

**“YOU SOUND LIKE AN OLD BLACK MAN”:
PERFORMATIVITY OF GENDER AND RACE AMONG FEMALE JAZZ
SAXOPHONISTS**

by

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This dissertation explores through the case study of female saxophonists how the increasing number of female jazz instrumentalists has impacted norms of gender, race, sexuality, and age among jazz musicians, audience members, and the music industry. Through ethnographic fieldwork, archival research, and an analysis of videotaped performances of female jazz saxophonists, I demonstrate that female performers tend to perform masculinity in order to conform to the historically and culturally established discourse of the genre, the instrument, and its performance style, all of which are closely associated with African American men. In addition, I illustrate that female saxophonists’ “performances” of gender include not only visual aspects (clothing, hair style, make-up, facial expressions, body movements) but also musical sound (composition types, sound quality, delivery style, volume, tempo, improvisational styles), which signify masculinity and femininity within the cultural contexts in which they perform. This work further shows that masculinity and femininity are complicated by other categories of identity including race, sexuality/sexual orientation, and age. In other words, masculinity and femininity are not a simplistic binary construction but rather fluid variables that are historically and culturally contingent and also intricately intersected with race, sexuality and age. Further, I suggest that the increasing visibility/audibility of female jazz saxophonists with the help of digital recording and network technology may pose a challenge to the masculinist and heterosexual discourse of jazz.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Although female jazz instrumentalists have always existed in the history of jazz, they have been scarcely discussed in the dominant discourse of jazz history and their music has been poorly documented. As a result, until very recently, there were only a few female jazz instrumentalists known to the general public with several exceptions of the pianists. However, in the past ten years, a growing number of women have performed traditionally male-dominated instruments, and the saxophonists occupy the second largest number among these women next to the pianists, who have always been majority. The visibility of female saxophonists is exemplified in these two events in 2008: The Kennedy Center held the first saxophone competition for young women in May 2008, and eighteen-year old Haley Niswanger won the first place; Israeli-born saxophonist Anat Cohen led her band at the Village Vanguard in New York City in October 2008, a first for a female horn player. How has the increasing number of female instrumentalists impacted the jazz scene and gender norms among players, audience members, the music, industry, and society in general? Since visibly a large number of female musicians are participating in performing jazz saxophone, the saxophone performance is a perfect site to investigate the question.

This research project explores how female jazz saxophonists “perform” stereotypical notion of masculinity in order to conform to the historically and culturally established views of the genre, the instrument, and its performance style, which are closely associated with African

American men. As a number of works of masculinity studies in recent years have shown, masculinity can be manifested in a number of different ways. For example, in music scholarship, authors have examined a variety of masculinities including black masculinity,¹ white masculinity,² Asian masculinity,³ and working class masculinity.⁴ However, in the jazz world, where strong heterosexual norms are persistent, a patriarchal definition of masculinity that is often associated with “blackness” has been cultivated and displayed throughout its history although alternative masculinities have also been presented by some performers.⁵ The heteronormative and patriarchal tradition has created clear gender roles in jazz: men are the performers, women are audience members, girlfriends, wives, or supporters; and men are instrumentalists, women are singers or, at best, pianists.⁶ I argue that gender in jazz is “performed” through the musical sound (timbre, delivery, composition, improvisation, etc.) as well as visual aspects such as hairstyles, clothing, demeanor, and facial expressions.

Female jazz saxophonists’ performance of masculinity can be considered to be a succession of the tradition as well as a requirement for these women to be accepted as authentic jazz saxophonists. Authenticity as a jazz saxophonist is further complicated by such factors as

¹ Hazel Carby, *Race Men* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), Steve Waksman, “Black Sound, Black Body: Jimi Hendrix, the Electric Guitar, and the Meanings of Blackness,” *Popular Music and Society* 23/1 (1999), 75-113.

² Patrick Burke, “Oasis of Swing: The Onix Club, Jazz, and White Masculinity in the Early 1930s,” *American Music* 24/3 (2006), 320-346, Matthew Bannister, “‘Loaded’: Indie Guitar Rock, Canonism, White Masculinities,” *Popular Music* 25/1 (2006), 77-95.

³ Fabienne Darling-Wolf, “SMAP, Sex, and Masculinity: Constructing the Perfect Female Fantasy in Japanese Popular Music,” *Popular Music and Society* 27/3 (2004), 357-370.

⁴ Mark A. Hernandez, “Breaking the Mold of Contemporary Working-Class Mexican Masculinity: The Rock Urbano Music of Tex Tex,” *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 20/1 (2008), 2-25, Aaron Fox, *Real Country: Music and Language in Working-Class Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

⁵ Krin Gabbard, “Signifyin’ Phallus: *Mo’ Better Blues* and Representations of the Jazz Trumpet,” *Representing Jazz*. Krin Gabbard, ed. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995), David Ake, “Re-masculating Jazz: Ornette Coleman, ‘Lonely Woman,’ and the New York Jazz Scene in the Late 1960s.” *American Music* 16/1(1998), 25-44.

⁶ See the detailed discussion in Valerie Wilmer, *As Serious Your Life: The Story of the New Jazz* (Westport, Conn.: L. Hill, 1980).

race and sexuality. Since jazz originates in African American culture, authenticity of jazz is often associated with a claim of “blackness,” toward which white and foreign jazz musicians may feel an inferiority complex. In addition, because of the emphasis on masculinity in jazz performances, the sexual orientation of strong female instrumentalists tends to be called into question, and homosexual male jazz musicians tend to be closeted.

This “performance” of masculinity is often denied by female performers. In my interviews with female performers, some of them claimed that they never considered jazz saxophone playing masculine or attempted to perform like men. Some mentioned that music is either good or bad and has nothing to do with the performer’s gender or a category of gender. However, their performances are often associated with those of men. For example, “You play like a man” is a classic compliment for female saxophonists. In addition, a female saxophonist mentioned that she was mistaken as a man by a person who heard her recording. Interestingly, two young white female saxophonists and an Asian saxophonist received the similar comments, “You sound like an old black man/ a big black man,” and they consider this comment a “great compliment.” These examples suggest that musical sound can signify masculinity regardless of the performer’s biological sex or her intention. As mentioned, female saxophonists’ performance of masculinity is a succession of the tradition. In other words, patriarchal and masculine discourse of jazz has been reiterated and reinforced by these female performers. I would like to explore how a growing number of women’s participation in jazz instrumental performance may have impacted the jazz discourse.

1.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

I propose to explore how female jazz saxophonists “perform” gender through their musical performance. I am specifically interested in what elements in musical sound signify masculinity/femininity. I seek to understand the process through which these musical elements have historically and culturally accrued the meaning of masculinity/femininity by tracing history of jazz performance in general and saxophone performance in particular. I aim to demonstrate that these musical elements signify masculinity/femininity not because they are essentially masculine/feminine but because they have been cultivated by male performers to signify a particular identity. In addition, the meaning of masculinity/femininity is not stable and what the same musical elements signify may change over time or in the context.

Moreover, I will examine how performance of gender is complicated by other categories of identity such as race, nationality, sexuality, and age without which gender cannot be fully discussed.⁷ How do race and nationality of the performers influence women’s performance of masculinity/femininity? Since jazz is deeply rooted in African American culture, masculinity in jazz is often associated with blackness. Does this mean that African American females have more advantages in performing masculinity in jazz than white American or foreign musicians? In fact, however, there are far fewer African American female saxophonists than white or foreign ones in the current jazz scene. In regards to sexuality, I have encountered a sizable number of

⁷ Intersectionality is one of the most crucial issues in gender studies. See, Kimberle Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color,” *Stanford Law Review* 43 (1993), 1241-1299. Martha E. Gimenez, “Marxism, and Class, Gender, and Race: Rethinking the Trilogy,” *Race, Gender & Class* 8/2 (2001) 23-33. Jessica Greenebaum, “Placing Jewish Women into Intersectionality of Race, Class and Gender,” *Race, Gender & Class* 6/4 (1999), 41-53.

lesbian jazz saxophonists in New York jazz scene.⁸ Does women's sexuality/sexual orientation relate to their performance of masculinity? How does women's masculine performance affect audiences' perception of the performer's sexuality? Through my interviews with female saxophonists, I have discovered that women's views on self-representation depend greatly on their age. In addition, there has always been the fascination with very young musicians in the music industry. As a matter of fact, there are some "child protégé" female saxophonists in the recent jazz scene. How does women's age relate to their performance of gender and the audience's views on them?

