on the side playing for musical theaters now, in the pit orchestra. It goes on, that side of me, still.

Benji's academic history in music clearly impacted his career in rock music. His music teacher encouraged him to learn and pursue classical music in high school. While he cites this aspect of his history as influential to his development as a musician in Boulevard, he simultaneously regards the decision to pursue a career in the classical music world as more "cutthroat." While he and most other musicians believe "making it big as a rockstar" was a long shot, they persever nonetheless. More importantly, many of them do so because fame and fortune is not the driving force behind their playing music in rock bands.

Despite the musicians' not anticipating making a living off of their rock music, they did, however, imagine music to be a core component of the careers they planned on pursuing. For

instance, some of the men have prospects to become audio engineers who would record music for a living. Jason says:

> When it was time for me to figure out what college I was going to go to, I realized I didn't want to go to a conservatory because I didn't have that kind of background in classical music. And I didn't have the discipline to really sit down eight hours a day and slave over difficult piano music. So I found this college, Berkeley College of Music in Boston that seemed, if I'm going to go to college somewhere, I'm going to go to a rock school! And that's probably the best one. And I figured out while I was there, dad was right about, 'You should make some money somehow, something to fall back on,' but I still didn't want to do it outside the realm of music. So I was an audio engineer. But I did it in high school before that, before I decided that I wanted to be an audio engineer, I know that I also thought about working for a record company. I was into Shimmy Disc Records at the time, and I thought I would just go to New York and [knock, knock, knock, knock], 'I like your records! Hire me!' But I never did that.

For most musicians who consider the feasibility of making a living off of music, a majority of them adopt what they consider "more realistic" expectations regarding their futures. These men often admit to heeding their parents' advice regarding their future careers. Accepting the strong possibility that building a career in performing music is highly unlikely, they sway back to a more traditional path by accruing educational credentials in collegiate institutions. However,

they typically do not pursue the most traditionally marketable degrees. Instead, they gain knowledge and training in music-related fields, most often recording and other audio engineering programs. These musicians, while performing in their bands, are simultaneously planting seeds for their "more realistic" future careers that still include a music aspect. In some ways they are attempting to conform to their parents' expectations of them as much as they can comfortably do. While none of them pursue their parents' expectations to get a degree in medicine or teaching, they do understand their parents' wishes for them to obtain a college degree, though in a field in which the musicians are more personally interested.

Commitment to Music

Music as a Career vs. Hobby

Just over half (15 of 28) of the men consider their participation in music to be a lifelong career choice. They by no means imagine they will one day be on the cover of *Rolling Stone* or play to sold-out arenas. Rather, they hope to devote a small, though national, following, get signed to a small record label, tour regularly, and make enough money to survive, living a simple, and not at all extravagant, life. Even this dream, though much more attainable than ideas of becoming the next Beatles, is a long shot. Zach is initially torn as to he considers music to be his career or his hobby:

> It [making a career in music] seems impossible. The numbers are
>
> just, you're probably not going to make it. But so are the odds of
>
> opening up a restaurant or starting a magazine. What ever you do,
>
> there is a high percentage that it just won't work out the way you at
>
> least hoped it would. So I don't really have any other options.
>
> What, am I going to *not* do it?

He rationalizes his decision by stressing that no career choice is a sure thing. He also seems so invested at this point that giving up his dream is not even an option. At the same time, he understands the chances of making it big are not in his favor.

One-third (9 of 28) of the men consider music to be their hobby, having no intentions of pursuing it as a lifelong career.[15] Most of these men liken making a career in music to "playing to lottery" or a "roll of the dice." Their years of involvement in the scene make it clear to them that making it big had little to do with actual talent. Rather, it is based on contacts and a willingness to create a particular type of music for mass appeal. These men do not give the impression they are burnt out or bitter at the music scene. They do, however, state that music, though central to their lives, is only one interest they have, only one aspect of their identities in which they are invested. Most of them also imagine music will always be a part of their lives in some way. In discussing the behind-the-scenes work that is required in being a band, particularly booking shows, scheduling tours, recording music, and promoting, the musicians suggest that those aspects alter the band experience more to a business project than a creative endeavor. For some of these musicians, it diminishes the "fun quality" that was once a part of creating music.

The hobby-oriented musicians create music for music's sake. They have no interest in attempting to build a career in music, in part because they recognize they would be somewhat at the mercy of not only the record label, but critics and fans as well. Ian, in discussing his intentions to not pursue music as a career, says:

> I guess always knowing that I wasn't that gifted at it, that and a
>
> really strong built-in fear of failure manifest in optimism which is

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[15] The remaining four musicians describe music as both a career and a hobby. They are not at a point in their lives in which they are certain what direction their lives may take. As such, they believe their musical futures could do either way: a possible career in music or perhaps something else entirely.

like, if you really want something that's kind of a roll of the dice,

you could just end up screwing yourself over, hurting yourself

from a psychological point of view. A lot of the arts are very

subjective, whether you become successful as recognized by the

greater world. You could be a great artist and nobody would know

it until you're dead. Or *never* know it. And maybe what you have

to do to get acceptance while you're alive is that you'd have to

change what you're doing a bit to please others. And even then, if

you try really hard doing that, it's really just up to a few critics or

people to decide whether you're going to be successful in the sense

of getting signed to a big record deal or making an amount of

money to do it as your living. Whereas if you keep it as a hobby

and you never really want it to be more, you just do what makes

you happy and you don't ever really have to worry about any of

that. You like doing it. My real job is fine with me. I don't have

some huge desire to escape the life that I'm in.

Parents and other adults shape the musicians' ideas of what constitutes an appropriate

adult career. Some men highlight the tension between their chosen career and their parents'

expectations of them. Patrick discusses at length the impact of adults on his decision to pursue

music as a career. He begins by remembering his mother's former profession in music:

I think it's important to remember that my mom gave up a career

in the opera to raise two kids. So the behavior that I saw modeled

for me was that music was an impracticality and that you should

not dwell on it too much because it will distract you from the really important business of making a living. I think in some ways that my mom's desire to be a creative person professionally was frustrated by that desire for practicality. Again in some ways it made her really, really happy. I talked to [my band mate] Noah about this the other day. Those guys [in my band] sometimes feel like they are really at odds with the material necessities of paying rent, paying bills, having equipment that works and all that, because it's a constant struggle. A foot in two worlds. Impractical for all society's messages you get from parents, teachers, vocational counselors, grandparents. The music is a luxury. There's no way to make a living, so you tend to second guess the impulse as a musician. And also you don't allow yourself the luxury of enjoying some of it. I see that behavior in my band members when we travel. They forget to have fun because they've been told that what they're doing is stealing away from their responsibilities by deciding to be creative. 'This is irresponsible. It's indulgent.' The thing is, I made a fairly decent living, not a great living, but a decent living in Five-Eight, so I've seen that it's possible to make a living as a musician. If we had made smarter decisions, we'd have made an even better living. It's hard to help people see that when they've got twenty plus years of their parents telling them, 'Music is not a career. Art is not a career.'

Although he has been able to make a "decent" living off music in the past, Patrick's anxiety carries on to this day. Furthermore, this tension between pursuing music over other more stable jobs is a daily stressor for most musicians. When men disclose their hesitations to fully pursue music (or when they debated whether it would be a temporary aspect of their lives), they typically frame their hesitations in economic terms. They question whether the self-fulfillment aspect of music overweighs the minimal economic compensation for music. Economic limitations of music seem to more greatly threaten men's than women's identities. Masculinity has historically been "measured by a paycheck" (Gould 1974), and perhaps men musicians are concerned with the disadvantage their pursuing music may have on their economic futures and masculine gender identities. Last, this aspect is apparent for men who are married, who have or are considering starting families, and for those who believe they will one day want to have children in the future. While men musicians are unique in many ways from the average American man, they nonetheless feel compelled to maintain the traditional role of the breadwinner.

Mentors

Regardless of one's experience performing in bands during high school and beyond, beginning one's career in a town with a reputable music scene can be daunting. Musicians with whom I spoke share their experiences in taking their first steps in the Athens music scene. During these discussions, I probed whether they received any assistance, words of advice, or strategies as to how to become a successful band from anyone in their lives. Levinson (1978) suggests that the men in his sample, regardless of their particular career, had mentors in their lives who help with their transitions into the working phases of their lives. Just over half of the

men (18 of 28) with whom I spoke suggest that they did indeed have a mentor figure in their

lives who helped with their music careers. Jason remembers:

> There was a coworker of mine who had been in an Atlanta band
>
> ten years prior, and he sort of explained some things about how to
>
> promote yourself to the clubs and how to make things look a little
>
> better. He made us a logo real quick. 'Put that on the cover of the
>
> cassette that you are going to send [to the club]. It will look better.'

In many cases, such as the one described by Jason, interactions and relationships with mentors

are informal. While Jason's mentor did not meet regularly with him to discuss band strategies,

nor did they share a personal relationship beyond their being coworkers, he did give Jason

particular advice on marketing his band and securing shows at clubs. Other musicians (11 of 28)

mention how chance meetings with other musicians, most often at other shows, bars, or parties,

often provided them new strategies to further their bands. Jason's coworker's suggestion, albeit

minor, was a strategy to give Jason's band a better shot at securing a show at the club. A few

others cite family members as taking on mentoring roles.

Only a few men (4 of 28) cite their band mates as taking on mentoring roles, often when

these band mates have previous experience in other bands in Athens. Matt cites his current

drummer as his mentor because of his experience touring and recording with another band in

Athens. He concludes his discussion of how his drummer assisted him by warning me:

> If you talk to him and you tell him he was my mentor, that's gonna
>
> cause a lot of trouble between us. Oh my God, I would never hear
>
> the end of that. … I don't think he'd ever think that I would say he
>
> was my mentor.

Like Matt, some men, while they did understand the extent to which others act as "unofficial"

mentors, are hesitant about using the term "mentor" in describing their relationship with them.

Bryant discusses his meetings with a relatively well-known Athens musician who helped set his

music career. In describing their relationship, he is adamant that:

> I wasn't like his freaking apprentice, he wasn't necessarily my
>
> mentor or anything like that, but he met with us and gave us a lot
>
> of great ideas and talked with us about a lot of good things.

Men musicians are hesitant to admit that their entrance to and success in the music scene is aided

by outsiders. Perhaps the musicians are attempting to adhere to the DIY (Do-It-Yourself) ethic at

play in indie rock scenes. Whatever the case is, in contrast to women, men are more likely to

ward off the suggestion that they received any help from an outside mentor, no matter how

minimal. In these ways, the men continue to adhere to traditional masculine characteristics of

independence (Kimmel 1996).

However, a few men suggest that having more readily-available mentors would have

benefited their initial foray into the music scene. One musician, after considering who helped

him when he first arrived in Athens, laments:

> I wish I could say there were more people showing us the way. I
>
> wish there was more, what I really thought there was, I mean, [one
>
> band] in town has kind of showed us. … If anything, from the
>
> people we felt like we could use help from the most in Athens, it
>
> hasn't been there as much.

These ideas suggest that men are by no means opposed to accepting the help from a guiding hand

in the music scene. If anything, as this quote suggests, they wish there were more experienced

musicians willing to offer their assistance to newcomers. At the same time, masculinity may play a role in the situation as well. While men new to the music scene seem to want (and in some cases expect) help from other local musicians, they seem hesitant or unwilling to *seek* help themselves. Perhaps doing so would question their masculine gender identity, particularly the masculine expectation of independence, self-sufficiency, and self-reliance (Kimmel 1996). It may be that accepting help when offered is less threatening to the musicians' senses of masculinity than is seeking help themselves.

In contrast to the women, over one-third (10 of 28) men do not admit to having a mentor figure introduce them to the music scene in Athens. By denying the assistance of any outside figure, they too seem to be adhering to traditionally masculine characteristics of self-reliance. They are lone wolves attempting to make an entrance to the music scene on their own. At earlier in the interviews however, a few of these men did suggest they had mentor figures. Once explicitly asked whether someone "showed them the ropes when [they] were first starting out," however, they rebuff their earlier mentioning of receiving advice and assistance from more experienced musicians in the scene.

The Musician Identity

Music is an important part of the men's identities. A number of them cite the precedence their being a musician takes over other aspects of their lives. It outweighs their identities stemming from their other jobs, their educational backgrounds, and other activities in which they took part. A majority of the men (20 of 28) have taken on the identity as a musician for quite some time. A total of four musicians, of whom Jason is one, have *always* felt like a musician:

> Well, what musician means to me, it's almost like a calling. It's a
>
> calling. Some people say that they are Muslim or Christian, and

> I'm a musician. So it was really early that I would have claimed to
>
> be a musician. But to somebody like my dad, a musician is
>
> somebody who is very good at their instrument and they have
>
> some way of making money in doing it. … It was probably when I
>
> went to college for [music] that I became a musician to him, even
>
> though I had been playing in bands before then.

He likens his musicianhood as similar to a religious calling. To him, it is as central to his life as religion is to others.

For exactly half of the men (14 of 28), they first self-identified as musicians during the high school years when music began taking up more of their free time and they started performing in bands of their own. Another four men adopted the musician identity after their move to Athens.

Other men take a somewhat more business-oriented approach to attaining musicianhood. One man felt like a musician when he began making money off of his music:

> I guess college aged, maybe in high school. I guess when people
>
> were actually calling me to come play jobs for money. I started
>
> doing musical theater, playing bass for orchestras [in high school].
>
> I guess when I started getting a paycheck.

Here, money is tightly bound to his ideas of career and true musicianhood. Rather than self-identifying as a musician as other men did, this man identified as a musician when it was treated as a business, namely when others hired him for pay.

