

WOMEN'S STUDIES CELEBRATION
Women's History Month 2006

NOMINATION: Papers and projects done in completion of course work for Spring, Summer and Fall 2005 eligible for nomination. Students do not need to be enrolled Fall 2005 or Spring 2006 to be eligible.

(Students are encouraged to identify works they would like nominated and approach their professor to initiate the process.)

Instructor Forman, Pamela Dept. Sociology
Course Number and Name WMS. 419 - Sociology of Women Semester completed Spring '05
Title of Nominated Work "Alternative Rock Subculture and its Manipulation of Gender Relationships"

Pick one-

CATEGORY:

Sampson:
☒ Undergraduate Research Paper
☐ Undergraduate Project
☐ Graduate

☐ See
☐ Olson
☐ Kessler
☐ Turell
☐ Belter

(The judges retain the right to reassign categories for all nominated works.)

STUDENT INFORMATION:

Name Erin Hankey
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****WHY DO YOU, THE INSTRUCTOR, RECOMMEND THIS AS AN EXEMPLARY STUDENT PAPER/PROJECT? (Attach a separate sheet.)**

As the nominating instructor, please notify the student and ask them to turn in the paper, or attach to your nomination form.

.....
Awards are sponsored by the UW-Eau Claire Foundation, Helen X. Sampson Fund, and by private individuals. Research involving human subjects must conform to the guidelines given by the Institutional Research Board. Contact Research Services, 836-3405, with questions.

Submission deadline is February 13, 2006.



UNIVERSITY of WISCONSIN-EAU CLAIRE

Pamela J. Forman • Department of Sociology • 429 Schneider Hall • Eau Claire, WI 54702-4004 • (715) 836-3039

11 February 2006

Re: Research Project Submission by Erin Hankey, "Alternative Rock Subculture and its Manipulation of Gender Relationships."

Dear Members of Women's Studies Award Committee:

I am nominating this paper by Erin Hankey as an exemplary paper that she wrote for my Sociology of Women course in Spring 2005. This 400-level course of 70 students primarily consisted of juniors and seniors. Erin turned in this paper as a sophomore who had not yet taken a course in sociological theory. Her paper struck me in its nuanced attempts both to understand and apply Schippers' theoretical framework. She questions Schippers' attempts to situate the agency shown by the women in this alternative rock subculture as examples of subjectivity and even hegemonic femininity. Instead, she claims that these women are trying to empower themselves through acting more assertively when approached by men and in how they perform and interpret their music. I particularly enjoyed her application of Schippers' ideas to her own choices of musicians: Ani DiFranco and Kurt Cobain of Nirvana. She argues that while Cobain may dye his hair pink, he conforms with norms of hegemonic masculinity while DiFranco takes from both femininity and masculinity in developing her own sense of style and poise on the stage. In sum, Erin's paper stood out as an accomplished effort. I believe that her work demonstrates both critical thinking and an astute understanding of gender relations. Thank you for your time in reading each of these wonderful efforts.

Sincerely,

Pamela J. Forman

PAPER 2

Schippers' Analysis

DUE: Wednesday, 20 April at 2 (section 1) or 3:15 (section 2) in class. All papers handed in after this time will receive a 25% penalty for each day late. Paper is worth 15% of your grade (150 points).

Format:

Write a paper that is up to 4 typed pages in length, double-spaced, 12 point font, and with 1 inch margins. Number your pages. Keep a copy of it! Define the concepts that you use and properly reference each source that was integral to your paper (Please see Reference Guidelines.).

For the second assignment, Write a paper about Mimi Schippers book, *Rockin' Out of the Box* (2002). This assignment asks you to demonstrate your analytical and writing skills with an essay that advances an argument about gender and music using pertinent course materials (Wharton, Schippers, and/or Preves) and potentially articles on music, web sites, music videos, music selections, music magazines.

Your paper should have a clear **SOCIOLOGICAL argument** which you support with evidence and explanations. Sometimes, the best way to develop an argument is to develop at least two possible ways of looking at the same issue. Then situate your view on the argument.

For those of you that want to include music or music video clips, please hand in the paper with a CD that has the music recorded on it. You can also list the links in your paper; in that case, please email me your paper as an attachment to make it easier for me to access them (Please still hand in a hard copy of your paper. Just email it as well with an email that says it has links to URLs).