Further, I will investigate how visual presentation and musical sound are interrelated in the masculine performance of female saxophonists. How do female musicians present themselves in their public performance? How does the performer's feminine looking body affect the audience's perception of her performances? Especially, with the recent development of communication technology, jazz has been circulated more and more with visual images. How does the circulation of jazz with the visual image of women affect the discourse of jazz as male dominated music genre?

Through examining these questions, I aim to explore how these female saxophonists "perform" gender in order to situate themselves in the complex norms of gender, race, sexuality, and age that influence the way audience members hear and *see* jazz. Furthermore, I will suggest how the participation of female saxophonists would challenge the masculinist discourse and gender norms of jazz.

⁸ I interviewed five of them.

1.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research fits with recent ethnomusicological work that views musical performance as a site for construction, expression, and contestation of gender identities.⁹ These works examine how gender ideologies in a certain society are reflected in various aspects such as the shapes of the instruments, sound of the instruments, performance practices and styles, and costumes as well as how these elements in music, in return, have constructed views about gender in that society. Among these authors, Sugarman and Nannyonga-Tamusuza underscore that gender identities and gender ideology in society are hardly stable and constantly interact each other, which results in renegotiating and redefining identities. I subscribe to their emphasis on the instability and temporality of gender identity. In my work, the jazz world in general and the saxophone performance in particular is a space where gender ideologies in American society are reflected. More specifically, instrument assignments, instrumental sound, delivery styles, improvisation styles, compositions, clothing, demeanor, body movements, and audiences of jazz reflect notions of gender in society. As I mentioned earlier, the mainstream jazz scene has kept its age-old gender ideologies relatively intact. However, the recent advancement of female instrumentalists definitely has challenged the normative ideas of jazz performance styles and

⁹ Marcia Herndon, "Biology and Culture: Music, Gender, Power and Ambiguity." In *Music, Gender, and Culture*. Marcia Herndon and Susanne Ziegler eds. (Wilhelmshaven: Florian Noetzel Verlag, 1990), 11-26. Jane Sugarman, *Engendering Song: Singing and Subjectivity at Prespa Albanian Weddings* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1997). Michelle Kisliuk, "Performance and Modernity among the BaAka Pygmies: A Closer Look at the Mystique of Egalitarian Foragers in the Rain Forest." In *Music and Gender* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 25-50. Caroline Bithell, "A Mans Game? Engendered Song and the Changing Dynamics of Musical Activity in Corsica." In *Music and Gender: Perspectives from the Mediterranean*, Tullia Magrini, ed. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 33-66. Lara Pellegrinelli, "The Song Is Who? Locating Singers on the Jazz Scene." (Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 2004). Sylvia Nannyonga-Tamusuza. *Baakisimba: Gender in the Music and Dance of the Baganda People of Uganda* (New York: Routledge, 2005)

practices as well as visual presentation, which constantly negotiate and interact with gender ideologies in the jazz scene and American society in general.

When discussing female saxophonists' performance of gender, I greatly draw on Judith Butler's most influential idea of gender as performative. Many works that discuss gender roles and gender construction in music, especially up to the early 1990s, assume that gender is based on biological sex.¹⁰ In other words, these works treat masculinity and femininity as socially and culturally constructed characteristics of people who are biologically male and female respectively. According to Butler, however, gender has nothing to do with sexed body. She states, "Gender is neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex."¹¹ Instead, she claims that gender is merely a repetition of acts and that gender is not a noun or attributes, but it is always a "doing." However, there is no doer behind it because there is no essence or truth of gender identity. "There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results."¹² In other words, the expressions of gender are not derived from gender identity. Instead, these expressions performatively constitute the effect of gender core, which is "an illusion discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality."¹³ Further, referring to drag, Butler reminds us that we normally are not conscious of these expressions of gender since they are naturalized. In drag, however, we immediately notice the disjuncture between "the expressive mode of gender" and the person's "true" gender identity that we assume (though it is an illusion). This reminds me of a feminine

¹⁰ Nannyonga-Tamusuza's discussion of "sociocultural" gender construction within the context of palace is an example of non-Western view of gender that does not correspond with biological sex.

¹¹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1999), 10.

¹² Butler, 33.

¹³ Butler, 173.

looking young white or Asian female saxophonist who sounds like an “old black man.” Since we unconsciously expect certain musical sound to be produced by a certain type of body, we notice discontinuity between the musical sound and the female saxophonist’s body. I suggest that this female saxophonist would subvert the gender norms in a similar way, if not the same, drag does. Therefore, Butler’s notion of “gender as performative” sheds light on the analysis of female jazz saxophone performance.

In further clarifying her idea of gender as performative, Butler suggests that gender is a norm. According to her, gender is not what one “is” or what one “has.” Instead, “Gender is the apparatus by which the production and normalization of masculine and feminine take place along with the interstitial forms of hormonal, chromosomal, psychic, and performative that gender assumes.”¹⁴ Gender is produced and normalized at the same time by our performing expressions of gender based on gender norms. These gender norms, however, are so naturalized that we often are not aware of them.

The gender norms might be confused with more prevalent ideas of the gender roles and gender stereotypes. Gender roles and stereotypes are both formulated under the assumption of a mutually exclusive binary construction of masculine and feminine, which are based on biological sex. Gender roles assume social construction, and stereotypes frequently assume ignorance. Gender norms, on the other hand, are process of producing and normalizing the notion of feminine and masculine. Therefore, gender norms are not stable or universal. Yet, gender norms can function at the level of gender roles and stereotypes. The statement, “You sound like an old (heterosexual) black man” can be easily dismissed as a stereotype because the idea that good, authentic saxophonist is an old black man may be based on ignorance. However, I consider this a

¹⁴ Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 42.

norm because it involves culturally and socially normalized notion of a good jazz saxophonist and also is provisional and subject to change. This is a complex norm that intersects age, sexuality, race, and gender.

Applying Butler's theory to performances of female jazz saxophonists, I analyze not only visually detected elements but also various elements of musical sound as gender signifiers. Female jazz saxophonists often perform masculinity by adopting the "expressions" that are historically and culturally identified as masculine regardless of their female body. However, these "expressions" are naturalized and may not be noticed as masculine. The "expressions" here include elements that are presented both visually (hairstyles, clothing, facial expressions, body movement, and demeanor) and aurally (timbre, volume, tempo, composition, improvisation, and delivery). Here, I draw on Suzanne Cusick's work on gender performativity of singing. In her article, she explores whether singing can perform gender regardless of voice's biological restriction. She concludes that it can, suggesting that singing participates in a cultural system or a discourse of Song "that requires its participants to accept culturally specific disciplines to sites deep inside their bodies (as well as their minds)."¹⁵ Those culturally specific disciplines are often naturalized and unnoticed.

Further, I apply Butler's theory in analyzing my findings from archival research and ethnographic fieldwork that consists of documentation (videotaping) of live performances, interviews (with musicians, music industry professionals, and audience members) and participant observation as a jazz saxophonist. The stories told by my interview subjects and my experiences as a female performer contain extremely rich materials that explicitly and implicitly express people's notions of gender, race, sexuality, and age. Especially, the interviews with female

¹⁵ Suzanne G. Cusick, "On Musical Performances of Gender and Sex." In *Audible Traces: Gender, Identity, and Music*. Elaine Hamessley, ed. (Zulich and Los Angeles: Carciofoli, 1999), 38

saxophonists reveal their complex, sometimes contradicting attitudes, which demonstrate that some women perform gender within the norms, some outside the norms, and others both in and out of the norms, intentionally or unintentionally.