Zach first identified as a musician when he:

> …was in high school. The private school I went to, not a whole lot
>
> of people played music. No one really cared about secular rock. So
>
> automatically, I kinda got pinned, not like an outsider, not like that
>
> weird kid, the just as the kid who does that. And I didn't mind.

Though he took on the identity of a musician in high school, it wasn't purely on his own terms. Rather, he was pegged as a musician by his peers. While he "didn't mind" this label, it took an outside force to first instigate his musician identity. Transitions to high school settings may be key to broadening adolescent boys' identity options (Kinney 1993), whether it is self- or other-initiated. The increased numbers of social cliques during adolescence help boys to recover previously "flawed" identities from middle school. Zach "didn't mind" his new identity in high school because it may have been more valued than his previous identity or other potential identities (as an "outsider" or "that weird kid").

Such is the case for men. They often do not initially self-identify as musicians, but take on that aspect of their identities when it is precipitated by outsiders, either through paying them for musical services or stereotyping them as musicians. In both cases, self-identifying as a musician is less agentic, not purely on their own terms.

Very few men (5 of 28) do not self-identify as musicians. Bryant from Cinemechanica is one musician who avoids labeling himself a musician:

> Michael: Was there a general time when you were more
>
> identifying yourself as a musician?
>
> Bryant: No. I still don't see myself necessarily as a musician. I
>
> mean, what is a musician?

Michael: Is it because you are—

Bryant: Just because I'm weird. It's like, what is a musician? Is it a

profession? I guess it can be. But for me it isn't necessarily. It's

kind of something I do. I do play music.

His hesitation to describe himself as a musician is particularly surprising since his band moved to

Athens for the music scene, tours extensively, has released an album, and started their own

record label. Despite meeting these goals, however, Bryant does not feel like a musician, partly

because he is uncomfortable viewing music as a profession. Later in the interview, Bryant

discloses that music will likely be a temporary part of his life, as he wants to pursue other goals

later in life. Not seeing music as his career may play a significant role in his not identifying as a

musician.

Men Musicians and Masculinity

Throughout the interviews, men reveal the complications of masculinity within the music

scene. Often they raise these issues in terms of their coming of age and "discomfort" with

traditionally masculine pursuits. Other times the men revel in the unique gender performances

they and other men in music enact, both on stage and off.

One-quarter of the men (6 of 28) believe men musicians adhere to components of

traditional masculinity. Pushbutton lead singer-guitarist Chris does not see men in the music

scene, including himself, as enacting a masculinity any different from other men. He discusses

men musicians as different only in terms of their working from "a different area of the brain."

Nor does he believe participation in music required being better in tune with one's emotions.

More men (9 of 28) are consistent in their beliefs that men musicians had a masculine

gender identity wholly unique from other men in contemporary society. Jason feels that "there is

something special about musicians." While he can not pinpoint exactly what it was, Jason believes it encompasses men musicians' entire lives—their identities, their interests, their goals, their perseverance, their relationships. He includes a disclaimer that musicians were not the only group of men who were unique. He concludes by saying, "If you are a sports guy as much as I am a music guy, you may think there is something [unique] about men who play sports." He implies that men could be influenced, by the occupations and leisure pursuits in which they take part, into enacting particular expressions of masculinity. While music may have taught him particular lessons as to how to enact his masculinity, he believes sports and other activities similarly influence masculinity, though with unique outcomes.

Almost half of the men (13 of 28), however, feel that they and other men in the music scene did create and enact a unique range of masculinities that incorporates both traditional and nontraditional components of hegemonic masculinity. In discussing the complicated mix of components in men musicians masculinities, most men with whom I spoke believe not only that men had a range of gender performances, but also that most men musicians enact both hypermasculine and hyperfeminine attributes. They spoke of men musicians as comprising sets of dualities that, at first glance, do not seem reconcilable. The men describe themselves, their band mates, and other musicians generally, as enacting traditionally gendered and transgressive gender performances simultaneously. They describe men who perform music as being "meatheads" but having meaningful lives, as being narcissistic but having empathy and intense emotion for others, as being selfish but not being materialistic, and as adhering to traditional masculine expectations but wearing makeup on stage. For many men, of whom Patrick is one, they believe these contradictory dualities at play are typical of men who create art:

I think that is the essential duality of being a rock and roll musician. That's what makes the best rock and roll musicians great. It's that combination of toughness and vulnerability. Think about the way that you perceive David Bowie, especially in the '70s: the rock and roll animal, Diamond Dogs, but also in drag. That duality intrigues people and draws them in because they are experiencing that on their own. And then when you're a teenager, you're overflowing with emotions, and you feel both like your balls weigh five pound each, but also that you just want to be loved by someone. That's rock and roll in a nutshell. I think that Music Hates You is the most overpowering, heavy band, and it's very masculine. We're all pretty much guy guys. We work on our own cars. Everybody but me has a physically laborious job. But we also feel things really intently. Every one of us has wrestled with depression, and every one of us has wrestled with anxiety, and every one of us wants more than anything to be with someone who loves us and to be safe in the world. But part of being in Music Hates You is understanding that you're never really safe. Life is a constant struggle against irrelevance, against superficiality, against being co-opted and sucked into a life that doesn't allow you to completely be who you are. So I think that both of those stereotypes, they are both completely wrong and absolutely right. I think the central conflict of being in rock and roll, being a rock and

roll musician is that kind-hearted killer mystique. And all the great

rock and roll artists personify that.

Patrick's analysis of the contradictions in musicians' gender identities is tied to contradictory

expectations faced by men in contemporary society. Particularly among musicians, divulging

one's vulnerability is increasingly more acceptable for men today. In many ways, divulging

one's vulnerability as a man (and doing so through music) may be a therapeutic solution for

dealing with the unattainable demands of traditional masculinity. Masculinity, in music scenes at

least, seems to be constructed in opposition to hegemonic ideals of appropriate manhood

(Connell 1987).

Other musicians who enact both traditional and nontraditional components of masculinity

do so in reaction to stereotypical images of men in rock. Navid describes male sexuality as a

historic core component of rock musicians. He believes it still to be the case today, although

bands are increasingly playing with the notion of sexuality. For instance, he cites a band in which

the lead singer intentionally complicates ideas of masculine sexuality. He attended a show in

Athens in which:

> The singer would come into the audience and sort of just feel up on
>
> guys. Not to say that he was gay, but just because the guys were
>
> uncomfortable with that. And that's entertaining. That's what he's
>
> trying to do. He's trying to make people upset.

This singer was trying to "make people upset" by disturbing traditional expectations of male

sexuality in rock culture. In other interviews, a number of men critique musicians who are in

bands to increase their access to sex. While Navid's example does parallel traditional enactments

of sexuality on stage, it does so in a way that threatens ideas of hegemonic (heterosexual)

masculinity. The singer, according to Navid, was not intending to flirt with men in the audience, but rather to tease the boundaries of acceptable masculinity.

Adam, whose band Coulier has a reputation of not taking themselves too seriously[16], consistently straddles the line between traditional and nontraditional masculinities. He emphasizes the contradictory nature of his band:

> A lot of Coulier is very much this end of the spectrum, the masculine, power riff, it's very tongue-in-cheek. It's extremely tongue-in-cheek because we are not, I mean, we're dudes I guess. That's all done with a sense of humor. Coulier is not an emotional band. … My old band, I never wrote the lyrics. I guess I could write a guitar part and be like, this is very sad. … So there is a lot of stuff that is probably in tune with the emotions. But I definitely did not write music being like, 'I want to write a sad song. I'm in a bad mood, I'm going to write a sad song.' In the band I've never been like genuinely, 'Let's write a dude song.' And you know that would be funny, if we wrote a dude song. We would do it intentionally, because it's funny, not because we're tough. I like this band because I think we had a unique approach.

Adam's performance in Coulier (both in terms of music, as well as in gender) complicates ideas of masculinity. While Coulier does have a traditionally masculine sound: loud guitars, aggressive music, they also are critical of masculinity. Their masculine performances are intended to be

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[16] To further illustrate the "tongue-in-cheek" nature of his band, Adams shares the history of the band. The name is an homage of sorts to actor-comedian Dave Coulier, most famous for his role as Uncle Joey in the sitcom *Full House*.

critiques of traditional masculinity. At the same time, however, their audience may not always be in on the joke, particularly since countless bands with similar sounds have performed similarly without any intention of making a statement on the absurdity of hegemonic masculinity. As such, the audience could theoretically understand Coulier as conforming and contributing to traditional depictions of masculinity. While Adam is critical of masculinity, his dialogue also conforms to hegemonic masculinity. He separates the emotional aspect from the creative aspect of music. While he does not explicitly suggest emotional songwriting is feminine, he does distance himself from it, implying traditionally masculine overtones.

Still other musicians frame men's gender identities in terms of their lifestyle and life pathways. A number of musicians contrast their lives with their non-musician peers, focusing on distinctions between their working lives. Bryant contrasts himself to his college peers:

> Just about everyone who graduated with me at Wake Forest, their
>
> path is probably very different. They're either in grad school or
>
> they're doing the 9 to 5 or they are a total bum living with their
>
> parents. It's definitely a different perspective, where your life is
>
> taking you. And also, for me, having a sense of meaning to my life.
>
> I want to play music. I want to spread the word on this music.
>
> That's what I want to do. A lot of people, nonmusicians, don't
>
> have that drive to work for. So many times people are working 9 to
>
> 5s that they are not happy with. It just depends. It depends on the
>
> musician, just the same. Are you in it because you love music?
>
> Then you have something, a purpose for your life, something to
>
> live for, a reason to get up. If you're just kind of wandering

>through your life like a fucking zombie and you don't have
>
>anything to look forward to, it just depends on the person. But in
>
>general, if you are *really* a musician and you really love doing it,
>
>then you have that. I just hope everyone else that has a 9 to 5 loves
>
>what [they]'re doing.

Men explicitly tie masculine gender identity to their working lives. It is not simply that working in a different job (as a musician) makes men unique. More importantly, it is the impact working as a musician has on the development of men's gender identities. Having a passion for the work one does is what contributes to men musicians' masculinities. It provides Bryant, as well as other musicians, with "a sense of meaning to [his] life." While work has traditionally anchored men's gender identities, increasing numbers of men as of late distance their identities from the work they do. Among musicians, however, having a satisfying work life, one in which they are autonomous and creative and self-directed, may ease the construction of a suitable and satisfactory masculine gender identity in comparison to nonmusician men. Over half of the musicians feel fortunate to have a job that did contribute to their selfhood in positive ways, even hoping that other men were equally satisfied in their jobs.

The Gender Imbalance in the Music Scene

All of the men recognize the gender imbalance in the local music scene. For the most part, they do not necessarily believe the gender ratio is more imbalanced in their local scene compared to the nationwide trends. A few of them, although they did recognize the overabundance of men in music, believe the gender ratio is improving over time.

Most of the men have ideas as to why fewer women are involved in bands than were men, but a few have no theory to explain the gender imbalance. When I ask why they believe

there are fewer women in music, two of the men simply shrug their shoulders and say something along the lines of, "I don't know. I've never really thought about it." I pause to give them time to mull it over before realizing it is time to move to the next section of the interview. These men, however, are the minority. Most of them (26 of 28) have at least one explanation to account for women's lesser participation in music.

Socialization

Over half of the men (18 of 28) believe socialization is a primary influence that dissuades women from and prompts men to pursue music in adulthood (and even earlier in life). From early in life, musicians believe boys in general are "encouraged to be more proactive and follow what they want to do rather than what they are told to do." These lessons may prompt men to pursue a range of interests, from sports to education goals to music. In some sense, the men musicians believe men to have more leeway in what they pursue in their leisure activities as well as their academic and vocational pursuits. They believe one privilege of growing up as a male in contemporary America is the push to be more autonomous and make decisions more fully on their own.

Some men believe women are socialized to have a different set of interests in comparison to men. Furthermore, a few suggest that women are "smarter" than men and therefore made wiser life decisions. These men suggest that women are more rational in making career and educational choices and, for this reason, decide against pursuing music. They reverse traditional conceptions of men and women in describing gendered trends in music. They characterize men as irrational and women as rational in selecting among career options.

Some men (8 of 28) discuss gendered socialization and the limits of masculinity as contributing to women's lesser participation in music. In response to my asking what he believes contributed to the gender imbalance in music, Chris replies:

> You know what I think that has to do with? It is socially acceptable
> for women to cry. Women are a lot more vocal about what they are
> thinking and what they're feeling. They have better
> communication skills with their friends and their parents, whereas
> guys are forced to keep everything pent up inside. Like for me
> personally, that's one way that I address my issues and get things
> out: through songs, through playing live. And that's why it's a
> boy's club, because it is a way to get the tears out.

A number of men discuss the creation of music as therapeutic for musicians, and a few of them, such as Chris, cite this as particularly important for men's mental health. Due to gendered social expectations on the limited acceptability of emotionality by men in our culture, music is considered to be the outlet for expressing one's inner feelings. In this sense, men musicians, though unique in some aspects of their gender identities, continue to adhere to traditional expectations of masculinity in their not divulging their emotions inappropriately. The exception to this, as demonstrated by Chris, is by outleting one's emotions through songs. This situation is a contradiction in that it requires men to share their personal feelings with a public audience, many of whom the songwriter may not be acquainted.