Suggested Format:

Writing is rewriting. **Please turn in a paper that you and another person carefully edited.** I recommend bribing your friends with whatever will inspire them to do a thorough job of proofreading (perhaps by offering them the same favor). Please do not turn in your roughest rough draft. Although all semesters are busy, papers written a few hours before they are due are not going to be your best work.

Title—use an imaginative title, not "GENDER AND ..."

Introduction—Start with a quote or something to get the reader interested in your topic. Lay out your main **SOCIOLOGICAL** argument and offer the reader sign posts as to the major points that you will review. (1/2 to one page)

Body—Each topic should be introduced with clear topic sentences at the beginning of paragraphs. Define your concepts and offer evidence to illustrate each of them. The analysis involves stating how these examples illustrated the concepts. (2-3 pages)

Conclusion—Summarize the main points of your analysis and reconsider them in terms of their greater social significance. You might end by asking questions that you would consider in further research on this topic or that would be useful for further inquiry of the topic. (1/2-1 page)

GRADING SCHEMA (150 points):

An analysis of Mimi Schippers' *Rockin' Out of the Box* (2002)

Schippers analyzes what she refers to as gender maneuvering in alternative hard rock. This paper asks you to choose three questions and develop them into an essay examining this text.

I will grade the essay as follows:

Discussion of 3 questions (3 x 40 points each=120 possible)

Structure of paper (introduction/conclusion/transitions) (20)

Mechanics (spelling/proofreading/grammar)/Citations/references (10)

- 1) Define and develop her concept of "gender maneuvering." Offer examples of both interactive and cultural gender maneuvering. Do you find this concept useful in thinking about gender as a performance? Why or why not?
- 2) Discuss how rock musicians/rock bands negotiate femininity and masculinity through their music and performances. Offer at least one examples of a female and compare/contrast this construction of gender with a male musician/rock band. While you may rely on Schippers, I suggest that you analyze other musicians as well. You may get data on these musicians from cds, websites, music videos, music magazines, etc.
- 3) Develop and discuss the fans that follow rock music. Offer an analysis of what it means to be a groupie and how being a groupie either falls into or opposes the gender order in our society.
- 4) Sexuality and eroticism are a part of rock music. Discuss the sexual order in alternative rock music. Do you see alternative rock music as a place that is particular open to fluidity in the sexualities of both the musicians and fans? Offer examples to support your points.
- 5) Discuss the notion of feminist politics and how it plays into women's entry into alternative rock.

References

Use a consistent format for referencing your paper's ideas. Please avoid plagiarizing in any manner. I do like you to use quotes in your paper. However, I do not like it when they overwhelm your own voice. If you have a page that is quotes strung together, rewrite it so most of the quotes turn into paraphrasing in your own words. Be sure to explain the quotes that you do end up including. When you directly quote from a piece, follow the quote with a citation. Thus, if you use a quote from Schippers on page 88, you would cite it after the quote as (Schipper 2002: 88). However, if you used the quote from Denfield on p. 178 of Schippers, cite it as (Denfield, cited in Schippers 2002: 178).

If you cite lecture material, do so as follows by listing in parentheses by name and the date (Forman, date 2005). If you can not remember who made the point, list as follows (Class discussion, date).

If you prefer another referencing style, feel free to use it. The following is Chicago Style as used by the American Sociological Association.

Periodical/Journal Articles

West, Candace and Don H. Zimmerman. 1987. "Doing Gender." *Gender and Society*. 1: 125-151.

Books

Mason, Karen O. 1974. *Women's Labor Force Participation and Fertility*. Research Triangle, NC: National Institutes of Health.

U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1990. *Characteristics of Population*. Vol. 1. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Book Chapter

Wilkinson, Sue and Celia Kitzinger. 1994. "Towards a Feminist Approach to Breast Cancer." Pp. 121-140 in *Women and Health: Feminist Perspectives*, edited by S. Wilkinson and C. Kitzinger. London: Taylor and Francis.

Newspaper Article

Diesenhouse, Susan. 1990. "More Women Are Playing but Fewer Call the Shots." *New York Times*. December 11: B13.

Web Sites

Hawes, Kay. 1999. "Voice for Change." *NCAA News* December 6. Retrieved May 14, 2000 (<http://www.ncaa.org/news/19991206/active/3625n33.html>).