It is crucial to emphasize that masculinity and femininity I discuss here are not essential or stable qualities men and women are supposed to possess. Instead, they are fluid, historically and culturally contingent and are also intricately intersected with other categories of identity such as race, sexuality, and age. This idea is based on postmodernist views, which reject any type of fixed and universalized categories of identity such as gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity, and class. Since gender, sexuality, and race are the key theoretical premises in this work, sexuality and race need to be further explained and theorized in relation to Butler's notion of gender as performative. Sexuality can refer to categories of desire (heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, asexuality, etc) and those of sexual orientation (heterosexual/straight, gay, lesbian, etc). Whereas there are a variety of sexual desire and orientations, categories of sexuality tend to be understood as a binary opposition of homosexual and heterosexual. Feminist sociologist Judith Lorber attempts to deconstruct binary constructed homosexuality and heterosexuality by citing empirical data such as, "90 percent of the 323 self-identified lesbians who answered her questionnaire had had heterosexual experiences, 43 percent after coming out as lesbians."¹⁶ Lorber demonstrates here that one's sexual desire and sexual identification are highly complex. Similarly, as Adrienne Rich suggests, there are a wide range of a woman-identified experience—from the one that does not involve sexuality to the sexual one, and there are many different ways that these women identify themselves.

¹⁶ Judith Lorber, "Beyond the Binaries: Depolarizing the Categories of Sex, Sexuality, and Gender," *Sociological Inquiry* 77/2 (1996), 149.

Although sexuality and gender are closely related, these are not necessarily corresponded to each other. As Butler suggests, gender is not determined by sexuality or sexuality is not restricted by gender. She claims that gender takes different forms when contextualized by queer sexualities and that the gender binary (masculinity and femininity are characteristics of male and female respectively) is effective only in the context of heterosexuality.¹⁷ In addition, there is a multiplicity of non-heterosexuality. Sexuality is not a core of a person's identity. For example, there is no universal quality of lesbians or heterosexual women. Therefore, I suggest that sexuality is also performative.

My ideas of race in general and blackness in particular owe very much to Stuart Hall. In his article "Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation," Hall presents two related but contrasting ways to view "cultural identity" in his discussion of the Afro-Caribbean black cinemas. The first position "defines 'cultural identity' in terms of the idea of one, shared culture." In this view, cultural identities "reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as 'one people,' with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history."¹⁸ This view is perhaps more prevalent in the jazz world and has been a foundation of a cultural myth regarding blackness. The second position, on the other hand, recognizes that "there are also critical points of deep and significant difference which constitute 'what we really are.'"¹⁹ In this view, cultural identity is "a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being.'" This idea of cultural identity as "becoming" resonates very well with Butler's idea of gender as "doing." Therefore, I suggest here that race is also performative. Further he states, "In this perspective, cultural

¹⁷ Bulter (2004), 54.

¹⁸ Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation," *Framework* 36 (1989), 69.

¹⁹ Hall (1989), 70.

identity is not a fixed essence at all, lying unchanged outside history and culture. It is not some universal and transcendental spirit inside us on which history has made no fundamental mark.”²⁰ Instead, “it is always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth.”²¹ These two views are not mutually exclusive, and they both are present in Afro-Caribbean cinemas as well as in jazz. The first position is closely associated with “black masculinity myth” in jazz. Though I acknowledge the first position, it is necessary to understand the second position in order to examine complex construction of blackness in jazz.

Since gender, sexuality, and race are closely related and cannot be discussed separately, intersectionality must be taken into account in my analysis of jazz saxophone performance. Here, intersectionality as a framework of analysis should be mentioned. Intersectionality emerged as a major framework of research in feminist theory and women’s studies because of the “limitations of gender as a single analytical category.”²² There are different levels and kinds of intersectionality and approaches to these categories of identity. On one hand, I attempt to deconstruct the categories (gender, race, nationality, sexuality, age, and possibly more) of performers because these categories are not completely separated but mutually constituted in each individual. On the other hand, when I analyze the experiences and ideas expressed by musicians who belong to certain categories, I accept the categories and carefully use them. Specifically, I will examine two intersections: gender and race, and gender and sexuality.

Finally, the importance of the visual image in relation to gender norms has to be explained. While one of the goals of this work is to demonstrate that musical sound in addition to visual elements is part of gender norms, I have to emphasize that musical sound is closely related

²⁰ Hall, 71.

²¹ Hall, 72.

²² Leslie McCall, “The Complexity of Intersectionality,” *Sign: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30/3 (2005), 1771.

to the visual image. Musical sound signifies gender largely because of its association with the visual image. This is closely related to K. Heather Pinson's recent work on Herman Leonard's jazz photographs and the jazz image. She states, "the visual image as facilitated by Leonard in his photography has come to represent a particular mental understanding of the sound and look of jazz."²³ She suggests that Leonard's photographs represented the standard of jazz photography because of its refined quality, and that they have been repeatedly used in advertisements, calendars, T-shirts, covers of jazz history textbooks or biographies as a result of the commercial and general interest in "the visual and mental understanding of what a jazz musician looks like."²⁴ Consequently, Leonard's photographs have become "images of jazz in that they contribute to the circulating knowledge of jazz musicians as well as the style of music."²⁵ And the image Leonard's photographs display is typically "a well-dressed African American man playing an instrument, most likely a saxophone or a trumpet, with smoke wafting about the stage on which he is playing at a nightclub,"²⁶ and the associated musical style is jazz in the late 1940s and the 50s, which became the basis of the mainstream jazz. Therefore, the sound of mainstream jazz saxophone performance evokes the image of a well-dressed, possibly old and heterosexual, African American man, which has contributed to create a normalized notion of the jazz musician.

²³ K. Heather Pinson, *The Jazz Image: Seeing Music through Herman Leonard's Photography* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010), 3.

²⁴ Pinson, 7.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Pinson, 16.

1.3 STATE OF RESEARCH

1.3.1 Jazz and Gender/Sexuality

Literature that discusses women in jazz has been increasing dramatically partly due to the fact that in the past ten years female jazz musicians have been more visible and their number has been increasing. There are several different approaches to gender/sexuality issues in jazz: biography and interview of female jazz musicians, present and historical status of female jazz musicians, gender association of musical instruments, the issue of historiography, intersection of race and gender, and homophobia in jazz.

The first category, biographies and interviews of female jazz musicians, contributes to the recovery and recognition of these women.²⁷ Among them, alto saxophonist Ann Patterson's statement is important as one of the female jazz saxophonists from an earlier generation. Patterson, who was born in 1947 and lead the all female big band Maiden Voyage in Los Angeles in the late 1970s to the early 1980s, states, "The only reason we haven't seen very many women play saxophone well is that the saxophone is a very free-blowing horn- you have to be very aggressive to play it. I think that just sociologically women are not aggressive, so it's more difficult to overcome whatever passive way they're used to being and be aggressive when they play."²⁸ She suggests that women are not aggressive not because of their female body but

²⁷ Linda Dahl, *Stormy Weather: The Music and Lives of a Century of Jazzwomen* (New York: Limelight Editions, 1984). Leslie Gourse, *Madame Jazz: Contemporary Women Instrumentalists* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). Wayne Enstice and Janis Stockhouse, *Jazzwomen: Conversations with Twenty-one Musicians* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004)

²⁸ Dahl, 266.

because of societal expectation. She also emphasizes that she never saw any women playing jazz, especially horn players, when she grew up.²⁹

Jazz critics have written on the second category somehow sporadically over the years. The possibly oldest example of these writings was a piece by Barry Ulanov for *Down Beat* magazine in 1958. Titled “Women in Jazz: Do they Belong?,” Ulanov points out that women do not get fair recognition “except as singers or pianists with male assistants and colleagues.”³⁰ The situation of female jazz instrumentalists had not been changed so dramatically when jazz critic Peter Watrous wrote the article “Why Women Remain at the Back of the Bus” in the *New York Times* in 1994. Watrous criticizes Carnegie Hall’s “Women in Jazz” concert that was held earlier that week for two reasons: the concert implies that “women need special ways of being marketed” and that women are perceived as “anomalies in jazz.”³¹ Then he points out that “Young women working in jazz are rarely as adept as men of the same age”³² because women are not usually encouraged to play instruments such as saxophones and trumpets. Therefore, “women who wait until their 20’s to decide to become saxophonists, for example, are a decade behind their peers.”³³ In addition, Watrous suggests “the mythology surrounding jazz,” which “perpetuates a value system based on stereotypical notions of masculinity.”³⁴ This article ingeniously summarizes the jazz scene up to the early 1990s, which has been changing in recent years.