Some of these men explicitly mention that writing music may be an emotional outlet for men in contemporary US society—and perhaps one of the only acceptable emotional outlets for them. These men believe songwriting is a "way to express things, a way to be honest about

yourself." Roy, in particular, believes, as a musician, he is "much more brutally honest than I might be able to admit in conversation." Jay believes men songwriters are complex people who:

are in touch with their emotions, but they also feel the need to express this masculinity. … I think [music history] started off as a real male thing, tough guy, rebellious James Dean kind of thing, what with Elvis and all. But you always see even the toughest guys writing in these bands. You have to be in touch with your emotions, but I don't think you have to understand [them]. There's always been that confused sort of thing, with Nirvana or whatever. They can't deny their emotions—they tend to be run by them. If you're run by your emotions, you can't turn it off. So if you have any musical talent, you put that together.

Since women are "allowed" to be emotional, they do not need music participation to relieve emotional stress from everyday life. As such, men may be drawn to music for more social-psychological reasons in comparison to women.

On the other side of the socialization coin, other men focus more explicitly on women's differential socialization as the main factor that inhibited their participation in music culture. Navid says:

The reason why women don't play music is because they aren't socially encouraged to do so. I feel like that's a shame because it's been proven time and time again that music is such a boom to creativity and to mental powers, specifically on a mathematical level. It's just such a shame that women aren't encouraged to play

music. In the thing is, I can think of at least two or three people off

the top of my head who are women who are great musicians. At

the same time, I can think of at least two people off the top of my

head who are women who tried playing music, in some cases

didn't even try and never got anywhere, and just kind of gave up.

And I always felt like I was just such a shame because there are no

women that play music. In Athens, I think there are a few. In

Atlanta, it's more rare. Beyond that, even in independent music,

where things are supposed to be more racially and gender tolerant,

they're still mostly white males doing just about everything. And I

just feel like that is a shame. Obviously, there are some notable

exceptions. There was the whole Kathleen Hanna riot girl

movement, but even so, those die off. They've just sort of been

flash in the pan. I'd really like to see some sustained change. I

don't know what it will take, but I'd like to see it happen. I'd like

to see more women in music.

These comments suggest that musicians regard socialization as bifurcated by gender. They also

imply that men who consider pursuing music are advantaged over women, though none

explicitly addressed their individual advantage. Last, male advantage, as suggested by Navid,

reaches far beyond the realms of music. He connects music to creativity and higher-order

thinking, none of which are biologically determined by biology.

Gendered Rock Culture

Unlike women, a majority of the men (16 of 28) discuss the impact of culture on the gender breakdown of rock bands. During their childhood, many men became fascinated with rock music. Often a particular band or musician planted the seed for the adolescent boy to want to learn an instrument. Men remember nearly all of their favorite bands while growing up were comprised entirely of men. As such, they felt they could easily identify with them: either in terms of their selves or the content of their music. In any case, they could easily imagine themselves in the roles of these men since they shared the same gender. Considering this, many men, such as Zach, imagine it difficult for adolescent girls to similarly identify with the same musicians they men did:

> When girls my age were growing up, I don't know how many girls
>
> there really were to look up to be a musician. Like I said, growing
>
> up, every band that was on the radio when I was in the fifth grade
>
> was a male rock band.

Bryant has similar thoughts on historically gendered rock culture:

> I really think it has a lot to do with the whole beginning of rock
>
> music and what we see rock music as. Rock music has been four
>
> dudes in a band since freaking the Beatles, prior to that, forever.
>
> Over time, you start having more girls playing. In rock music now
>
> there's probably more girls than there were ever before. I really
>
> think it's because of the path of rock music really.

Men seem more attuned to the masculine trajectory of rock culture, perhaps because a number of them identified with the musicians' music they grew up listening to. For many of them,

connecting to a band was an inspiration early in life to learn an instrument. They consider the extent to which a teenage girl would be likely to gain inspiration from a group collectively comprised of men and believe it would be more difficult for them.

The men who had experience in music school, compared the gendered rock music culture to the more gender equitable classical music culture. Bryant contrasts differences in rock and school-structured music cultures:

> Think about being in a marching band and high school band, orchestra, symphony orchestra. There's not an outstanding number of men versus women in that. Women can do it just the same as a man. It's been that way for a long time, right? So in rock music, I really think it [the imbalance] is from past tradition.

To him, the gender disparity in rock culture does not make sense since, during the high school years (and perhaps beyond), women participate in other music cultures to the same extent as do men. While women seem equally interested and capable of learning instruments and performing in school-structured bands, their representation severely diminishes in rock music culture (Bielby 2004). The only explanation Bryant has for this "drop off" is the extent to which rock culture is structured by masculine norms.

Discrimination

The least popular response (6 of 28) involves beliefs that women's lesser participation may be the result of discrimination in the music scene. Zach wonders whether "guy musicians aren't accepting of girls coming into music." He speculates whether growing up in the South further complicated the process of contemplating music for women. His discussion of potential discrimination takes two forms, each of which would potentially occur at different times in the

life course and by different individuals. First, early in life women may be discouraged from learning an instrument or pushed away from masculine rock culture, possibly by parents or other adult figures. Second, for those women who do learn instruments and may have an interest in participating in bands later in life, the men with whom they would be participating with may not accept them into their culture.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have traced men's life course experiences in music, beginning at the age at which music first entered their lives and moving through adolescence and into their current situations in early adulthood. At each phase of their lives, men experience particular events that either directly prompt them to pursue music or make it easily for them to do so during adulthood. Here I summarize three aspects of life course events particular to men: opportunities that prompted their participation in music, constraints that hindered their musical participation, and ways they negotiated the attainment of masculine gender identities.

Gendered Opportunities and Constraints

The men's lives are characterized by particular opportunities that made acquiring musical skills easier for them. The men had an early introduction to music, often starting to learn their first instrument at five or six years of age. While most of them gave up on these first instruments shortly thereafter, they all transitioned to other instruments later in life, oftentimes to rock instruments they were much more self-motivated to learn. Their peer networks makes learning these instruments easier. Having a circle of friends (of whom nearly all were boys themselves) provides the musicians a faster learning curve.

The boys experience some constraints as well. First, parental expectations for their children's futures also complicated men's commitment to music. A majority of the men's parents

expected (or hoped) their sons would grow in adulthood pursuing largely traditional careers. Second, the economic toll of committing oneself to music and therefore having limited economic resources is strong among the men. Masculinity has been historically tied to the economic role, and men musicians are delinquent from other men in this way.

Through their participation in creating and performing music in bands, men experiment with new forms of masculinity, and many have been playing with masculinity for many years of their lives. During adolescence, many of them avoided athletics, the traditional route to adolescent masculinity. Instead, they opted for more arts-centered and, for some, softer masculinity. As they transitioned to adulthood, they continue to test out alternate forms of gender, sometimes intentionally and other times without much thought. In sum, they create and are secure in their constructions of masculinities which often blend what they see as the most beneficial aspects of traditional masculinity with traditional femininity.

Learning and Constructing Masculinity

Only a very few men believe men musicians to have completely traditional or completely nontraditional masculine gender identities. A majority of them see men who play music as having a mix of traditional and nontraditional aspects of masculinity, and even a mix of masculine and feminine traits.

Last, in discussing the gender imbalance in the music scene, men simultaneously discuss the ways that they learned gender themselves. Many men theorize that few women participate in music due to the masculine culture of rock music. They recollect having identified with the musicians whose music they listened to during their adolescence. They cite particular artists that they respect and, in some ways, model themselves after. It is beyond them how women could possibly identify with these musicians. Because boys' rock star dreams are often instigated by

particular (all-men) bands, they imagine it more difficult for girls to view these performers and feel inspired to follow a similar route.

In sum, men's experiences over the life course provide them with both opportunities and constraints (though more of the former than the latter) that enable them to seriously consider pursuing music as a vocation during adulthood. At the same time, they learn appropriate gender identities within this subculture, as well as ways to manipulate the gender identities in ways that led to masculinities in which they were most comfortable.

CHAPTER 6

WOMEN MUSICIANS' GENDERED LIFE COURSE EXPERIENCES IN MUSIC

<u>**Women Musicians' Life Course Trajectories**</u>

In this chapter, I explore the experiences of women in music. Although there were many overlaps in the experiences of women and men musicians, the women also had unique experiences tied to gender. I begin by contrasting women's experiences to those of men, focusing on the implications for development of gender identities. I then explore musicians' discussions of the extent to which women musicians compare to non-musician women. I examine conceptions of women musicians' femininities, as discussed by both women and men. Finally, I explore musicians' perspectives on gender imbalances in the music scene and the rationales provided by women as to why men still are dominant in bands.

<u>**Women's Early Years in the Life Course**</u>

Early Musical Interests and Instruments

Similar to the men, women began learning their first instrument in the early elementary school years, typically at age seven. This is, on the average, two years later than the men had begun. Some of the women started even later. Kay is a self-described "late bloomer" who didn't learn her first instrument until much later after graduating from high school. (One woman who tried out the piano at the suggestion of her parents did not learn what she considered her first "real" instrument until her early twenties. She too considers herself a late bloomer.)

There are differences in women and men's instrument specializations, however. Nine of the ten women started first with the piano, and for all but one this was at the suggestion of their

parents. Three of them quit piano after a few weeks, while the other five took lessons between four and ten years and continue to play piano. In their bands, over one-third (4 of 10) of the women play the keyboard and/or synthesizer. This is in stark contrast to the men, only one of whom plays the keyboard and synthesizer in his band today.

While the guitar and particularly the drums seem to be the most masculine instruments, as described in the previous chapter, the keyboard is far and above the most feminine instrument in indie rock bands today. Furthermore, knowledge of and experience with piano-based instruments may allow women the greatest opportunities for entry into bands. At the same time, women's specialization in keyboards and synthesizers may limit their options in rock bands, since keyboards are not considered to be essential instruments to such bands. Likewise, the bands most likely to employ keyboards and synthesizers tend to be pop-rock bands. Two of the bands with keyboards are "happy and poppy." More aggressive bands almost never include keyboards in their instrumentation. Psychic Hearts is the lone exception in my sample, as synthesizer player Nico describes her band as "high energy and fast paced [and] heavy, but our music is about to get heavier."

Although women and men first learned to play instruments at about the same point in life, they differed in when they learned to play their first central "rock" instrument. While all of the men and most of the women had learned their first instrument by the end of middle school, many women did not pick up their first "rock" instrument that soon. This discrepancy is notable for a few reasons. First, it may explain women's lesser numbers in the population of musicians. Having an early start to learning an instrument, a process that includes gaining an early understanding of reading music, understanding rhythm, and getting a feel for instruments, may make learning additional instruments later in life easier. Second, it may explain women's limited

variability in instrumentation in rock bands later in life. Although both men and women overwhelmingly have the piano as their first instrument, only one man plays a piano-based instrument in his current band. Women, however, are likely to play the keyboard and/or synthesizer in their current band. Furthermore, keyboards are not considered essential to rock bands as are guitars or drums, instruments both dominated by men.

Thus, experiences in playing instruments are stratified by gender. Although women and men took up piano at early ages, women were less likely to learn to play traditional rock instruments or, when they play them, they learned them later in life.

Extracurricular Activities in High School

In the high school years, women's extracurricular activities during high school mirrored men's pursuits. Women participated in a range of activities including music, sports, academic groups, art, drama, as well as cheerleading. Similar to the men musicians, few women who later became musicians participated in organized sports. McKenna was more involved in sports than the other women musicians, but not entirely by choice, as excerpts from our conversation illustrate:

>McKenna: My stepfather, he really kind of pushed me into sports.
>
>He was a very commanding figure in my life at the time, so I
>
>pursued it wholly. There was a while where I was very passionate
>
>and obsessed with basketball—
>
>Michael: Was this in high school or middle school?
>
>McKenna: From like ten to seventeen, sixteen, something like that.
>
>I started getting serious about it when I was about twelve maybe.
>
>Everything has to be perfect with him, but I didn't realize it at the

time, because I did enjoy the sport. I just slept it, ate it, breathed it.

I guess at the time, I was like, 'I'm going to play college

basketball.' That's what I wanted to do so. I practiced every day

and every night and I wish I would have put that energy into what

were my obvious leanings [when I was] very young, like I said I

was writing poetry and I liked to draw and I *loved* music.

McKenna's father clearly influenced her participation in sports. Her intense devotion to sports made her somewhat unique from her peers. While she did learn commitment to a craft, she now wishes she had stood her own ground and put her adolescent energy toward her true passion— the arts and music.

Seven of the ten women were involved in school-structured music programs. Four of them participated in activities that stressed singing: chorus, show choir, and/or musicals. This too is in contrast to men, as their extracurricular activities in music typically involved playing an instrument. Women's activities, however, concentrated on the vocal aspect of music. In a variety of settings across the life course, women are more likely to contribute vocally to music performances. Half (5 of 10) of the women did so in school-structured music activities early in life, and seventy percent (7 of 10) sing in their rock bands during early adulthood. Singing seems to be a primary entry point for women into musical activities, both in high school and later as performers in bands.

Perceived Future During Adolescence

Eight of the women report that their parents had fairly clear aspirations for their daughters' careers when the children were young, and a musical career typically was not among their parental preferences. While their parents' ideas of the daughters' future careers did range

from careers in archaeology, business, engineering, journalism, law, among others, they were all similar in their hopes for their daughters to enter a profession. Cora's parents had clear preferences for her to pursue a career in teaching, an aspiration that apparently persists. Cora tells me:

> I still get calls from my mother saying, 'You would just make such a good junior high math teacher.' I mean, completely pestering me. All of her friends think that's what I'm studying. Whenever I go back to visit, they are like, 'So how is it going, studying math?' Sorry, that's just my mom's dream of what she wants me to aspire to be. No.