Erin Hankey
 Wmns. 419.002
 04.20.05
 Essay #2

Alternative Rock Subculture and its Manipulation of Gender Relationships

The early history of rock music, in regards to lyrics, musicians, and performance, can be traced to one single idea: it was all about *men*. From the early years of Elvis Presley with his sexually gyrating hips to the later rock music of AC-DC expressing its members' "big balls," rock n' roll was an industry run by men, performed by male musicians, and included lyrics that were written from a male perspective. Those involved with the culture of rock music just prior to the 1990s saw a need to move away from the "cock rock" of bands like Ted Nugent and Motley Crue that emphasized male dominance and the mainstream gender order as a result of two large and enraged rebellions (Schippers 2002: 54). One rebellion, the second wave of feminism of the 1960s, showed this new generation of youth that there should be no toleration for the perpetual objectification of women or the hierarchy that is produced from heterosexism. Punk rock of the late 1970s in the United Kingdom, the second rebellion, critiqued the mainstream culture of its dull and clichéd middle-class society and stood against corporate music that "sells out" and gives profit to big business. The result was a transformation of music in the rock subculture.

Sociologist Mimi Schippers examines this transformed subculture in her book, Rockin' Out of the Box. Schippers' ethnography focuses on the rejection of the mainstream, hierarchical gender order in rock music. Her theoretical contribution is to blend both macro-level sociological theories such as that of Anthony Giddens (1984) and R.W. Connell (1995), with the poststructural ideas of Judith Butler (1990) and the micro-level ethnomethodological analysis of Candace West and Don Zimmerman (1987). Her study documents a subculture, *alternative hard*

rock, which used strategies to create its own set of rules for gender norms and for restructuring the relationship between masculinity and femininity. Such use of strategies by this subculture is termed by Schippers as *gender maneuvering* (xii). This paper will move from applying the aforementioned sociologists' theories to Schippers' concepts, towards the application of those concepts to examples in her book. The last section is my own analysis of how a musician, Ani DiFranco, and a band, Nirvana, of the alternative hard rock subculture have conscientiously challenged the sexism of mainstream rock through human agency, but more importantly through gender maneuvering, so as to not perpetuate society's hierarchical gender order.

The performance of gender in the alternative rock subculture works to resist reproducing norms within the existing gender order. Schippers describes the word *alternative* as a reference to a *relationship* rather than a characteristic, in that it points to what it is alternative *to*, such as the dominant, mainstream, and accepted culture (Schippers 2002: 13). Sociologist Anthony Giddens' theory of *structuration* claims that the "rules" for how to act, interact, and understand the world in any social situation are "produced, sustained, and transformed" (Schippers 2002: xi). Schippers applies Giddens' theory of structuration to gender relations. Her concept of *gender maneuvering* attempts to set a "new course for *gender structuration*" (2002: xii). Gender maneuvering involves the manipulation of gendered performances so as to either establish, transform, or disrupt the dichotomy between femininity and masculinity (2002: 119). Schippers, like Giddens, sees human agency as potentially transformative in that we do not necessarily replicate the existing norms for gender relations within a particular subculture.

Mainstream rock culture has been manipulated by alternative rockers to produce and perform their own set of rules for "doing" rock. Sociologists Candace West and Don Zimmerman view gender as a performance, establishing that we "do" masculinity or femininity

as we enact other social roles (Schippers 2002: xi). Because we are rewarded daily by others for performing the proper gender that is accepted by society, we are, thus, coerced to follow the established societal patterns and produce gender relations such as inequality, power, and domination (West and Zimmerman, cited in Schippers 2002: xi). The term of *cultural gender maneuvering* refers to a collective effort by a group to manipulate the masculinity-femininity relationship as it develops in any situation. Alternative hard rockers and their fans transgress the gender order by creating an alternative subculture that no longer reifies the patterns of mainstream rock culture (Schippers 2002: 40-41). Next, I will discuss examples of cultural and interactive gender maneuvering: the first of a reclaiming of the former derogatory term “slut”; the latter of men displaying restraint in approaching women in social situations.

The reclaiming of the derogatory label *slut* by the subculture as a mark of solidarity among female alternative hard rockers is one way alternative hard rockers culturally gender maneuver. Women view this label as an insult directed towards them for acting beyond the limits of legitimate femininity by being overtly sexual towards men (Schippers 2002: 45). Amongst women in this alternative music scene, however, calling each other slut is commonly accepted. If someone outside this marginalized group, a man for instance, uses the term towards women, no tolerance towards this individual is given. Besides just verbally using the symbol, women in the alternative hard rock subculture also “do” slut as a way to feel empowered (Schippers 2002: 45). They may frequently talk about sex, openly express their sexual desires, and wear revealing clothing as a “badge of honor,” all in an effort to transform themselves from sexual objects to sexual subjects (Schippers 2002: 46). Although I see what Schippers is trying to claim in terms of women’s attempt to gain their subjectivity, their continued display of sexuality in their dress and in their references to sexual desire seems to represent agency more

than subjectivity. In these instances, women may be empowering themselves; however, the sexual order in which women are subordinate to men remains relatively intact. Men displaying restraint in approaching women is another way the subculture contests the gender order.