Jazz critics/ journalists have frequently criticized the absence of women in the top mainstream bands. Lara Pellegrinelli wrote a piece on Jazz at Lincoln Center for *Village Voice* in

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Barry Ulanov, “Women in Jazz: Do They Belong?” *Down Beat* 25/1 (1958), 15, 50.

³¹ Peter Watrous, “Why Women Remain at the Back of the Bus,” *New York Times* 11/27/1994, 34.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

November, 2000. She discusses why no female musician has been a member in the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra (LCJO). According to Pellegrinelli, one of the reasons is that LCJO never conducted open auditions. Answering Pellegrinelli's question, Wynton Marsalis, artistic director of LCJO, insists that open auditions are inconvenient because it attracts numerous people for one opening.³⁵ Prominent jazz critic Nat Hentoff, in his article "Testosterone is Not an Instrument" in *JazzTimes*, also attacks the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra and Wynton Marsalis because they do not hire any female musicians and because their hiring/ auditioning process has been unclear.³⁶ As we have seen, the status of female jazz musicians has been discussed in newspaper columns and jazz trade magazines by jazz critics and journalists, who contribute to informing general public about the current situation of women in jazz.

Gender associations of musical instruments are closely related to women's participation in jazz as instrumentalists. Mainly, music educators have contributed to this area of inquiry. Although these researchers discuss musical instruments in general, which are not directly relevant to jazz performance, their findings are still informative. In their pioneering study "The Sex-Stereotyping of Musical Instruments" published in 1978, Susan Yank Porter and Harold F. Abeles conducted a series of surveys to examine how instruments are associated with gender. They asked musicians and non-musicians to rate eight musical instruments in terms of masculinity and femininity. The flute was rated as the most feminine instrument, followed by the violin and clarinet; the drums were perceived as the most masculine, followed by the trombone and the trumpet. The cello and saxophone were placed in the middle of a masculine-feminine continuum. In another survey, Porter and Abeles found that these feminine and masculine

³⁵ Lara Pellegrinelli, "Dig Boy Dig." <http://www.villagevoice.com/news/0045,pellegrinelli,19640,1.html>

³⁶ Nat Hentoff, "Testosterone Is Not an Instrument." http://jazztimes.com/columns_and_features/final_chorus/index.cfm?id=34

instruments were identical to the instruments parents would choose for their daughters and sons. Furthermore, their study showed that the girls' selections consistently moved toward traditionally 'feminine' instruments by the third or fourth grade.³⁷ This suggests that instrument preference is gradually altered by the parents' concept and the socially constructed image of instrument.

In their study in 1992, Judith K. Delzell and David A. Leppla investigated the changes in gender association since Porter and Abeles' study. They conducted surveys among college students and fourth-grade students, and found that gender associations are still present even though the magnitude appears to have lessened. What is noteworthy here is that the preferences of fourth-grade students for selected instruments have changed drastically. For example, drums are the second most preferred instrument of girls, and the flute is the fourth choice of boys. They also found the increasing popularity of the saxophone among both boys and girls. It is rated the second most preferred instrument.³⁸ Patrick M. Fortney, J. David Boyle, and Nicholas J. DeCarbo's 1993 study of middle school band students' instrument choices still shows the strong gender association: males tend to play percussion, brass instruments, and the saxophone, and females play woodwind instruments. This study also shows the saxophone's popularity. Although 72% of actual saxophone players are males, saxophone was the most-preferred instrument by both males and females if there were no restraints on their selection. As important factors in instrument selection, they reported that influences by people such as music teachers, family members, and friends, and some practical considerations such as instruments' availability,

³⁷ Harold F. Abels & Susan Yank Porter, "The Sex Stereotyping of Musical Instruments". *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 26/2 (1978) 65-75.

³⁸ Judith K. Delzel & David A. Leppla, "Gender Association of Musical Instruments and Preferences of Fourth-Grades Students for Selected Instruments." *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 40/2 (1992), 93-103

cost, size, and perceived difficulty.³⁹ The popularity of the saxophone has been increasing probably because young people are familiar with it from various contemporary music genres.

Abeles's 2009 article is a follow-up study of his work three decades ago, attempting to "determine if gender associations for musical instruments reflect the social change that had taken place during this period."⁴⁰ This project consists of two parts: first, investigating how college students' gender associations of musical instruments changed; second, examining if middle school students' choice of instruments reflect a change in instrument gender associations. The result was that there was no significant change in both college students' gender associations and middle school students' choice of instruments. Abeles suggests other factors besides gender that may affect middle school students' choice of instruments. What I find most interesting in this study is that though the saxophone has been placed in the middle of a masculine-feminine continuum, far fewer girls are playing it than boys. Since cello, another "middle" instrument, is played by more girls, fewer girls play saxophone because of its stronger association with the band instead of the orchestra.

Gender norms do not only influence young people when they choose the instruments but also influence young adults to decide whether they continue to play jazz. Kathleen M. McKeage's dissertation "Gender and Participation in Undergraduate Instrumental Jazz Ensembles: A National Survey" consists of two main components. First, McKeage examines the relationship between gender and participation in high school and college instrumental jazz ensembles. The result indicates that more men than women participate in jazz ensembles in both high school and college, and the number of women participating in jazz ensembles dramatically

³⁹ Patrick M. Fortney, J. David Boyle, and Nicholas J. DeCarbo. "A Study of Middle School Band Students' Instrument Choices." *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 41/1(1993), 28-39.

⁴⁰ Hal Abeles, "Are Musical Instrument Gender Associations Changing?" *Journal of Research in Music Education* 57 (2009), 130.

drops in college. The second component of this study focuses on the reason why students decide to continue or discontinue participation in instrumental jazz. More women than men decide to focus on classical playing, “feeling more comfortable in traditional ensemble than jazz and their inability to tie jazz participation to career goals.”⁴¹ This study explains the present jazz scene, where fewer women than men participate in instrumental jazz. Women feel more comfortable with playing traditional (classical) music than jazz possibly because it does not involve improvisation, stereotypically associated with jazz, and they find it difficult to vision their career as a jazz musician.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, a few jazz scholars attempted to incorporate female jazz instrumentalists into the discourse of jazz historiography. In 1999 Sherrie Tucker completed her dissertation on all female big bands in the 1940s. During the course of her research, Tucker discovered hundreds of all-female big bands that have never been written in jazz history books. Through interviews and detailed archival research, Tucker successfully located these bands in socio-cultural context of 1940s America. For example, one of these bands, the Prairie View Co-eds, was formed in 1943 after many male band members were drafted. Tucker suggests that the Prairie View Co-eds was not included in the discourse of jazz historiography because they fit into neither stereotypes of jazz musician—black, masculine and eccentric outsider—nor jazzwomen —the girl singer with a tragic personal life.⁴² Her examination of a wide variety of ways that gender and race were performed is particularly relevant to my work.