As did the men's parents, women's parents hoped that their daughters would attain a high level of education and to pursue stable, high-status careers. However, in contrast to a few men, not one woman had parents who expected their child to pursue a music-related career in adulthood. Men are more likely to have parents like Kristen's who "just wanted [their children] to be happy" in their lives (though they preferred such happiness to be attained in professional careers).

Women appear also to have faced more parental restrictions. For example, Nico's parents assumed she would pursue a traditional job in the business world (particularly after earning a degree in business) and disapprove of her pursuing music as a career. When I ask how her parents reacting to her committing herself to her band, Nico admits, "They are pissed. They hate it, they hate it so much." While some men have parents who hoped their children's music pursuits were temporary, none had experiences with their parents who expressed such strong disapproval of their musical involvement.

And what about women's expectations of their future careers themselves? When they were in their teens, five of them expected to go to college. They initially planned on pursuing careers in medicine, veterinary medicine, or teaching. All but two women did not foresee music as being a part of their careers in adulthood. Nico says:

> I never thought that I was gonna be in a band. All my life, I wanted to go to Notre Dame. So I studied so hard in high school. It kicked my ass, studying so hard. I made all A's and got into Notre Dame and got a small scholarship.

Although she ultimately enrolled in another university, Nico's initial expectations to attend college remained intact. Similar to Nico, other women in my sample did not plan as teenagers to pursue music as a career. Men, in comparison, did consider the possibility from a young age. The possibility of music as a career never entered women's minds until after their later experiences in touring and releasing albums with their bands. Two women, however, had thoughts early in their childhood of pursuing music as a career. Mandy, who dreamed of writing songs and getting a record contract, was one of them. While she did have other interests, music was an early one that she imagined.

The First Rock Band

Women became involved in their first band later than men did. As described in the previous chapter, men usually joined their first rock band during middle school. By high school, every man had played in at least one band. Women joined their first bands at much later ages, however. Not one woman played in a band during her middle school years. While three women had performed in rock bands by the time they graduated high school, most (7 of 10) did not join

a band until their post high school years. When I ask Kay when she started learning the bass and joined her first band, she says, "It was the very end of my senior year of college."

Furthermore, while men have extensive experience in a few, if not several, bands in their past, many women have much more limited experience in bands. My conversation with Murder Beach's singer-keyboardist Kristen illustrates this point:

> Michael: And is this like the first serious, pseudo-serious band that
>
> you've been in?
>
> Kristen: Yeah, it's the only band I've never been actually.
>
> Michael: Oh, it's the only band you've been in? Wow!
>
> Kristen: Yeah.

Even more surprising, Nico, synthesizer-bassist for Psychic Hearts, *learned* her first instrument as she joined her first band. Since women were about the same age as the men were when they first became interested in music, and about the same age when most learned their first instrument, it was surprising that they joined their first band at later ages. Several factors seem to contribute to this difference. First, many women didn't learn their first rock instrument until well after men did. While men typically picked up their first rock instrument in middle school, some women did not learn theirs until much later, and for Nico, until she actually joined her first band. Second, peer networks may affect the age at which each gender typically joined their first band. As discussed in the previous chapter, men typically learned their instrument with the help of male peers and music was a centerpoint of same-gender peer activities for the young men. Even men who took private lessons also developed their playing with the assistance of friends. Only one woman, in contrast, discusses playing and learning the guitar with the assistance of a peer in high school. The majority of women develop their playing on their own, sometimes

through private lessons, but more often through trial and error. Adolescent girls are less likely to play the guitar and are less likely to have friends who play the guitar. As a result, women do not typically learn how to play the guitar until much later—often when they develop mixed-gender friendships after high school.

Commitment to Music

Music: A Career or Hobby?

Although all the women enjoy playing in their band and performing onstage and all devoted much of their free time to their bands, only half (5 of 10) of them consider music to be their career rather than a hobby. The instrument they play, whether they contribute to songwriting, their current job, and level of education have no consistent relationship to whether music was viewed as a career or a hobby. Age, however, is important. Those who consider music to be a career were at the far ends of the age distributions in my sample: early 20s or over 30. Nico, age 23, hopes her career will center on music:

> I definitely would never argue to make a career out of it. That's our
>
> goal. We want to take it as far as we can. It's going to take a while.
>
> … And we know if we do it right, maybe we'll get a [contract with
>
> a record] label. You can do it real fast and get hype and get big
>
> fast, but if you don't do it right and if you don't put out the right
>
> songs, if they are not ready, then it is short-lived. And we want to
>
> pay our dues and do our time and at that point, I think it will be
>
> good. Two years.

McKenna, age 32, is equally committed to music and intended "to make a lifelong career out of it, for sure." Although Nico and McKenna have different years of experience in playing in bands and are nearly a decade apart in age, they share the goal of making music their primary career.

Women in their mid to late twenties, however, are more apt to see music as a hobby. Kristen is an example:

> I'm not someone who's consumed by music all the time. I mean, I love music, I love to listen to it, but it isn't my life. It's definitely my most important hobby, but I feel like I'm too practical. If we got this awesome record deal and they wanted to pay us money and we could travel through Europe, sure, I would make it my priority in a heartbeat. But I just don't ever see that happening. And maybe that's why it won't ever happen. I definitely love it, but it's not my everything.

This trend may have to do with the intersection of age, experience, and perseverance. For many of the younger women, their current band is their first serious band, and the newness of the activity may support their heavy investment of time and energy. The women between 26 and 28 have played music for a significantly longer period of time. They have put in difficult years holding down dual jobs and attempting to balance music and work. Many realize that making it big is a long shot. Second, they are tired of the economic hardship of the musician lifestyle. Finally, the excitement of being in a band and performing in front of audiences may have dimmed. These women are more likely to describe aspects of their participation in bands as "work" and, hence, less enjoyable.

For the women in their 30s, however, something may have pushed them over the "bump" that the women who view music as hobby experienced. Women in this group believe that since they had paid their dues, greater success is right around the corner. Younger respondents who consider music to be their career have similar thoughts regarding patience in making it big, as Nico tells me her band is willing to "pay [their] dues and take [their] time."

Mentors

Women, like the men, have mentors who had helped them along with their musical careers. By far the most unique aspect of women's experiences with their mentors concerns the extent to which their boyfriends take on this role. Half of the women (5 of 10) cite their then-boyfriends as their central mentor when they were first starting out in the music scene. For these women, their then-boyfriends were also bandmates at the time the band first formed. The boyfriends usually were much more experienced in performing in bands. Furthermore, their boyfriends were often the ones putting together the band. Cora, who was dating a member of another well-known Athens band some time before joining her current band Pushbutton, highlights how their relationship benefited her music career. When I ask whether anyone helped "show [her] the ropes with being in a band" when she was first starting out, she responds:

> Yes, unfortunately so. My ex-boyfriend, when I first moved here.
>
> … He books the Caledonia and plays in a band … that does a lot of
>
> touring all across the US and Japan and Europe. I would be around
>
> when he was booking a lot. And I would sometimes go with him to
>
> the Caledonia when he was booking and talking to other bands and
>
> seeing which bands [were suitable] and the press packs in question,

just seeing which ones him and the owner of the club liked and

what they didn't like. … So I guess I just kind of learned from that.

Dating a musician is not the sole factor that led women to pursue musical performance.

However, it may make it easier to develop a successful band.

For women, the mentors are more likely to be drawn from other members of their bands

rather than from the broader musical community, which was the case for men. Just as men do not

single out specific individuals who take on the role of the mentor, women do not have particular

people in their lives who act as formal mentors. Women are similar to men in typically citing

other Athens-area musicians as taking on informal roles as mentors, providing newer bands with

strategies as to how to book shows, organize tours, record albums, as well as other tips to further

their musical careers. However, women's mentors usually are other members of their bands.

McKenna discusses how her unofficial mentor was her more-experienced bandmate:

And I owe it all to this guy who was the first drummer in the band.

He really got it going because I tried to get it going for a while

before and I didn't really know what to do. I was working really

hard, writing songs all the time, diligent work ethic, playing and

practicing and even tried a couple of different cities out and never

really got it moving. And then I moved here and met him and it

was kind of better than [before]. …

Michael: Okay. What specifically did he set in motion?

McKenna: Just because he had done it so much before. I mean, he

set up the first shows and just basic things that I didn't even think

about. Just got it moving, just made it happen, whereas I would

probably just be in the practice room, writing a million songs, you

know what I mean? He just totally got it started.

Some women mention that "more experienced musicians" in their bands helped them personally learn about the music scene and how to deal with the business aspects of music. It appears as if women's limited experience and/or late start to the music scene made their bandmates, who were often men, more likely to take on mentoring roles. Julie remembers:

When I was [in my] first band in college, neither Wendy or I had a

lot of experience with playing shows out, but Chris did. And Chris

also at that time was recording a lot of local bands, so he had a lot

of contacts as far as knowing people in bands and stuff like that. So

the few shows that we did play, I think he set up a few of them.

And then the drummer in our band, Jeremy, who's now in lots and

lots of other bands in town, also had a lot of contacts as far as

people who played music and stuff. So whatever other shows we

played, he set up a lot of them too. … There wasn't really one

person who showed me the ropes or whatever, whatever the ropes

are, but I think it was just more like making friends and knowing

people and doing your own thing and just learning as you went

along.

Only one woman has another women musician as a mentor. Mandy's mentor is a musician in another town with whom she often played. Her mentor eventually built a career not through performing in a band, but in working for a record label. This mentor helped Mandy learn how to build a more stable career in the music industry. In Mandy's case, her mentor counseled

from a distance and perhaps did not realize that she was an effective mentor for Mandy. In general, women do not specifically select these mentors because of their shared gender. Rather, they are likely to select mentors from within their existing peer networks and among friends who have experience in bands. Among both of these groupings, a majority of them are men. Hence, women de facto choose men as their mentors.

Other women are introduced to and encouraged to perform music by family members, usually fathers or uncles. When I ask McKenna how old she was when she began playing the guitar, she immediately talks about her uncle. He let her learn on his instruments, offered to teach her himself, and gave McKenna "that extra drive to keep doing it."

The "Push" By Men

In addition to the mentors who help women musicians "learn the ropes" of being in a band in Athens, women note that other men in their lives have encouraged their pursuit of music. Five of the women discuss how particular men in their lives nudged—and in some cases pushed—them to pursue music. McKenna notes that her uncle had strongly encouraged her to invest herself in music. She says:

> Once I had an interest in it, but wasn't doing so well in teaching
>
> myself, he offered me to come live with him in Jacksonville,
>
> Florida and he had a bunch of equipment there already. He was
>
> like, 'If you have any questions, ask me and I'll tell you what I
>
> know.' He was really like my mentor for learning how to play. For
>
> six months he really kind of pushed me in the sense, just being
>
> around him and watching him, helped give me that extra drive to

keep doing it really, since I started so late. It was really cool. So I

pretty much really owe it all to him, seriously getting into music.

Similar to McKenna, Kristen is direct in discussing the role her then-boyfriend played in nudging her to perform music with him. Kristen remembers never truly considering forming a band herself, even though she plays instruments and considers herself to be creative. She was enthusiastic about performing in a band once her then-boyfriend suggested it, inviting her to play keyboards and sing lead vocals.

Mandy's experience is slightly different in that her then-boyfriend (and current husband) urged her to start a band of her own before eventually starting Heroes Severum together:

Well, Eric taught me a lot. He was always there like when I was

contemplating even starting a band, starting [my previous band]

The Bet, he really encouraged me to do that. … He sort of said,

'Hey, go for it.' Because I was unhappy just being in college and

writing papers. I felt kind of bored and I needed to be doing

something else too. He said, 'Well, play music.' And I looked

around and was like, 'I'm not very happy. Maybe I will play music

again.' [And he said,] 'Go for it!' That sort of helped.

This is particularly unique to women, as not one single man cites a woman in his life as prodding him to pursue music. This does not mean that a man's encouragement to "take the plunge" is required for women to pursue music, but these women do cite their boyfriends' prodding as a factor that helped them to initially pursue music. In only one case did a woman specifically say that were it not for her boyfriend, she may have likely never joined a band.

Musical Participation and Identity Construction

The Musician Identity

All women consider their musician identities to be important aspects of their self-concepts, though to varying degrees. In discussing their identities as musicians, three women (Mandy, McKenna, and Cora) have a lengthy time span of identifying themselves as "real" musicians. These women first self-identified as a musician during their early childhood years and have "always" felt like a musician. Cora, for instance, says:

> I've always considered myself a musician just because I've played
>
> the piano since I was young. But as far as a performer and an
>
> entertainer, I guess it wasn't until like last fall that it actually sunk
>
> in that, you know, dealing with the shows and doing all that,
>
> performing.

In her mind, she differentiates between being a musician and being a performer, although there is overlap between the two. For Cora, it didn't "sink in" that she is not only a musician, but a performer as well, until recently. Other women have a sharper distinction between being a musician and a performer. For them, one of those identities does not necessarily stipulate inclusion in the other category. In this mindset, they could be performers in that they played music on stage in public venues with an audience in attendance, but that does not necessarily make them musicians.

Three of the women, all of whom had years of experience performing in bands, still do not consider themselves to be "real" musicians. In disclosing her reservations to taking on the musician identity, Kay links it to her being a "late bloomer" to performing music. Julie doesn't take on the musician identity either:

Michael: When do you first remember saying to yourself, 'I'm a

musician'? When did you first feel like a musician? Whatever that

means.

Julie: I don't think I really do feel like a musician, even now.

Michael: No?