Schippers' work examines interactive gender maneuvering through the example of an interaction between five women, including Schippers, and a male stranger in a bar. The male approaches the group at their table and says, "Hi girls. Are you alone?" which "both reflects and recreates the hegemonic order" (Schippers 2002: 74, 80). Calling these women "girls" and going against the norm of approaching strangers in a social setting was certainly not in his favor. He then verbally compares them to women in a Robert Palmer video, which are generally seen as sexual objects. One of the women, Maddie, decides to then scrutinize his masculinity by comparing him to the actor, Paulie Shore, thus, mocking this man and making him look ridiculous (Schippers 2002: 77). This action allows Maddie to assert a different position for herself and the others, from being the sex objects to becoming the "discerning subjects," and also situates the man into a specific role of "pathetic loser or geek" (Schippers 2002: 78). The women's femininity now empowered over the man's masculinity as they became in charge of the interactive situation and situated him into a role of their choice.

As sociologists West and Zimmerman examine gender as a form of "doing" masculinity or femininity, poststructural sociologist Judith Butler builds upon this concept by adding that gender consists of the *relationship* that is created by this performance. She focuses on the hierarchical and binary gender order and on how society views masculinity and femininity as complementary and complete opposites. Butler sees that gender relations of inequality are "symbolically produced and maintained" (Schippers: xi). The symbolic relationship between the two genders of the hierarchical order positions masculine as dominant over feminine. The

alternative hard rock subculture has intentionally created a new set of rules and norms in an effort to go against and somewhat blend society's hierarchical and binary order between masculinity and femininity. Their opposition to sexism, along with their greater respect for women, is reflected by the ways they perform their gender. By choosing to be more feminine men or more masculine women, whether depicted through physical actions, dress, or verbal communication, this group is deciding to defy the binary gender order in an attempt to produce something different that has potential to create more acceptance of any non-hegemonic act. The notions that gender is performed and that unequal gender relations are symbolically produced makes available the concept of gender maneuvering.

Rock musicians and bands negotiate femininity and masculinity through their music and performances. R.W. Connell suggests that there are multiple masculinities, four in fact, that build off of *hegemonic masculinity* to create a social organization of gender between these different masculinities (Schippers 2002: 29). *Hegemonic masculinity* is defined as "a set of practices that are defined as masculine and that work to maintain, reproduce, legitimate, and guarantee male dominance within any given gender order" (Connell, cited in Schippers 2002: 29). The most common masculinity that alternative hard rock males adopt is *subordinate masculinity*—"the uncool, sexually inept and unconfident but brainy high school nerd" (2002: 115). This persona or style, however, does not necessarily fully represent the interaction that takes place between femininities and masculinities. Instead of viewing the female counterpart to the male's style of masculinity or femininity, Schippers considers style as a device for a masculinity-femininity relationship of which she calls *gendered dress* (2002:166). Women adopt traditional masculine forms of dress, actions, and attitudes. However, unlike the previous hard rockers of the late 1970s and the 1980s, male alternative hard rockers assume the subordinate or

marginal masculinities rather than embrace femininity. An amazing example of a woman who adopts the device of *gendered dress* for a masculinity-femininity relationship is the musician, Ani DiFranco.

Although she isn't mentioned in Schippers' work, Ani DiFranco is a musician who negotiates femininity through her music lyrics and stage performances. DiFranco's music has been categorized under the genre of "folk," yet her intentions have been clearly *alternative*. The unique blending of an assortment of instruments and sounds, combined with the powerful energy and confidence she exudes during a show, can offer a reexamination of what is truly "folk." Creating her own record label, Righteous Babe Records, Inc., of which she was sure would not go mainstream, Ani DiFranco "inspired countless other musicians to rewrite the rules of the recording industry by striving for self-sufficiency and refusing to allow art to be subsumed by cold commerce" (Biography). This achievement mirrors the assertion that punk rockers had voiced concerning the illegitimacy of musicians selling out to big business. Ani DiFranco's lyrics consist of relationships and family experiences, political convictions, the current welfare state of the country and the world, and speaking out against many forms of oppression. Shocking to some audience members and music listeners are those raw, gritty lyrics that DiFranco expresses as truth, as she sees it, without fear (Biography). If this goes against the gender order of the larger society, then more power to her!