Kristin Ann McGee’s 2003 dissertation “Some Liked It Hot: The Jazz Canon and the All-Girl Bands in times of war and peace, ca. 1928-1955” covers a longer time period than Tucker’s

⁴¹ Kathleen M. McKeage, “Gender and Participation in Undergraduate Instrumental Jazz Ensembles: A National Survey.” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wyoming), 2003, 1-2.

⁴² Sherrie Tucker, *Swing Shift: “All-Girl” Bands of the 1940s* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000), 97-136.

dissertation. In the introduction, McGee clearly states that her dissertation differs from Tucker's in two respects: it "attempted to move beyond Tucker's contextualization of all-girl bands by providing a through analysis and comparison of all-girl performances to other gendered and seemingly more remote, cultural phenomena"⁴³; it includes "theoretical analysis of several musical recordings produced by all-girl bands either on 78s or on film." Certainly, the lack of musical analysis in gender related works in jazz is one of the gaps I aim to fill with my dissertation.

Lara Pellegrinelli's dissertation "The Song is *Who?* Locating Singers on the Jazz Scene" in 2004 is another scholarly attempt to explore gender issues and historiography in jazz. Pellegrinelli points out "the disparity between public enthusiasm for 'jazz singing'...and dismissive insider perspectives regarding singers and the voice."⁴⁴ In a stereotypical dichotomy that "men are instrumentalists, women are singers," female singers tend to be looked down upon as "non musicians." On the contrary to popular feminized image, she suggests, women jazz singers represent both masculinities and femininities in their performances of gender in order to be included into the jazz scene.⁴⁵ Her idea of performing gender in jazz singing is highly relevant to performing masculinity of female saxophonists in my research.

Three articles I discuss now fall into the fourth category, intersection of race and gender. In his article "Signifyin' the Phallus: *Mo' Better Blues* and Representations of the Jazz Trumpet," Krin Gabbard examines the image of jazz trumpet through the performance of jazz musicians and several movies. Gabbard points out the ambivalent image of black male: "hyper

⁴³ Kristin Ann McGee, "Some Liked It Hot: The Jazz Canon and the All-Girl Bands in Times of War and Peace, ca. 1928-1955." (Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of Chicago 2003).

⁴⁴ Lara Pellegrinelli, "The Song Is Who? Locating Singers on the Jazz Scene." (Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 2004), ii-iii.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 79-91.

masculine” and “pathetically unmanly.”⁴⁶ He goes on to say that “the phallicism of the jazz trumpet resides in pitch, speed of execution, and emotional intensity, all of which [Louis] Armstrong greatly expanded in the 1920s.”⁴⁷ The phallic image of the trumpet associated with African American males has been imitated and internalized by white and women trumpeters. The association of the jazz trumpet with black masculinity parallels my research on the image of the jazz saxophone.

Ingrid Monson explores the intersection of gender and racial stereotypes in the context of “hipness” in her article “The Problem with White Hipness.” She suggests, “subcultural image of bebop was nourished by a conflation of the music with a style of black masculinity that held, and continues to hold, great appeal for white audiences and musicians.”⁴⁸ Association of bebop with black masculinity is also discussed by David Ake. In his article “Re-Masculatin Jazz: Ornette Coleman, ‘Lonely Woman,’ and the New York Jazz Scene in the Late 1950s,” Ake suggests the close relationship between bebop’s instrumental virtuosity and phallic potency. According to Ake, jazz masculinity was also constructed off the stage by such musicians as Miles Davis who loved boxing and boasted of his sexual prowess. These authors relate the jazz trumpet and bebop with black masculinity, which is highly relevant to my research on female jazz saxophone performance.

Finally, I would like to discuss homophobia in jazz. In my experience as a jazz saxophonist in New York City, I have encountered a number of gay female jazz musicians. While I do not have a statistical data, it seems that female gay musicians are more visible than

⁴⁶ Krin Gabbard, “Signifyin’ Phallus: *Mo’ Better Blues* and Representations of the Jazz Trumpet,” *Representing Jazz*. Krin Gabbard, ed. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995), 108.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Ingrid Monson, “The Problem with White Hipness: Race, Gender, and Cultural Conceptions in Jazz Historical Discourse,” *Journal of American Musicological Society* 48/3 (1995), 402.

male gay musicians in the jazz scene. If a woman plays very well on traditionally masculine instruments, her sexual orientation tends to be called into question. The suspecting of female jazz instrumentalists' sexual orientation and homophobia stems from gender norms in jazz that are deeply rooted in heterosexuality. Despite these interesting issues, research on female gay jazz musicians has not been done extensively except for Tucker's work on her interview subjects, in which she demonstrates the complexity of sexuality, identification of sexual orientation, and the issue of coming out.⁴⁹

There are several writings that discuss homophobia in jazz. The oldest of these is probably "The Strange Case of Charles Ives or, Why Is Jazz Not Gay Music?" by Grover Sales.⁵⁰ In this article, Sales discusses paucity of gay male jazz musicians and jazz's unpopularity among gay population. John Gill's *Queer Noises: Male and Female Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Music* has chapters on blues women's homosexuality, Billy Strayhorn, Cecil Taylor, and Gary Burton. Gill suggests that much queer history in blues was eliminated "owing to the hypocrisy and homophobia of jazz writers."⁵¹ Chris Albertson also claims, "they [most jazz critics] prefer to believe that homosexuality and jazz are mutually exclusive or that it is worse than dope addiction, a shameful skeleton to be kept in the closet."⁵² Why do these jazz critics believe that homosexuality should not exist in the jazz world? This homophobic attitude in jazz is based on the long-standing image of jazz, which stereotypically symbolizes male masculinity and heterosexuality. This is well explained in the Gill's account of "a common myth about masculine sexuality and jazz: Gay men do not like jazz; and the jazz musician as Romantic

⁴⁹ Sherrie Tucker, "When Subjects Don't Come out." In *Queer Episodes in Music and Modern Identity*. Sophie Fuller and Lloyd Whitesell, eds. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002).

⁵⁰ Grover Sales, "The Strange Case of Charles Ives or, Why Is Jazz Not Gay Music?"

⁵¹ John Gill, *Queer Noises: Male and Female Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century Music* (London: Cassell, 1995), 51.

⁵² Chris Albertson, cited in John Gill, 44–45.

outsider, a fast-living womanizer with an insatiable appetite for alcohol and narcotics based on the life and career of saxophonist Charlie Parker.”⁵³ This what I call the “masculine sexuality myth” in jazz has contributed to the reification of masculine musical styles represented in be-bop era as well as homophobic attitudes. Gill insists that the majority of writing on black American music has been produced by white heterosexual males. The homophobia present in some of their criticism is partly based on a romanticized image of black masculinity⁵⁴, which is widely admired by both jazz musicians and audiences. Their desire for black masculinity is glimpsed in non-black musicians who talk and act like black men as seen in the example of Mezz Mezzrow, which will be discussed below.

1.3.2 Jazz and Race

While analyzing jazz from the perspective of gender is relatively new, racial issues in jazz have been discussed for many years. Since gender and race share some aspects as a category of analysis, it is useful to review literature on jazz and race. The earlier writings on jazz were mainly by white authors, who express their contradictory attitudes toward African-Americans. On one hand, the authors seem to be fascinated with the special talent and ability of African-Americans, and are deeply intrigued by their music. On the other hand, they regard African-Americans as an inferior group of people. One of the earliest published discussions of jazz, by Walter Kingsley, written in 1917, demonstrates the author’s fascination with the music and its

⁵³ John Gill, 48.