Julie: If I think of myself, I don't really think, 'I am a musician.'

The band is really fun, and I would miss it a whole lot if I wasn't

in it, but it's also kind of a hobby. It's a huge part of my life, and I

love it. And I love seeing all the people that I'm in a band with

regularly, and those guys are just great and it's so much fun. And I

would be really, really sad if I didn't have it. But I know a lot of

people who really *are* musicians, like who have gone to school for

music, and I consider them to be musicians. I consider what I do to

be just kind of like for fun.

Similar to women in other male-dominated work settings (Clance and Imes 1978), Julie feels like

an "imposter" through her participation in a masculine music scene. She does not wholly take on

the musician identity due to her (and other women's) marginal status in this setting. As Julie's

comments suggest, she and other women sometimes have a different (and more demanding) set

of criteria for what constitutes a "real" musician, a point I develop further next.

"Requirements" for the Musician Identity

For some of the women, the musician identity requires more professional experience or

formal credentialing, either in going to music school or getting other professional musical

training. Having years of experience writing songs, performing live, touring, recording and

releasing albums in rock bands does not suffice to produce a conception of oneself as "professional" for these women.

In some cases though, truly mastering one's instrument is an adequate substitute for formal professional training in music. Nico, though doubtful of her status as a true musician, feels more like one when she "can play a show without making any major mess ups." For Kristen and Julie, avoiding the musician identity appears to be related to their beliefs that for them music would not be a lifelong career. Their ideas of true musicianhood include the intention of making a career out of and money from music.

For other women, contributing to songwriting is an important component of the real musician identity. Nearly all of the women with whom I spoke write original compositions. While two of them are primary songwriters for their bands, the majority of women do not consider their songs to be appropriate for their bands, nor are these compositions added to the bands' performance repertoire. McKenna remembers adopting the musician identity well before starting Polemic, her current band:

> After I was playing for a couple of months, I didn't want to follow any of the rules and layouts of how to do it because I started coming in with ideas and started writing full songs and had no idea that I was even capable of doing that. And then once I started doing that that's all I wanted to do. I was obsessed with it because it's so much fun. And [for] the first time in my life I felt like I was unloading who I really was. I guess that's when I really started feeling whole as a person and as a musician.

For McKenna, performing, touring, recording albums, and having outside acknowledgement have little to do with her considering herself a musician. Rather, composing original music is critical for establishing an identity as a musician. For her, the identity of musician became an aspect of her self once she began writing music, despite not having a band of her own.

Nico also links musical identities to songwriting. She notes that she feels "pretty insecure about [being a musician] because I don't really write the songs." For men, musician identities are less strongly tied to songwriting and based more explicitly on musical performance. Thus, women's criteria for placing themselves in the "real musician" identity are more stringent than men's.

While women do participate in bands, they are less likely to emerge as the "voice" of the band, in that their songs are less likely than men's work to be performed by the band. Therefore, the bands are not reflecting the "voices" of women to the same extent that they reflect the voices of the men members. This is yet another variation of marginalization. Only rarely do women seem exploited and subordinated overtly, the focus of many prior studies of gender stratification in music. However, you find in the indie music world a more subtle form of marginalization of women in that they typically are not the "spokespeople" for the bands.

Women Musicians and Sexuality

Femininity takes on a special meaning in the music scene. For most women, it needs to be negotiated in the scene and enacted in particular ways for women to be successful as musicians. Most research on women in music finds the pressure from both the audience as well as band members to enact and display a sexualized identity on stage (Groce and Cooper 1990). The women I spoke with do not cite the sexualized component of their femininity in their experience. It is not a problem for almost all women, and only a few experience difficulties with

this. Emily did reminisce her early days in her band during which she gained a reputation as the "hot chick bass player." Cora, however, is unique in strategically enacting it on her own. Her stage persona incorporates sexuality:

> I think that when I'm on stage, it's just another side of my
>
> personality, kind of a flirt I guess. I dress cute, I know what makes
>
> guys want to come see your band play, which is kind of shallow,
>
> but the truth sometimes. And it's what brings people initially to see
>
> us. And then we have the music to back up. If it's a good
>
> performance and if the music backs it up, then they will appreciate
>
> it and come back again.

While on stage, she intentionally flirts with men in audience to "get her foot in the door." Her sexuality is an incentive to get men to attend shows with the intention to increase her band's fanbase.

Women Musicians and Femininity

In terms of gender identity, two of my interviewees do not see any notable differences between women who performed in bands and those who did not. Julie suggests the only thing unique about women musicians is how they spend their free time. Others seem to be uncomfortable generalizing women on the basis of their career or leisure pursuits.

Five women believe women musicians to have unique gender identities and that they are distinctive in some ways from non-musician women their age. Kay sees a link between women musicians and their gender identities:

> It's kind of different with women I think. Hopefully it's becoming
>
> less, but it's still such a guy's world. I mean, the number of times

that they have been like, 'Oh, you can't eat because you're not in the band.' It's just like, 'No, see, I *am* in the band. Give me my food!' People still don't expect a lot of times to see female musicians. More of the musicians that I know that are out there performing, they do have to make some different decisions about having kids. The guys do too, that's not fair for me to make those kinds of generalizations. It seems I haven't met nearly as many women musicians, but they do seem to have a different kind of courage. I mean, I know lots of female musicians who don't play out and a lot of times because they are afraid to or because they have to do this other thing. And I think there are a lot of really creative women out there who just aren't feeling okay for whatever reason to be in the band because it's seen as irresponsible.

Kay and others believe that women musicians differ from other women by possessing the traditionally masculine characteristics of courage and toughness. Kay's comments are quite telling in theorizing women's lesser outcomes in the music scene. First, because of the history of men dominating music scenes, outsiders assume that women present in the scene are not musicians themselves. While Kay had to fight for her meal backstage (a perk typically given by restaurants and bars to musical performers), women's need to assert their identities as legitimate performers may make their work more stressful and may have larger consequences for their pursuit of music over time. Second, she highlights consequences to women who may want to pursue a career in music, particularly in terms of work-family conflict. Third, women, according to Kay, may need that extra "something," whether it is courage, support, or encouragement, to

commit to music. Last, she also sees pursuing music as more appropriate for men since women may be expected to a greater extent to be "responsible" more so than men their age. Because "boys will be boys," their parents may be more willing to acquiesce to their pursuits of music (at least during early adulthood). In sum, not only are women musicians unique in terms of their pursuing a male-dominated line of work, but consequences stemming from cultural assumptions as well as family issues also summon them an experience different from men. Women musicians' experiences here too parallel those of women in more professional male-dominated careers (Martin 1999).

The remaining three women see women musicians as having a mix of traditional and unique feminine gender identities. On the one hand, these respondents do not see women's occupations as musicians as being directly linked to their senses of femininity. One can be traditionally feminine or not, regardless of her occupation, interest, or commitment to music. Performing in a band is not enough to alter one's femininity. On the other hand, these women think that it takes something special for women to pursue a career in a heavily-masculine field. Though they sometimes don't know "exactly what it is" that makes them unique from other women, they distinguish women musicians in general as distinct from the larger population of American women.

The Gender Imbalance in the Music Scene

All ten women musicians recognize that they, as women in a rock scene, are rarities. Some describe the gender imbalance as "fairly frustrating," and another woman is irritated that she "kind of feel[s] like a black sheep in the music community" because of her gender. A few of

them have other women friends who play instruments and write music, but for one of several reasons discussed below, these friends are not currently in bands, nor are they looking to join one.

Explaining the Gender Imbalance

After hearing women musicians' perceptions of the gender imbalance in the music scene, I ask their thoughts as to what may precipitate women's lesser participation in bands. While some men have few comments to make about this question, all of the women whom I interviewed have clear ideas on what contributes to women's lesser presence in bands. The most common answers focus on gender socialization and gender differences in personality. Women also cite discrimination, as well as gender differences in the extent to which people consider the possibility of pursuing music as a career.

Gendered Socialization

Seven of the ten women cite differential socialization by gender as the root of women's lesser participation in music in adolescence and adulthood. They typically contrast either their experience or that of another woman with whom they are acquainted with what they imagine the typical man's to be like. Nico contrasts men's experiences to women's:

> I think males come off as stronger and seem like they have more
>
> ability, even if that may not necessarily be the case. That's just
>
> how it is in society in general. Women, I feel, aren't as encouraged
>
> to try as hard to be better at what they do. I mean, I'm sure it's
>
> getting better, but it wasn't like that, even in the Seventies, women
>
> were never encouraged to be businesswomen. They were
>
> encouraged to stay at home. They were never encouraged to be

awesome at something, to work at something. You probably find

more girls learning how to knit than playing music now even

which is messed up, but that's just a matter of fact.

Nico emphasizes the similarities between women's historical exclusion from the business world with her observations of the music world. Women are pushed into traditionally feminine leisure activities that deter them from music careers in the future. Other women have sentiments similar to Nico, emphasizing the extent to which "we [women] were all sort of similarly raised in this culture" or the extent to which "girls aren't really encouraged" to learn an instrument and/or pursue music.

Cora cites ways socialization may influence personality factors that are crucial to pursuing music. She says:

I just think that guys are typically more confident. It's easier for

guy to get himself out there. Because I think that in general girls

worry more about what people think about them. … So it's easier

for a guy to be confident enough to perform for people.

Cora's thoughts that women take others' opinions into account when making decisions is similar to themes raised regarding parental aspirations' effects on daughters. Not only do parents discourage women more so than men from pursuing musical careers, but the women appear to take their parental preferences more seriously. Furthermore, men's traditional socialization experiences may facilitate them in the daunting pursuit of music as a career.

Gendered Personalities

Seven women also discuss differences in each gender's personalities as contributing to differential outcomes in music. Only rarely do women suggest that these differences are inherent.

More often than not, they suggest that gendered personalities are the result of cultural outcomes, socialization, or gender expectations. Women musicians suggest that becoming a musician requires traditionally masculine characteristics. In particular, women suggest that men are "typically more confident" and "come off as stronger and seem like they have more ability, even if that may not necessarily be the case." Kristen notes another potential gender difference that may be of consequence as well:

> I do you think you have to be brave to perform, no matter what
>
> you're doing. And maybe that has something to do with it. Maybe
>
> it's just more women are shy.

Again, women do not necessarily see these differences as biological, and some of them do observe women musicians who have met the "masculinity requirement" described above. Nico characterizes women musicians who are likely to be most successful:

> It's a strange field for a woman to get into. There is so much
>
> testosterone in it that you have to be tough. I think that a lot of
>
> women who play music are a lot more tough, even if you can't see
>
> it on the outside. You've got to be because you have got to stick up
>
> for yourself. And you can get taken advantage of. You've got to
>
> look after yourself.

On the other side of the coin, some women suggest that women's traditionally feminine personalities inhibit their entry to the musician life. Women's supposed tendencies to be shyer, less confident, and less aggressive makes their entrance to the music world more problematic. Adhering to stereotypical feminine characteristics is at odds with music culture.

Discrimination

Some women (4 of 10) suggest that they or other women they know experienced discrimination in music. This discrimination takes a few forms, and Cora describes it like this:

A lot of times if a girl is in a band, it tends to be a lot more about

looks and personality than it is about music. So I think that for a

girl to be a musician and for it to work out, they have to be pretty

confident and worked really hard at it … And you really do you

have to be probably better than guy musicians because people are

not necessarily expecting as much out of you.

As studies of other occupations have suggested (Marini 1989), the bar may be higher for women than for men. Although music is an informal vocation in which credentials are less quantifiable than in traditional careers, women encounter a different set of expectations in securing a position. For example, McKenna relates:

It's definitely not in balance. But it's never kept me from doing

anything. It's pushed me to try to be that much more of a dominant

player. And I certainly never felt impaired or intimidated at all, but

I think a lot of people do. I think maybe there's an intimidation

factor.

Only a few women experience overt gender discrimination, when someone tells them they can not join a band, play in a club, or pursue music because of their gender. However, more of them have experiences of more subtle forms of gender discrimination in which other musicians assume they would not be adequate at their instrument or capable of handling the demands of music life. Some women, like Kay, have friends who gave up on music as a result of such

persistent discrimination. Others, however, such as McKenna, suggest that facing discrimination increases her personal motivation to succeed in music. In this sense, she may be distinctive from other women.

Gendered Possibilities

Finally, some women (4 of 10) believe that women are less likely than men to even consider the possibility of joining a band. They mention their having women friends who played instruments but who are not looking to join a band. Emily discusses her friends' limited experiences in music:

> Many of my girlfriends have always wanted to be in a band but
> have never taken the time to learn the instruments or put the effort
> into actually *being* in a band. Almost every one of my boyfriends
> who have had the musician bug has taken the time to learn an
> instrument and experienced a little with being in a band. It's really
> sad because I sometimes wonder if the reason behind my
> girlfriends not taking the time to learn an instrument or joining a
> band is because society has always expected women to put their
> hopes and dreams on the back burner.

Emily's friends do not seriously consider pursuing music as a result of gender expectancies. While most men who play instruments may at least consider the possibility of making a career of music, women may be less likely to consider it and consequently less represented in the musician population. Kristen links her own experience in her limited, but successful, career in Murder Beach to this idea as well. She has this to say about women and their participation in music:

> There are a lot less female musicians than male musicians and
> maybe it's just that girls don't even think about it. Just like me, I
> wasn't ever like, 'Oh, I'm going to start a band!' … If I hadn't had
> met Ian [her then-boyfriend who founded and invited her to join
> Murder Beach], then I probably would not have ever *been* in a
> band. Unless I would have met somebody else who was like,
> 'Yeah, let's start a band.' You know, male or female. Maybe it's
> just that [women] don't even think about it.