Ani DiFranco has been fairly straightforward about her sexuality, and it is on the stage where she effectively constructs this sexuality. When on tour with her band, there are both male and female members who, in their dress or by what they say during a performance, negotiate the relationship between mainstream masculinity and femininity. DiFranco can dress in both typical masculine garb as well as the makings of a "slut," and still be powerful and not objectified in her

actions or words. Although she stands at the petite height of five feet, that power and energy, along with her black combat boots in which she is always clad, create an unobjectified woman. As Schippers expresses in her book, women may refer to their bodies or the distinguishable parts of their bodies from those of men. Significance is given to the ways that they may do this, which can “emphasize simultaneously being a woman *and* a musician *and* a desiring sexual subject *and* a person with a woman’s body” (2002: 118). These seemingly clashing depictions are in actuality an approach to blur the lines between masculinity and femininity and to diminish the control and domination of men over women. When DiFranco expresses such portrayal, she is being the subjective female musician who views herself as a woman who has power and control over her life, as expressed through her music. An example of a band that may have displayed hegemonic masculinity in their gendered dress, but who adopted a subordinate masculinity through their vocal expression so as to not maintain or legitimate male dominance, is Nirvana.

The construction of gender through the music and performance by male alternative rock band, Nirvana, contrasts with that of Ani DiFranco and other female bands and musicians. On stage, the three band members were dressed in the garb commonly known as the “grunge” look. The main goal of this style was to portray the unimportance of economic success by combining clothes that don’t really match or combine well and which look old or secondhand (Schippers 2002: 107). With the members of Nirvana, army surplus jackets or flannel shirts with cut jeans or cargo pants and combat boots or Chuck’s was typical attire. Their hair was generally long or shaven off, and most had some facial hair. However, unlike Ani DiFranco, who adopts both masculine and feminine styles in look and dress, in general, Nirvana maintained a mostly hegemonic masculinity with regards to appearance. Exceptions occurred when some eye makeup was put on, or if Kurt Cobain’s hair was dyed pink.

The type of music that was created by the band can be labeled as loud and aggressive, and thus, the mainstream media regarded this band as a “celebration of masculine adolescence” (Schippers 2002: 108). However, many of the lyrics hardly coincide with the style of music that had been created, which was a common construction amongst the subculture. Contrary to the old mainstream rock that sang about promiscuous sex with and the domination of women, Nirvana’s song “Breed” displays well the deployment from that sexism. Part of the lyrics goes as follows: “even if you have // even if you need // I don’t mean to stare // we don’t have to breed // we can plant a house // we can build a tree // I don’t even care...” Perhaps this was an effort to state that the act of sex isn’t necessary to him or the band members, but rather that forming a meaningful relationship takes precedence over sexual desires. The hegemonic masculinity that produces domination over women was not displayed by Nirvana’s construction of gender through their musical lyrics.

Attempts by the alternative rock subculture to redefine the norms of the hierarchical gender order are examined in Mimi Schippers’ ethnography, Rockin’ Out of the Box. Drawing upon theories and concepts of sociologists Giddens, West and Zimmerman, Butler, and Connell, Schippers’ analysis of this subculture provides the framework for a developed view of the construction of gender as well as provides the context to create one group’s own gender order. Contributions and influences of such rebellious groups as the second-wave feminists and the punk rock culture of the 1970s has played an important role in the emergence of these attempts to create new relationships between masculinity and femininity. The efforts of both musicians and fans to reject and destroy the dominant culture’s construction of the gender order through *gender maneuvering* were, for the most part, a success. This generation of people who passionately loved talented and creative musicians came to realize that they also hated sexism, a

significant premise of earlier rock music. Seeing no excuse or reason to maintain, reproduce, or legitimate male dominance, those who were part of this subculture created their own set of norms and rules in an effort to reject the hierarchical gender order, to transform relationships amongst people, and to embrace equality through their collective passion for rock music.

References

"Biography." Retrieved April 19, 2005 (<http://www.righteousbabe.com/ani/bio.asp>).

Schippers, Mimi. 2002. *Rockin' Out of the Box: Gender Maneuvering in Alternative Hard Rock*. Rutgers University Press, New Jersey.