⁵⁴ House music is often regarded as “homosexual music” in contrast to jazz, which is considered “heterosexual music.” Brian Currid suggests the gay eroticism in house music is produced “through the matrices of race and gender through the consumption and fetishization of blackness and black femininity as sites of excess and transgression.” See Brian Currid, “‘We Are Family’: House Music and Queer Performativity,” *Cruising the Performative: Inventions into the Representation of Ethnicity, Nationality, and Sexuality* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 165–196.

primitiveness. He writes, “It [jazz] is an attempt to reproduce the marvelous syncopation of the African jungle...jazz is based on the savage musician’s wonderful gift for progressive retarding and acceleration guided by his sense of swing.”⁵⁵ Kingsley’s statement is an example of Ingrid Monson’s notion of the “Primitivist myth,” to which the image of jazz has been tied closely. She writes in her article “Doubleness and Jazz Improvisation: Irony, Parody and Ethnomusicology,”

In it [Primitivist myth] the jazz musician is constructed as a “noble savage” who maintains a pure, emotional, and unmediated relationship to his art. The earliest critics were French men... with strong relationships to the primitivist movement. From their perspective, the “primitive” was something positive—romanticized, uncontaminated ideal toward which artists should aspire.⁵⁶

While white critics celebrate and romanticize music by African-Americans, they consciously or unconsciously confine the music to the sphere where they can control it. Krin Gabbard’s statement in the introduction of his book *Representing Jazz* efficiently summarizes the situation. “But whether music was demonized or romanticized, the result was the same: jazz was the safely contained world of the Other where whites knew they could find experiences unavailable to them at home.”⁵⁷ Therefore, it can be said that representing jazz as “primitive” and jazz musicians as “noble savage” is a white invention.

The close association of jazz with the African American male and his experience in the United States advocated mainly by African American authors perhaps originates with LeRoi Jones’s *Blues People: Negro Music in White America*, which was first published in 1963 and is

⁵⁵ Walter Kingsley, “Whence Comes Jass? Facts From the Great Authority on the Subject,” *New York Sun*, August 5, 1917, 3. In Robert Walser ed., *Keeping Time: Readings in Jazz History* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 5-7.

⁵⁶ Ingrid Monson, “Doubleness and Jazz Improvisation: Irony, Parody, and Ethnomusicology.” *Critical Inquiry* 29 (1994), 286.

⁵⁷ Krin Gabbard, “Introduction: Writing the Other History.” *Representing Jazz*. Gabbard, ed. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995), 2.

still considered to be an influential work of the field. Jones insists that “Blues is the parent of all legitimate jazz,” and emphasizes black experience as the essential part of the blues. He goes on to say, “Jazz as played by white musicians was not the same as that played by black musicians, nor was there any reason for it to be...”⁵⁸ Baraka’s statement suggests authenticity of jazz performance by African American musicians. This idea of origin, authenticity and even ownership of jazz that are associated with African Americans permeates in many succeeding writings on jazz.⁵⁹

James Lincoln Collier, in his book *Jazz: The American Theme Song*, strongly opposes the essentialist view by suggesting that “although jazz had been created by blacks in the first instance, it had become the general property of Americans of all races, all classes.”⁶⁰ He also emphasizes white people’s significant role as audiences/consumers of jazz. This relates to the David Meltzer’s notion that “While the music is the creation of African-Americans, jazz as mythology, commodity, cultural display is a white invention and the expression of postcolonial tradition.”⁶¹

While many writers emphasize that the major contributors of jazz are African Americans, Richard M. Sudhalter, in his book *Lost Chords: White Musicians and Their Contribution to Jazz, 1915-1945*, describes white musicians’ contribution to jazz by “using available evidence.”⁶² He asserts that white musicians such as Bud Freeman, Bix Beiderbecke, Frank Trumbaur, and Benny Goodman were influential in the history of jazz. For example, Sudhalter suggests that

⁵⁸ LeRoi Jones, *Blues People: Negro Music in White America*. (New York: William Morrow, 1999), 17.

⁵⁹ Stanly Crouch, *Considering Genius*. (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2006), Ben Sidran, *Black Talk*. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1981 [1971])

⁶⁰ James Lincoln Collier, *Jazz: The American Theme Song*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 185.

⁶¹ David Meltzer, ed. *Reading Jazz*. (San Francisco: Mercury, 1993), 4.

⁶² Richard M. Sudhalter, *Lost Chords: White Musicians and their Contribution to Jazz, 1915-1945*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), xvi.

Lester Young was influenced by white tenor saxophonists such as Bud Freeman instead of succeeding the style of black tenor saxophonist Coleman Hawkins. Sudhulter shows the transcription of both Young's and Freeman's solo on the same song and points out the similarity.⁶³ His argument is seemingly convincing. However, his statements such as "Young's way of riding the beat, particularly at fast tempos, immediately recalls...the white tenor men"⁶⁴ sound problematic because it seems to promote the ultimate differences between black and white musicians.

Some white musicians fanatically believed in the existence of "blackness," deeply admired black musicians, and even wanted to become black. One of them was Mezz Mezzrow, the clarinet/ saxophone player from Chicago. Mezzrow (born Milton Mesirov) was born in 1899 and became part of the Chicago Jazz scene in the 1920s. Subsequently, he moved to Harlem, New York City, and tried to adopt the lifestyle of black people there. *Really the Blues*, his autobiography written in collaboration with Bernard Wolfe, displays Mezzrow's fascination with jazz and black people. Mezzrow says, "They were my kind of people. And I was going to learn their music and play it for the rest of my days. I was going to be a musician, a Negro musician, hipping the world about the blues the way only Negroes can."⁶⁵ Gayle Wald examines *Really the Blues* in the context of racial passing. In her article "Mezz Mezzrow and the Voluntary Negro Blues," she examines his "identification with 'marginality' as, paradoxically, an attempt to elevate and distinguish himself."⁶⁶ More interestingly, Wald suggests that jazz

⁶³ Ibid., 255-257.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 257.

⁶⁵ Milton Mezzrow and Bernard Wolfe, *Really the Blues* (New York: Random House, 1946), 18.

⁶⁶ Gayle Wald, "Mezz Mezzrow and the Voluntary Negro Blues," In *Crossing the Line: Racial Passing in Twentieth-Century U.S. Literature and Culture*. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000), 57.

culture offered Mezzrow “models of raced masculinity through which to negotiate and deflect stereotypes of Jewish male effeminacy.”⁶⁷ Here, blackness is equated with masculinity.

Although most writings discuss racial issues in jazz in the context of “black and white,” a few works attempt to include Asians. For example, *Blue Nippon: Authenticating Jazz in Japan* by E. Taylor Atkins traces the history of Japanese jazz and explores “authenticity complex” suffered by Japanese jazz musicians. Japanese musicians tend to feel that “jazz played by Japanese is not genuine.”⁶⁸ Their feeling of a “lack of authenticity” originates from their deep admiration of African Americans as originators and innovators of jazz. In my opinion, what the author terms the “authenticity complex” that Japanese jazz musicians suffer from is also encountered by female jazz musicians.

In her book *Speak it Louder*, Deborah Wong briefly discusses the racialization of jazz. In addition to recognizing a dichotomy of black and white as creator and a marketing category among consumers/fans/critics, she makes a significant point by saying that Asian American jazz musicians are “easily forgotten because those jazz sounds were neither produced nor heard by the right kind of Americans.”⁶⁹ She cites the comments of her friend, who is an African American musician and music scholar, regarding the performance by Asian American pianist Jon Jan’s large ensemble. According to her friend, the ensemble’s “musicianship is good but technically stiff...the beat that revealed them not African American.”⁷⁰ From this statement, Wong concludes that “[H]e was hearing the absence of an African American musicking body, and this in itself was an assertion that such a body was somehow identifiable.” I find this

⁶⁷ Ibid., 56

⁶⁸ E. Taylor Atkins, *Blue Nippon: Authenticating Jazz in Japan*. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001) 260.