Expectancies, of course, are partially reflective of social realities. Although women musicians successfully find mentors, they lack role models, or individuals who share their personal attributes who could give them firsthand advice on how to handle issues that are more central for women musicians than for men, such as sexualization on stage and tendencies of men performers to question or devalue their musical talents (Epstein 1974).

While men have multiple pathways for entering musical careers, women seem to enter music in a much less predictable manner, and often only with male sponsorship or encouragement. Were it not for her relationship with a man in a band, Kristen doubts she would have ever attempted to join a band on her own. Perhaps the culmination of the previous three explanations leads to the lesser likelihood of women contemplating a career in music.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have elaborated the life course trajectories of women's pathways in pursuing music, specifying aspects of their lives that were unique from the general pathways discussed in Chapter 4 and specifically in comparison to men's experiences covered in Chapter 5. First, examining experiences of women in the music scene sheds light on the extent to which

this aspect of social life is still a stratified enterprise. Women's participation does challenge conventional gender arrangements, but it also reifies them. Second, at the individual level, this analysis illustrates the ways that women's identities as musicians and as gendered beings are connected to their participation in music.

Gendered Opportunities and Constraints

Opportunities and constraints seem to be organized by gender in the life course trajectories of musicians. The primary opportunity women have over men was their expertise and experience in participating in school-structured music programs that emphasized singing. These experiences seem to prove beneficial in later life, as women are very likely to be vocalists in their current rock bands. The emphasis on women's vocals may also act as an advantage in the more melodic genres of music in which their bands are often categorized.

The constraints women experienced, however, are more numerous. First, most of them learned their first "rock" instrument several years beyond the average age men did. As such, women often have to catch up to their male counterparts' expertise in their instruments, placing them at a disadvantage in contributing to bands as instrumentalists. Furthermore, their delayed entrance to performing in bands may contribute to future constraints. For instance, having less experience in bands (some women have only been in one band total) may disadvantage them in terms of their experience, expertise, and familiarity with the music scene.

Second, women's vocal concentration, discussed as an opportunity above, may act simultaneously as a constraint. First, women's membership in bands may be more limited since their contribution as singers may override their potential responsibilities as guitarists or bass players. Furthermore, women singers often sing musical compositions their men band members had written with little (or no) input from them. As such, while they are essential to the

performing of the band's music, they are much less crucial (and in some cases less valued) in terms of songwriting contributions.

The biggest distinction between each gender's experiences is the role of romantic partners in their music careers. Women are the only musicians to ever cite their romantic partners as mentors or role models. Furthermore, only women cite the push by men in their lives as a strong factor in their deciding to pursue music. Women seem to be less inclined to pursue music without the guidance or support of an outside (and male) figure.

Women Musicians and Identity Construction

Identity issues are also arranged by gender for the musicians with whom I spoke. Women, in general, have a narrower conception of what constituted a true musician. They have stricter criteria and often do not meet those criteria themselves. Fewer women, as a result, self identify as musicians as did men. Their gendered experiences also play a role in their being less comfortable adopting the label of a musician. They feel much less experienced than (men) musicians in their bands and in their social circles. Because they have not played their instrument for as many years as did men, they may feel compelled to distance themselves from true musicianhood. Their self-described statuses as "late bloomers" also suggest that they feel as if they still had many years of experience to accumulate before reaching an appropriate level of mastery. Because songwriting and professional training are not part of their histories either, many women feel they do not meet the conception of being a real musician.

Music participation also seems to influence some women's ideas about gender identity. Most of them see women musicians as somewhat unique in comparison to non-musician women. They characterize women musicians as having more traditionally masculine characteristics, such as courage, aggression, and confidence. A few women believe women musicians to have a

different set of familial interests, particularly that they are less invested in wanting children of their own. They do not, however, consider such characteristics as innate or static. Rather, perhaps since rock culture is imbued with such masculinity, women must adopt masculine characteristics to enter and succeed in this arena. In effect, women musicians create new forms of femininity to transgress the gender divide in traditional conception of music as a "man's world." At the same time, they still maintain aspects of traditional femininity within their construct. Most women consider themselves to be feminine and present themselves in largely traditional feminine constructs.

All women are blatantly aware of and frustrated by the gender imbalance in the music scene. They readily discuss potential factors that may contribute to the imbalance, perhaps because they have considered such ideas previously. They believe that, especially today, it is possible for women to overcome these obstacles. Perhaps because these women came of age after the Second Wave, they are well aware of the gender imbalance in various lines of work and education systems, as well as aware of the historical (but limited) improvement in these inequalities. Last, women are unique in contemplating the extent to which considering the possibility of music as a vocation is beyond the realm of women's imaginings of their futures. Ignoring such possibilities may be due to women's not meeting the self-imposed musician "requirements" or their identifications as "late bloomers." In either case, women may consider themselves less viable as musicians and, therefore, less likely to think of their participation in bands as anything more than a leisure pursuit.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

In this study I set out to explore the connections between gender, indie music performance, and the transition to adulthood. I focused on gender from two distinctive, but interrelated, vantage points: how gender affects musical performance, and how musical performance affects the gendered transition to adulthood. I centered my inquiry on the world of indie rock music, a genre that often is characterized as less sexist and less gender stratified than other musical genres. My research suggests that indie music is also a gender stratified world, although the lines of stratification are gentler and more subtle than those described in other musical genres. For those who are performers, indie rock music is also an important milieu for the transition to adulthood. This transition, however, works somewhat differently for women and for men, and serious involvement with music in the adolescent and young adult years has somewhat different consequences for women and for men.

<u>Gender Stratification in Indie Rock Music</u>

My first research question (chapter 1) focused on whether women and men have equal access to, and similar experiences as performers in, an indie rock music scene. My study shows that indie rock, in comparison to some genres such as hard rock, heavy metal, and rap music, is not as overtly sexist. Within this world, women performers are not forced to be sexualized, and enact sexual gender personae only when they choose to do so. Moreover, lyrics of the songs that women perform are less apt to be overtly sexist than songs performed in other genres. Women

performers frequently report being treated with respect both by men bandmates and in most cases also by audience members.

Nevertheless, there is undeniable evidence that women are marginalized and disadvantaged in the world of indie music. This disadvantage begins well before women become musical performers. In childhood, women have fewer opportunities to learn rock instruments, and girls' peer relationships do not encourage them to start or join garage bands, a hallmark of young men's experiences. During adolescence, the key musical moment cited by most musicians, girls are less likely to socialize with peers interested in performing music (i.e., boys). Since a majority of musical performance is a group effort, girls may practice their instruments and write original songs in private, but are less likely to begin exploring the world of musical participation in bands with peers. These differences only increase as women age into young adulthood. Many women need explicit sponsorship from men in their lives, often boyfriends, to begin to perform with bands, and many played marginalized roles within their bands. Men are less apt to need gatekeepers or sponsors, and their sponsors are unlikely to be women.

Mentoring for a musical career also has gendered dimensions that contribute to stratification. Nearly all musicians with whom I spoke have mentors, although men are less likely to admit or recognize them. Women's social networks in the music scene are more limited due to their tangential status and late entrance into musical performance. They therefore rely on men with whom they share romantic relationships or who are family members to fill these mentoring roles. The mentoring relationships depend upon the quality of the relationship with the male mentor, perhaps making them less secure than the peer-based mentoring relationships of the men musicians. This too may be applicable to work trajectories outside of music, where women need male sponsorship for entrée (Epstein 1970) but where such relationships may be difficult to

manage and subject to complex interpretations by others. Women surely cannot be expected to rely on men in their personal lives for career mentoring in other lines of work. If mentoring is essential for success, and if women must rely on men to fill these roles, it may explain women's lesser participation in other lines of work.

Many women are vocalists or played only those (generally devalued) instruments thought appropriate for women. Although a few women among my interviewees play guitar—the emblematic instrument of a rock musician—they are the exceptions rather than the rule. Women are also less likely than their male counterparts to be songwriters, or to have the songs they do write performed by their bands. Bands become identified, at least in part, by the original songs that they perform, and women participate less than men in the creation of the band's identity. Perhaps as a result of this marginalization, women are less likely to identify as musicians, and, as my evidence suggests, to envision a long-range career as a musical performer.

The marginalization of women in indie rock bands parallels in many ways the marginalization of women who are tokens or minorities in more formal careers once occupied solely, or primarily, by men. Women are permitted into the world, especially with masculine sponsorship, but their roles and influence within it are delimited. Mentoring and sponsorship is more tenuous for women, and often comes through personal relationships (Lorber 1995). Women are not altogether excluded, but they are sometimes subjected to subtle or occasionally overt discrimination that makes it harder for them to succeed or to feel wholly a part of this world (Kanter 1977; Reskin and Padavic 1994). They have what Ruth Farmer (1993) has defined as "a place but not importance" in the world of indie music.

Although the women I interviewed did not often initiate conversations about discrimination and marginalization (perhaps because they were talking with a man as an

interviewer), they usually had a great deal to say about these topics when I brought them up in interviews. They report difficulty in being taken seriously as musicians onstage, where condescending compliments about their performance suggest the audience assumes women are not adequate in playing their instruments, and offstage, where they sometimes have to forcefully asset their identity as musicians to claim benefits such as meals provided for the band. A few women explicitly compare their experiences in indie rock with those of women in male-dominated professions, believing that their experiences in indie rock music has taught them skills that will be valuable later in life when working in other masculine-dominated domains. Indeed, difficulty being taken seriously in professional roles or being mistaken for lesser-status workers is a common experience for many women in the workplace (Pierce 1995). Participation in indie music is thus a lesson in enduring subtle marginalization in masculine workplaces but possibly also in learning to resist and challenge such subordination.

Nevertheless, the stratification seems to take its toll, as fewer women than men see themselves as "true" musicians or envision making music the centerpoint of their lives beyond young adulthood. Women, in comparison to men, feel more pressure to grow up and move on. Women might be more sensitive to pressure from parents and other adults, but it also is possible that adults see indie music careers as more inappropriate, or more at risk for failure, for women than for men. If women have fewer same-gender peers who have been musical performers in comparison to men, they might also have less peer support for continuing to center their lives on musical performance beyond the young adult period. Women are also less likely than men to pursue the "middle" strategy of decentering musical performance but staying connected to musical worlds by entering a music-related job more consistent with an adult identity, as, for example, a producer or promoter. It is possible that gender stratification limits women's

opportunities to enter these worlds and to exert influence that would make them more gender equitable, although this is a question that is beyond this study.

For men who are involved in indie rock, the subtle stratification system in indie rock is largely beneficial, if unacknowledged. Most men performers are not blatantly sexist in performances or everyday relationships, and within the culture there is a devaluation of musicians who enter music motivated primarily by desires for sexual conquests. Nonetheless, men musicians are also largely unaware of the processes that render masculine dominance within indie music as normal and invisible (McIntosh 1988). Most men think very little about gender stratification or discrimination in indie music. When pressed to consider it, most have much briefer and much more superficial accounts of gender relationships in indie rock. As such, indie rock is another domain in which stratification is normalized and naturalized (McIntosh 1988).

Men musicians are cognizant, however, about the ways in which their involvement in musical performances affects within-gender stratification. Many explicitly see musical performance as a means to attain a satisfying, respected, if not dominant form of masculinity, when they feel they could not achieve, or did not desire to conform to, hegemonic standards of masculinity stressing athleticism, competitiveness, and material success (Kimmel 1996). These themes are less prominent in the interviews with women musical performers, although some women and men expressed disdain for an overemphasis on material success as a banner of adulthood.

Gender Enactment in Indie Rock Music

My second research question centered on how women and men enact, represent, recreate and transform gender in the context of indie rock music. My study suggests that indie music performance is a site for flexible enactment of gender identities that sometimes challenge

prevailing norms, especially prevailing norms of masculinity. This aspect of indie music is perhaps more central to the men than to the women, although women note that they are successfully able to resist stereotypical roles forced on women performers on stage (e.g., an extremely sexualized self-presentation, unless this is their preference) or off. Off-stage, many women take pride in their carrying out of masculine-stereotyped activities (negotiating contracts, constructing websites) on behalf of their bands and believe that their growing competence in these tasks will serve them well throughout their adult lives and in other masculine-dominated areas of life.

Women and men involved in indie rock culture seem to have greater freedom to construct new versions of femininity and masculinity. A majority of women and men believe gender identities of both women and men in the music scene are innovative and distinctive from traditional gender role patterns. Both women and men see their gender identities as innovative blendings of masculinity and femininity. More importantly, women and men suggest an ability to combine aspects of femininity and masculinity is required for success in this scene.

Women, in particular, see the benefits of appropriating particular elements of traditional masculinity. They suggest that musicianhood teaches them a "different kind of courage" that they otherwise may not have adopted. Foremost, they have decided to pursue a career that is not only a longshot, but one in a field that is historically male-dominated and misogynistic. Women learn to adopt a "take charge" attitude to enter the scene and be successful. They likewise learn to adopt the rock-and-roll personae, illustrated by their increased confidence both on and off stage. These experiences, in and of themselves, mark their lives and their gender identities. At the same time, their gender identities are also unique because of the ways they chose *not* to behave. For instance, sexuality is not central to women musicians' gender identities. Women are

not expected to dress in an ultrafeminine manner while on stage or present highly sexualized identities for men in the audience or band. Although women performers have options in their creation of sexual personae on stage, most choose not to present themselves as sexualized objects. For the most part, men bandmates and audiences are accepting of the women's choices of self-presentation.