⁶⁹ Deborah Wong, *Speak It Louder: Asian Americans Making Music* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 171.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

statement to be problematic because I do not believe that one can identify a musician's race by listening to his/her performance. In fact, Wong herself could not specifically identify what exactly her friend was hearing. This notion of "African American musicking body" is relevant to Monique Guillory's idea of "black performativity," which some people claim to hear in performances by African Americans, but few would be able to define.⁷¹

Identifying the performer's race by listening to the sound is relevant to my work when discussing whether the performer's gender can be identified from the musical sound. Here, George Lewis's idea of "'Afrological' and 'Eurological' systems of improvisative musicality"⁷² is highly convincing in this line of inquiry. He identifies two different styles of improvised music that are rooted in African American and European American culture. However, he claims that these two systems are "social and cultural location" and are theorized as "historically emergent rather than ethnically essential."⁷³ Therefore, he asserts that a person of any race can perform African American music "without losing its character as historically Afrological."⁷⁴ In other words, he suggests that Afrological character is created historically, not ethnically/biologically. This separation of racial or ethnic characteristics in music from the person's biologically determined race/ethnicity parallels my discussion of the separation of gendered characteristics in music from the performer's biologically determined sex.

In his book *Jazz Consciousness: Music, Race, and Humanity*, Paul Austerlitz discusses how quickly and widely jazz expanded in the mid-20th century. He suggests that jazz is diffused

⁷¹ Monique Guillory, "Black Bodies Swingin' : Race, Gender, and Jazz." In *Soul: Black Power, Politics, and Pleasure*. Monique Guillory and Richard C. Green eds. (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 195.

⁷² George Lewis, "Improvised Music after 1950: Afrological and Eurological Perspectives," *Black Music Research Journal* 22 (2002), 217.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

around the world so widely that we can call it a global music.⁷⁵ However, not everyone is happy about the situation. While jazz musicians outside the United States often celebrate the music's globalization and prosperity of localized versions of jazz, African American musicians "may legitimately feel threatened by the rise of jazz around the world, especially when European players are able to gain substantial economic support from local governments."⁷⁶ It seems that jazz is pulled by two opposite directions in the jazz world. On one hand, jazz has been increasingly played by people with different ethnic backgrounds in all over the world and, as a result, the music has been both globalized and localized. Moreover, women participate more in playing the traditionally male-dominated instruments, especially the saxophone. On the other hand, some essentialist African American males and their admirers have been trying to preserve the purity—"blackness" and masculine aesthetics—of the music.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

This research project consists of ethnographic fieldwork, an analysis of video-taped performances, and archival research. I used two techniques in fieldwork: interviews and participant-observation.

⁷⁵Paul Austerlitz, *Jazz Consciousness: Music, Race, and Humanity*. (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2005), xiv.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

1.4.1 Interviews

I interviewed thirty female jazz saxophonists, thirteen male jazz musicians, two female jazz instrumentalists, most of whom are based in New York City, five music industry professionals, and approximately thirty audience members. I employed partially structured interviews that begin with open-ended questions for musicians and music industry professionals. Interviews with female musicians covered topics such as how they have learned to become a jazz saxophonist, how difficult and/or advantageous it is to be a female jazz saxophonist, and how they present themselves in public performance. Topics covered in interviews with male musicians included how they perceive female saxophonists and why they prefer or do not prefer working with female saxophonists. In interviewing music industry professionals, I asked how they view female saxophonists from the perspective of promoting and marketing them. Interviews with audience members are both informal and formal. During and/or after a performance event, I conversed with them about how they perceived female performers. In addition, I closely observed audience reactions to the performance. I also formally conducted interviews with people from a wide variety of backgrounds. Before their interviews, half of them watched videotaped performances of female jazz saxophonists, while the other half listened to only the sound part of the videos. I asked them how they perceived them and observed how visual and sound components of the video affect the audience reception, which is discussed in Chapter 6.

1.4.2 Participant-observation

In addition to gathering information from interviews, I actively participated in jazz performance as an alto saxophonist in Pittsburgh and New York City and observed how musicians interact each other, how gender affects the interactions, and how audiences perceive me, as a musician, as a Japanese female and react to my performance. Two main venues I regularly performed are Calli's in Pittsburgh and Showmans in Harlem, New York City. Both venues are run by African American proprietors and audience members consist of local black population as well as European and Japanese tourists for the latter. In part because I have performed at Showmans since 2001, though intermittently, and there are a number of female instrumentalists in the current New York jazz scene, people's reactions at this venue have not particularly been notable for the past few years. On the other hand, I have received interesting comments from audience members at Calli's, which included, "You're the first female jazz instrumentalist I saw since Melba Liston [renowned trombonist who worked with Dizzy Gillespie]," "You're the most gorgeous saxophonist I've ever seen," and "You're a role model!" These comments made me realize how gender norms are permeated in jazz performance, which gave me insights to analyze musical performances of other female saxophonists and interview results.

1.4.3 Analysis of performance

My analysis of performance draws on the ways in which Ingrid Monson uses the semiotic notion of "index." According to Monson's understanding, index is something through which musicians and audiences communicate. Indexes range from the ones that are relatively audible

and can be notated to the ones that may not be notated such as “sonic signaling of timbre, dynamics, and offbeat phrasing.”⁷⁷ Further, she states that these hard-to-transcribe ones can be “intermusical” indexes that only those who have the aural knowledge can recognize. Here, the role of the audience becomes remarkable in creating the meaning in musical performance. I intend to explore what elements in musical sound and visual images convey masculinity and femininity to the audience. More specifically, I will analyze how the elements/qualities in timbre, delivery, rhythm, melody, composition, improvisation, clothes, hairstyles, body movements, and facial gestures signify masculinity and femininity by incorporating the reception of the audience.

1.5 RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

This work adopts two perspectives that have not been fully utilized in jazz scholarship: performance theories and gender theories. Jazz scholarship has been dominated by analyses of transcribed solos (improvisation as a product)⁷⁸ and interaction among musicians (improvisation as a process).⁷⁹ The former approach treats improvisation as composition and demonstrates the

⁷⁷ Ingrid Monson, *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 189.

⁷⁸ Gunther Schuller, “Sonny Rollins and the Challenge of Thematic Improvisation.” In *Keeping Time: Readings in Jazz History*. Robert Walser, ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1993), 212-222. Originally published in *The Jazz Review* 1 (1958). Frank Tirro, “Constructive Elements in jazz Improvisation.” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 27/2 (1974), 285-305. Thomas Owens, “Charlie Parker: Techniques of Improvisation.” Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1974. Barry Kenny, “Structure in Jazz Improvisation: A Formulaic Analysis of the Improvisations of Bill Evans.” *Annual Review of Jazz Studies* 10 (1999), 163-94.

⁷⁹ Paul Rinzier, “Preliminary Thoughts on Analyzing Musical Interaction among Jazz Performers.” *Annual Review of Jazz Studies* 4 (1988), 153-60. Paul Berliner, *Thinking in Music: The Infinite Art of Improvisation* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), Monson, 1996. Tor Dybo, “Analyzing Interaction during Jazz Improvisation.” *Jazzforschung* 31 (1999), Peter Reinholdsson, *Making Music Together: An Interactionist Perspective on Small-Group Performance in Jazz*. (Stockholm: Uppsala University Library, 1998).

structural complexity of improvised solos. In other words, this approach tends to prove that improvised solos can be as complex and organized as composed work, which often misses spontaneous and communicational aspects of the music. The latter approach is interested in the process of how musicians (in many cases, a soloist and a rhythm section) interact with each other and create improvised music. While this approach does concern the performance aspect of jazz improvisation, it is rather a musicological inquiry than that of performance studies. While a musicological approach aims to understand music and its meaning, a performance studies approach to the study of music aims to understand why music or its meaning so important to people and society and to ask “what music does or allows people to do.”⁸⁰ This work applies a performance studies approach and focuses on musical performance to investigate how musicians’ involvement in music (jazz performance) constructs their identity and affects gender norms in jazz.