Men suggest they have learned new masculinities through their participation in bands as well. Because this setting does not value traditional, outwardly-hypermasculine characterizations, they develop alternative masculine gender identities. For the most part, these alternatives keep hold of the socially positive aspects of traditional masculinity while discarding aspects they consider harmful. Their masculinities are traditional in that men performers are go-getters, devoted to their craft, and largely confident. However, in contrast to traditional forms of masculinity, men musicians are not overtly macho, aggressive, misogynist, or violent. They do not write or perform music of this sort either. Men musicians see themselves as placing greater value than many others of their age ranges on traditionally feminine characteristics such as emotion and creativity. Many are particularly critical of sexually aggressive, promiscuous masculinities, especially when sex is the impetus for musical participation. Likewise, they seem to take on particular aspects of traditional femininity in their gender identities, particularly having a healthy connection to their emotions and being egalitarian and cooperative.

In general, women and men involved in the cultural production of music have opportunities to "try on" and experiment with a broader range of gender identities. Such experimentation is not simply playful, nor is it necessarily temporary. The gender identities they construct in music can likely be carried over into other realms of social life outside of music in the future. Despite music's penchant for gender innovation, a form of gender splitting occurs

within this social setting as well. Though the gendered divisions in music may not be as rigid as they are in other social institutions, there are particular positions within the band that are better suited for women than for men.

Some men suggest their identities as musicians lead to healthier social relationships with their loved ones and friends. Their embracing of feminine qualities is at least partly due to the nature of musical production. Some, but not all, men believe the best songwriting emerged from deep emotion. Emotion breeds creativity and hence, a more authentic musician identity. While men are largely critical of hegemonic masculinity, they still strive to attain some aspects of it while discarding others.

The context of musical participation encompasses a "both/and" quality in which women and men challenge and reaffirm traditional gender hierarchies. Musicians maintain traditional gender arrangements by the continued valuing of masculine norms in music. Men clearly benefit from this structure of opportunity. However, through the creation and performance of music, women and men musicians also have opportunities to perform gender in new ways. For some musicians, public musical performance is a locale in which they can create new gendered selves. Both women and men see this ability to "play" with gender in this context has positive consequences to men and women's personal lives, especially in their constructing gender identities and their understandings of self.

Gender and the Transition to Adulthood

My third research question dealt with the ways participation as a musical performer influences the transition to early adulthood. For both the women and the men in my study, music is a central medium for the transition to adulthood. Most participants recognize this explicitly

and speak openly about the generally positive influence that music has had, and will continue to have, in their development as adult women and men.

I have strong evidence that illustrates that music is an important medium guiding the transition to adulthood for all musicians with whom I spoke. Participation in music is a central force that guides their entrance into early adulthood. For all of the musicians in my study, music performance is intricately tied to the transition to adulthood. It is a time of exploration, and their experience as a musical performer allows them to explore a variety of gender performances and identities.

Musicians, by and large, are able to successfully meet the traditional requisites of the attainment of adulthood through their participation in music. As scholars suggest, adulthood is signified by gaining an independent status, an adult identity, and embarking on a career (Arnett 2000). All of the musicians have separated from the family of origin, thus gaining a largely independent status. Nevertheless, some note that their parents assist them financially when necessary. Furthermore, many of the musicians frame their musical participation in such a way as to align themselves as meeting the criteria of adulthood. Musical participation demands responsibility and commitment; in a word, it requires adult-like behaviors. Music is not simply a leisurely activity to pass the time. Instead, it is a passion, something that requires devotion, commitment, and endurance. They suggest it requires more discipline and is more time-consuming than traditional jobs or even the typical college workload itself. As such, musical participation in bands is in line with components of normative adulthood and forces performers to become self-reliant in a way that other options for this life phase might not.

The musicians with whom I spoke encounter the same general dilemmas of all young adults, but they reconcile them in innovative ways. I cannot say whether their resolutions are

superior to traditional resolutions, but their decisions allow them to maintain what is important to them while securing a culturally-sanctioned adulthood. They are able to negotiate music as something more than a leisure pursuit, as something more than an adolescent interest. While they frame musical performance as requiring characteristics consistent with adulthood, they realize that securing adulthood is difficult in music worlds, so they adjust their goals accordingly. The most successful individuals are able to secure stable, middle-class jobs that allow them to continue performing music. Others venture into nonperformance music-related careers. Both of these options allow them to keep one foot in the music world that continues to be meaningful to them while meeting more conventional benchmarks associated with the attainment of adulthood. Musicians' experiences suggest ways in which musicians carve out new pathways to adulthood. Their routes are more fluid and flexible from traditional structured career pathways and perhaps more prolonged or at least less certain in the time trajectory.

Regardless of whether they devote themselves to music for the rest of their lives, this testing-out period alters men and women's sense of self and cues them in as to what sorts of things they want to do and, perhaps more importantly, things they do *not* want to do in the future. As such, musical performance is an important stepping-off point for the prime adult years. Some pursue nonperformance musical careers, while others shift preferences completely to other (though still artistic and creative) endeavors. Were it not for their participation in music, a number of the musicians, such as Murder Beach's Julie Dyles in Chapter 4, imagine they would have likely pursued the traditional middle-class route to adulthood: graduate from college, get a job in corporate America, and move to the suburbs. Participation in cultural production opens up new, previously unrealized, options for those who engaged in this activity in early in life.

However, age norms are gendered. It is not wholly appropriate for any adult to devote most of a life to an unstable, adolescent activity such as music. However, men can more successfully negotiate this decision, while women are likely to downplay their musician identity and shift its importance to that of a hobby. Thus, the life course is structured to allow women to participate in nontraditional activities, but makes it increasingly difficult for them to persist with them in adulthood. Men, to be sure, have difficulty persisting as well, but are more likely to successfully do so than are women. These differences may derive from stronger musical identities established in men, or from somewhat greater chances for success for men—despite long odds against success for all performers—in what is still a masculine-dominated enterprise. Or it may be the case that in music, as in other arenas, men have more authority to do as they desire while women face more pressure to conform to the wishes of others. Although several of the performers did not see themselves as becoming parents, women in particular are apt to recognize the incompatibility of musical careers with the role of parent, and this might be a reflection of the still-persistent patterns of greater shares of domestic labor and childcare allocated to mothers than to fathers.

In general, men and women integrate music into their lives in different ways. Women see music as a transitional point. It is a force that helps them through this stage successfully. For instance, consider how Heros Severum's Mandy Branch's dissatisfaction with college life, discussed in Chapter 6, changed once she began performing music. For her, music is a bridge that helped her through a difficult period on the way to adulthood. Men, in comparison, speak of music as central to their experiences and identities throughout their lives. Music is something men are likely to make great sacrifices for, in terms of education, parental approval, career, and family. In sum, while music is key to the transition to adulthood for both women and men, it is

important in unique ways for each. For men, music is largely an overarching trajectory in their lives, while it is a temporary—but important—transition to adulthood for women.

Gender, Commitment to Music, and Anticipated Futures

My fourth and final research question concerned the consequences that participating in a music scene has on musicians' lives, particularly their commitment to music and what lessons they may take away from their musical experiences and put to use in later life.

Examining careers in an informal sector illuminate cultural constraints that are as powerful as structural barriers in formal, traditional careers. The vocation of the indie rock musician is one that is self-directed and has few explicit credentials or requirements to enter. Theoretically, it should be more open to participation by a broad range of individuals than a career with highly selective entry procedures. However, a number of musicians self-deny their status as a musician based on traditional criteria associated with professional musicians in other genres (classical, for instance). My evidence illustrates the extent to which gender is a primary organizing principle of this world.

For instance, men are more comfortable in claiming identities as musicians, using fluid criteria as a basis for such a claim. Such may be the case generally in other nonmusic-centered vocations where men feel they belong as full-fledged participants. Men may shift criteria for their inclusion to a particular line of work. Their masculine gender identities may make their claims more accepted by outsiders.

Women, in contrast, may be more hesitant to diverge from the strict criteria of inclusion since they are newcomers and may not want to be seen as imposters. The tendency of women to feel they are imposters in careers dominated by men has been reported in prior research (Caselman et al. 2006; Clance and Imes 1978). As such, the musician identity is still marginal for

women. This suggests that, despite their greater incorporation in indie rock in comparison to other genres, women are not fully integrated into the scene. While rock music is supposedly a bastion of independence and denial of authority, musicians implement outside patriarchal structures to their scene.

Women, in general, appear to have a shorter window of time for music participation than men. Their connections to music are instead tentative. As they move into their twenties, women seem to face more pressure internally and from others to leave musical performance behind. Women, more so than men, leave music behind for other options in adulthood. Men more easily reconcile musicianhood as compatible with adulthood, easing their devotion to music without much tension. Others begin to decenter the performance aspect of music, instead switching to music production, a career shift more compatible with adulthood. This is consistent with other research that suggests that, in the contexts of families, men have more time and more resources to pursue leisure activities (Hochschild 1989).

In line with their discussions of musicianhood and identity status, many musicians are able to construct their musical participation as the start of a career trajectory in varying ways. Some foresee themselves as remaining committed to music for the entirety of their lives. They imagine they will pursue music, making it their career, for the remainder of their lives. They simultaneously anticipate a life of economic hardship, one in which they will likely always need a "second job" to help pay the bills. Other musicians, however, who see music as a temporary aspect of their young adult lives, still connect their participation in music to their future careers. They see their experiences in bands as socializing them to work successfully in other fields. Some, for instance, imagine the "more realistic" careers in music are in the production and promotion sectors. They thus begin taking on roles "behind the scenes" in the music world as

recording engineers, producers, and promoters. Other musicians imagine they will one day leave music behind altogether. They nonetheless believe their experiences as musicians will benefit them later in life.

For example, both women and men, through their participation in bands, become adept at the social side of business dealings in the music world. These skills, they imagine, may be of value in other, more traditional work settings. The women in particular sometimes spoke of their experience working in a male-dominated field as an asset to them in the future. Through musical participation, they learn how to work alongside men, negotiate their femininity and sexuality, and hold their own in the face of gender discrimination (though a rare experience in general). These lessons will do them well in the future—in any field.

Through their participation in music, both women and men musicians also learn the networking, informal aspect of career success. Numerous studies suggest the importance of informal networks and activities to success in the formal workplace (Granovetter 1974; McGuire 2002; Podolny and Baron 1997). Musicians learn the networking skills necessary for success in other, even normative, careers. They also learn skills of negotiation, time and money management, and conflict resolution. They develop off-stage, but performance-related, skills that can be drawn upon in careers and in family life: technical production skills, writing, website maintenance, and the like.

Although I examined people at one particular life period, I anticipate music will be consequential in their futures. The gendered experiences in music have the potential to stick with the musicians throughout life. Through their participation in the strongly masculine social world of music, women learn how to work within masculine-settings to achieve success and secure a place for themselves in it. Some women suggest that working with a "bunch of guys" in the

music scene may potentially advantage them in other male-dominated lines of work. They learn how to survive—and thrive—in a male-dominated world. Some musicians feel that learning to cope with the business aspects of musical performance or to navigate in a world that could be sexist and exclusionary are skills that will serve them well later in life. In general, subjective careers may contribute to success in formal careers.

Limitations

A few limitations of this research need to be taken into account. First, my data come from one particular segment of the population of musicians. For the most part, they are in the same age range. Since they are in young adulthood, it is uncertain how likely they will be to persist with music in later adulthood (although they all had ideas as to how long they imagine they will pursue music). A majority of the musicians with whom I spoke are white and come from affluent backgrounds. However, this is typical of indie rock participation. My respondents all reside in the same geographical location, but many originated from other locales. They cite aspects of the Athens community that they believed helped them more easily pursue music. While some of them did try out music in other cities, it is not certain whether their experiences in Athens are unique or would have been similar had they been in other musically-rich locales.

As is the case with any qualitative study, I cannot confirm the accuracy of my participants' recollections of past (or even recent) events in their lives. While I cannot say for sure how much of their stories were selectively told or enhanced in responding to my questions, I can say I did notice some contradictions, particularly when asking about mentoring relationships and familial influences on musical participation. I am confident the musicians did not intentionally try to mislead me and were as honest as possible in responding to my questions. What may more likely be the case is that the musicians were attempting to make their past

experiences fit with their current lives (Gubrium et al. 1994). People in all walks of life strive for consistency in constructing their senses of self, and musicians are no different. Narratives told about lives rarely are the literal truth, but rather a reflection of individuals' sense-making about their own lives (Kohler-Reissmann 2002).

Perhaps the biggest limitation in my study is the limited number of women musicians who are included. It is difficult to say how general their experiences are to the larger population of women musicians. Although I had a limited number of women, I did intentionally oversample women. I did not interview every woman who was in a band during my data collection, but I was able to secure interviews with a majority of them who were currently residing in the Athens area. Their limited presence in this study derives from their limited presence in the music scene. I was not able to interview members of some bands because they were extremely busy and often out of town and on tour during the period of my study. Athens has a reputation for launching new musical talent, and several bands have gone on to national and international success, perhaps the best known being R.E.M. and the B-52's. My study included few of the members of bands that had begun to attain such widespread visibility, but instead focused on what might be termed "second-tier" bands that performed regularly locally but had yet to gain a national or international reputation. Although I suspect that many of the processes I have discovered would be similar for members of the better-known bands, I cannot be certain about this without direct evidence from members of these bands.

Future Studies

This study answers a number of questions about gender, music, and the life course. At the same time, it raises several new questions, many of which are appropriate for future studies. First, the musicians envision what turns they imagine their lives will take in the future, but these

are mere speculations. It would be interesting to follow up on these musicians five and ten years down the line. At that point, most of them will have transitioned from early to "full" adulthood. A follow-up study could illustrate how musicians negotiate commitment to music, as well as highlight other dilemmas that they may encounter in adulthood. It could more fully assess the longer-range implications of their young adult immersion into musical performance and to see if these differed from women and men.

In a similar vein, it would be helpful to examine music scenes in other cities and compare them to Athens. The musicians with whom I spoke described certain aspects of the Athens community as unique, and particularly helpful to musicians. The presence of the nearby university, a large and appreciative musical audience, and the presence of significant production talent in the local area all were beneficial to musicians. That said, do women and men in other cities come to pursue music in ways similar to Athens musicians? Answering this question would require a comparative study of Athens and perhaps other towns with reputations as music centers.

Second, this study raises questions as to how general these findings are to other performance-related careers. Faulkner's (1974) study of classical musicians makes for a relevant comparison to my indie rock musicians. As in Faulkner's study, musicians in my study define their progress by comparing themselves to their similarly-aged peers in the music scene. They subjectively gauge their success by looking outward. However, there appear to be few clear and standard markers of what constitutes musical success among my population than one might find for, for example, aspirants to a profession in business, the military, academia, or medicine, where there are standardized normative careers and indicators at various points of one's progress (or lack thereof). The implications of this study suggest that individuals in other nonstandard careers

face similar dilemmas in their transition to adulthood. A study of men and women in a nontraditional career would answer such questions. Examining other individuals working in the arts would help determine whether the dilemmas musicians in my study faced are common to others. A comparative study in which I examined individuals in a distinct career, such as classical musicians, or perhaps artists, photographers, actors, or dancers, would allow for a better understanding of how generalizable the findings in this study are to the wider population.

Conclusion

To conclude, music is important to people's everyday lives. It is not simply for the young, as popular culture mistakenly suggests. Furthermore, musical performance is not simply for career musicians either. People in a range of nonmusical careers participate in bands for the love of music. For example, sociologist William Bielby performs with other sociologists in his band, named Thin Vitae. Horror writer Stephen King, humor columnist Dave Barry, and writer Mitch Albom perform in their band, the Rock Bottom Remainders. All these adult men began their involvement with musical performance in childhood and adolescence. Music is important enough to these successful adults that they continue to make space for it well into their adult lives.

And the musicians included in this dissertation show the centrality music has to those who create it in the small college town of Athens. They stress that, whatever turns their lives take in the future, the music has marked them in ways they never imagined it could have. Patrick Ferguson, drummer for Music Hates You, muses on how music, in fact, does not hate him, but has blessed him with a fortunate life:

> You make these fantastic friendships [with people across the
>
> country]. And you see them every now and then, you watch their

lives progress and their heartbreaks and triumphs and children and

jobs. It's almost embarrassing how lucky you are to know so many

people who live for music and love art and nurture that part of their

lives. You just end up with this tribe of poets and artists and

madmen that you are connected with. … If you're gonna do the

Jack Kerouac thing, pick up a guitar. If you want to see the

country, you want to know the difference between jambalaya in

New Orleans and Thai food in San Francisco, or what it's like to

swim in Vegas Beach in Northern California versus the Rock Kill

Double Hills on the East Coast, join a band. You'll travel more,

you'll see more, you'll experience more. It was the best

experience.

Beyond music providing a grand life experience, the meanings of this study tell us much about

social life. In contrast to other aspects of popular culture or other genres of music, indie rock is

not as overtly gendered. A culture of equity is built into the rhetoric of the scene, though gender

inequality indeed persists in musical participation. That said, music is a subtle context for

gendered socialization.

Roles in music are fluid and flexible, as musicians are able to adopt the musician identity

at will. However, these roles are simultaneously constrained by external gender expectations and

assumptions. The notion of having complete freedom to reinscribe culture from the inside as a

cultural producer is a partial myth, particularly in terms of gender. Cultural production, though it

has the potential to redirect meanings and understandings of the social world, often reproduces

the status quo. At the same time, the pathways to young adulthood for musicians emphasize

creativity and agency. Pathways to success in indie rock are uncertain, and the musicians know the odds are stacked against them. But despite the level of celebrity the musicians reach in the music scene, they have left their imprint on culture, one that may have lasting effects on the gender regime.

Music is an important window on the worlds of contemporary youth, and those who perform music are at its core. By studying women and men's lives as musicians, we learn about the significance gender, age, and culture has on participation and commitment to music. Music is a context for finding one's place in adulthood, both in terms of identity and career. It simultaneously uncovers the paradoxical structure in indie rock worlds. Indie rock is less sexist than other musical genres, and women have more latitude in negotiating their participation in it. However, gender equity in the scene is deceptive as women are still marginalized, although more gently than in other genres. Furthermore, as the music business increasingly attempts to recruit indie rock bands for the mainstream, the commodification of indie rock may even more negatively affect women's place in indie rock in the future. Or perhaps this genre, admired for its musical innovation, will continue to inspire innovation in gender as well.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHIC AND MUSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF MUSICIANS

Order[17]	Musician	Band	Instrument	Gender/Age	Job Status
1	Matt Lisle	Fairburn Royals	Vocals/Guitar[18]	M/28	White collar
2	Stephen James	Boulevard	Keyboards	M/27	Service sector
3	Donovan Babb	Boulevard	Drums	M/24	White collar
4	Benji Barton	Boulevard	Vocals/Guitar	M/28	White collar
5	Jeff Griggs	Murder Beach	Drums/Vocals	M/29	Service sector
6	Julie Dyles	Murder Beach	Guitar/Vocals	F/26	White collar
7	Chris Bishop	Murder Beach	Bass	M/31	Music Industry
8	Ian Darken	Murder Beach	Guitar	M/28	White collar
9	Kristen Stern	Murder Beach	Vocals/Keyboards	F/28	White collar
10	Mandy Branch	Heros Severum	Vocals/Guitar	F/28	White collar
11	Roy Coughlin	Heros Severum	Guitar	M/30	Service sector
12	Davey Staton	Heros Severum	Drums	M/37	White collar
13	Eric Friar	Heros Severum	Vocals/Guitar	M/29	Music Industry
14	McKenna Mackie	Polemic	Vocals/Guitar	F/32	Service sector
15	Patrick Ferguson	Music Hates You	Drums	M/37	White collar
16	Forest Hetland	Music Hates You	Bass	M/29	Service sector
17	Brion Kennedy	Coulier	Guitar	M/22	Student
18	Adam Newman	Coulier	Guitar	M/23	Student

[17] Musicians listed in this table are presented in the order in which they were interviewed. The exceptions are the musicians for whom I use pseudonyms, all of which appear at the end of the list. This is done to further protect their anonymity since a few of their bandmates may have been interviewed.

[18] In cases where particular musicians contributed to more than one instrument and/or vocals, I list both. When "vocals" appears first in the pairing of instrumentation, this illustrates the musician's role as primary singer. In cases when a particular instrument appears first in the pairing with "vocals" following the instrument, it illustrates the musician's contribution to background or harmony vocals.

19	Navid Amlani	Coulier	Drums	M/22	Student
20	Jason Gonzalez	Nutria	Guitar/Vocals	M/32	Stay-at-home dad
21	Bryant Williamson	Cinemechanica	Vocals/Guitar	M/25	Music Industry
22	Sam Gunn	Iron Hero	Vocals/Guitar	M/25	White collar
23	Chris Uhde	Pushbutton	Vocals/Guitar	M/29	Service sector
24	Dave Weiglein	Nutria	Bass	M/28	White collar
25	Nico Cashin	Psychic Hearts	Synthesizer/Bass	F/23	Service sector
26	Cora West	Pushbutton	Vocals/Keys	F/23	Service sector
27	Zach Hinkle	Engineering	Vocals/Guitar	M/22	Student
28	Kay Stanton	Casper & the Cookies	Bass	F/33	White collar
29	Jason NeSmith	Casper & the Cookies	Vocals/Guitar	M/34	Music Industry
30	"Jack"[19]	"Manic Cane"	Guitar	M/22	Service sector
31	"Jacob"	"Down Boy"	Guitar	M/32	Service sector
32	"Emily"	"Agreeable Planet"	Bass	F/28	White collar
33	"Adrian"	"Bell Curve"	Guitar/Vocals	F/22	Service sector
34	"Noel"	"Iron Charm"	Keyboards/Vocals	F/24	White collar
35	"Damien"	"Lovelorn Fly"	Guitar	M/27	White collar
36	"Stewart"	"Fuzz"	Bass/Vocals	M/23	Student
37	"Aaron"	"Barn Betty"	Drums	M/22	White collar
38	"Eli"	"Parasite"	Drums	M/26	Music Industry

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[19] Names of musicians and bands in quotes illustrate a pseudonym. All others are actual names of musicians and bands.

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Hey

I'm a graduate student in sociology doing my dissertation on local musicians. A study on musicians?, you ask. Yup, that's right. I'm mostly interested in how you decided to pursue music, about your life history with music, and the meaning music has in your lives. I'd like to include your band in my study. Once I'm done with this, I'd like to publish it as a book.

I've seen you all play a few times and really like what you're doing. That said, I'm writing to ask if you'd be up for an interview (which should last about an hour and a half). Ideally, I'd like to interview each member separately.

Anyway, I'm pretty broke and my project isn't funded by anyone, so I won't be able to pay you for the interviews. But I'm willing to barter any sort of work to compensate you for your time (like maybe do your merch table at a future show?). Or buy you a cup of coffee during the interview. Whatever you'd like.

Please let me know if you're up for this. I can be reached at this email address or by phone at 227-9876. If I'm not home, please leave a message and I'll get back to you.

Oh yeah, if you'd like to review some work I did for Flagpole, check out my story on We Versus the Shark:

http://www.flagpole.com/articles.php?fp=5254

… and a review of Princess Superstar's new album I did (scroll to the bottom, it's the second to the last one):

http://www.flagpole.com/articles.php?fp=5653

Thank you,
Michael Ramirez

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

History

I'm going to start by asking you about your childhood and adolescent experiences with music. Then I'll move to questions about your more recent life.

Looking back on your life, when did you first realize that you were interested in music?

What was the first instrument you learned how to play?
Did you seek out this instrument on your own?
Do you play any other instruments?

Do your parents play instruments?
Do your siblings play instruments?

What extracurricular activities were you involved in during middle school and high school?

When you were growing up, say, just moving into your teens and starting to think about the future, what did you think you'd be doing at the age you are at now?
What do you think your parents expected you to be doing at this age?

Recent Life

What did you decide to do once high school was over?

Are you currently enrolled in college? Graduated? Studying what?
or Do you have any desire to go (back) to school?

Do you have another job outside of your band?
Where?

When would you say that being a musician first became part of who you are?
or When do you first remember thinking, "I'm a musician"?

Current Band

Now I have some questions about your current band.

Your band's name is _____.
Who came up with it?

Is there any significance to it?

Are you in any other bands?

What prompted you to start/join a band?
How did you meet the other musicians in your band?
Have there been any lineup changes?

What do you like about being a musician?
Anything you don't like?

How did people (your family in particular) react when you first became a musician, or invested in music?

Do you find it difficult to balance music and school/work? How do you do it?

Do you want to make a career out of making/performing music, or is it mostly a hobby?

What subject matter do your songs deal with?

Do you contribute to songwriting?
Do you write songs on your own?

What's it like to perform on stage?
What do you like most about it?
Is there anything you dislike about it?

Is there a difference between the on-stage vs. the off-stage you? The on-stage persona vs. the real you?

Mentors
Next I'd like to talk about any people in your life who helped you when you were starting out.

Is there anyone who helped show you the ropes when you and your band were first starting out (advice on booking shows, recording, touring, etc.)?
How did you become acquainted with this person?
What exactly did this person help you with?

Then Is there another person in your life who helped you out with your band?
[If yes, repeat above questions.]

Athens
How different do you think your music career would be if you lived someplace other than Athens?
What does Athens offer you and your band that you think other cities wouldn't?

What do you like about the Athens music scene?
What are you most dissatisfied with in the Athens music scene?

How does playing in Athens compare to playing in other cities?

Identity
A lot of people say music helps them discover something about themselves, about who they are.
When you were younger, did music help you understand yourself? What?
What about today, does music help you understand anything about yourself?

Do you think men musicians are different from the typical American guy who doesn't play music? How?
In what ways are you dissimilar from the typical American guy?

Do you think women musicians are different from the typical American woman? How?
In what ways are you dissimilar from the typical American woman?

Do you see the music scene as imbalanced in terms of gender?
[If yes] Why do you think there are so few women in music?

Aspirations for the Future/Thinking about the Past
What would you consider your greatest success so far?
Are there any shortcomings that stick out, anything that you wished had turned out differently?

What are your plans for the future?

I know it's hard to say for sure, but what do you think you would be like if you have never become a musician?
What do you think you would have ended up doing instead?

Was there ever a time when you were contemplating giving up music?
What were the circumstances that led to this dilemma?
Why did you ultimately decide to continue pursuing music?

Do you feel any pressure from anyone to do something different?

Demographics
Age?
Where did you grow up?
How long have you lived in Athens?
How did you end up in Athens?
Marital status?
Highest level of Education?
What race would you say you belong to?
What social class would you say you were raised in?

Final Questions
[I would typically ask one of the following questions to conclude the interview.]

I would finally like to ask you about something you are most proud of. What stands out as something that you are most proud of when thinking about your role in your band?

What is one of your favorite memories about your band?

What is your most personally significant song of yours? Why?