While gender related works in jazz studies up to the 1980s were predominantly a “recovery project,” which demonstrates the underrecognition of female jazz musicians in the past and present, the past twenty years have produced works that highlight various aspects of gender in jazz as I surveyed above. Building on these works, this project demonstrates that musical sound is part of gender norms. As a result, this work will add the aural aspects to Judith Butler’s theory of gender performance. In her idea of gender performativity I briefly explained above, Butler only discusses gender attributes that can be detected visually. Therefore, this project suggests the possibility of expanding her theory to include aural elements.

In addition, this work contributes to supplement the “female masculinity” Judith Halberstam proposes. In her work, she focuses on female masculinity that is displayed in “butch

⁸⁰ Alejandro L. Madrid, “Why Music and Performance Studies? Why Now?: An Introduction to the Special Issue,” *Revista Transcultural de Musica* 13 (2009).

lesbians” and is associated with lesbian desire. She suggests that female masculinity becomes problematic when coupled with lesbian desire. On the other hand, female masculinity in this work is not associated with lesbian desire in most cases, and when it is, it becomes less problematic because it is situated outside the heterosexual matrix. Therefore, this project presents a different type of female masculinity that subverts gender norms.

1.6 CHAPTER OUTLINE

The second chapter “Invisible/Inaudible Women: Vi Burnside, Willene Barton, and Vi Redd” provides this work with historical background by introducing three saxophonists who became prominent in the 1940s, the 1950s, and the 1960s respectively. I will illustrate how female jazz instrumentalists historically have been invisible under masculinist discourse and gender norms based on heterosexuality. In the third chapter “Caress Notes or Get Up and Burn: Gendering Musical Sound in Jazz,” I will explain how gender norms have been developed and inscribed in musical elements, which consequently acquired gendered meanings. The second part of this chapter discusses how various elements in jazz saxophone performance such as delivery style, improvisation, and jam sessions can be typically considered masculine and feminine through examining interview results. I demonstrate that meanings of femininity and masculinity are not universal or ahistorical. For example, while bebop was considered to be complex and difficult to play or understand (read as masculine) in the 1940s, now it is considered to be relatively easy (read as feminine).

The next two chapters examine intersection of identity categories. The Fourth Chapter “Are You Straight or Gay?: Intersection of Gender and Sexuality in Jazz” examines how gender

and sexuality intersect in experiences of female jazz saxophonists. I will illuminate norms surrounding sexuality in jazz and how these affect female musicians and the audience's perception. I will explore questions including whether instrumental jazz is a "safe haven" for gay women as some people speculate and whether there is a relationship between a performer's sexuality and her music. The Fifth Chapter "Two Strikes and Double Negatives: Intersection of Gender and Race in Jazz" discusses how categories of gender and race intersect in jazz and saxophone performance. More specifically, I will explore how "blackness" affects African American, white American, and European female saxophonists. While some white female musicians consider being white and female "two strikes" in terms of authenticity, one saxophonist claimed that being black and female is "double negatives" in the white driven music industry. While jazz has been globalized, performed and studied almost everywhere in the world, its association with African American culture is still persistent. I will show that the complex racial discourse of jazz has shaped rather diverse views and experiences of female saxophonists.

In the Sixth Chapter, I will focus on the connection between visual image and musical sound in female saxophonists. Good mainstream jazz performance is associated with a (black heterosexual) male body. When the sound emerges from an unexpected body, there is a discontinuity between sound and body. Through an analysis of videotaped performances, I will show different degrees of gap between the sound and the visual image. The performances that present large gaps would challenge gender norms in jazz.

The Seventh Chapter "Conclusion: Performing a Female Jazz Saxophonist and Challenging the Discourse of the Jazz Saxophonist" explores how women I interviewed "perform" female jazz saxophonists within complex discourse of jazz discussed thus far. To

“perform” here is a process that “allows the performer to enact an identity, a musical persona.”⁸¹ Through examining their views on topics including advantages and disadvantages being a female saxophonist and all-female bands and events, I illustrate different ways of performing: from “Yes, I’m a woman” to “I never consider myself a woman.” I suggest that these women who play the saxophone outside the norms of jazz will contribute to challenge the discourse of jazz.

⁸¹ Philip Auslander, “Musical Personae,” *TDR* 50/1 (2006), 100-119.

2.0 “INVISIBLE/INAUDIBLE WOMEN: VI BURNSIDE, WILLENE BARTON, AND VI REDD”

In the dominant discourse of jazz history, all the innovators and major figures in instrumental jazz have been men. When I interviewed Dr. Billy Taylor (1921-2011), one of the most significant and influential supporters of women in jazz, however, he gently denied it saying, “No, that’s not quite true. There have *always* been many women who played, but they didn’t get an opportunity to be heard.”⁸² According to him, we can find information about these women only in black newspapers.

In the interviews with female jazz saxophonists, I often asked who were their role models or major influences when they first started to play jazz saxophone. Those most frequently mentioned were Charlie Parker, Cannonball Adderley, and John Coltrane. The names of female saxophonists such as Violet (Vi) Burnside (1915-1964), Willene Barton (ca.1925-2005) or Elvira (Vi) Redd (1928-) never came up. Though some of my interviewees now know who these musicians are, most of them never heard of these women when they became interested in jazz, perhaps because these musicians were rarely included in jazz history books. This is partly because jazz historiography has largely relied on commercially produced recordings. Although Burnside supposedly made her first album as a leader, *Burnside Beat*, in the early 1950s, there is

⁸² Billy Taylor, personal communication with author (August 8, 2009)

no detailed information on this recording, and since it does not appear on any discography it is unclear whether it was actually released. Her only existing recordings are scattered on several albums where she appeared as a star soloist with the International Sweethearts of Rhythm. Though Willene Barton was quite active up to the early 1990s, her only recording, *Feminine Sax* was made in 1957. Redd produced two albums as a leader in the early 1960s and a few other recordings as a sidewoman through 1977. Both Redd's and Barton's leader albums have long been out of print. These examples exemplify Sherrie Tucker's comment that "traditional gender constructions were contained and reproduced by the gatekeepers of the recording studios."⁸³

Rather than surveying a history of female jazz saxophonists, which can be found elsewhere⁸⁴, this chapter focuses on three African American female saxophonists: Vi Burnside, Willene Barton, and Vi Redd, who became prominent in the 1940s, 50s, and 60s, respectively. Through the case studies of these three female jazz saxophonists, this chapter explores the question of why they had so few recording opportunities despite their numerous performances throughout the US and even in Europe. Their lack of recordings has resulted in their exclusion from the dominant discourse of jazz history. Further, their invisibility and inaudibility has created a masculine discourse of jazz despite the constant presence of female jazz instrumentalists. In fact, a masculine discourse of jazz has excluded female instrumentalists from the jazz scene. This complex formation of a masculine jazz discourse also resulted in creating the foundations of gender performance in jazz that I discuss throughout this study.

⁸³ Sherrie Tucker, *Swing Shift: "All Girl" Bands of the 1940s* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000), 24.

⁸⁴ D. Antoinette Handy, *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1981), Sally Placksin, *American Women in Jazz, 1900 to the Present: Their Words, Lives, and Music* (New York: Wideview Books, 1982), Linda Dahl, *Stormy Weather: The Music and Lives of a Century of Jazzwomen* (New York: Putnam, 1977).

I selected these three women because I encountered their names frequently in various contexts while conducting research on female jazz saxophonists and while working as a jazz saxophonist in New York City. Yet, outside of the scholarship that focuses on women in jazz, information on them is significantly scant. Burnside and Barton, especially, received little coverage in the major jazz trade magazines such as *Down Beat* and *Metronome* despite their quite active career as jazz saxophonists. Although I will illustrate their career highlights, this chapter is not intended to be biographical. Instead, I am interested in how they have been written about in publications and talked about among musicians, which will demonstrate the gap between their active careers and their faint recognition as well as their limited recording opportunities. In addition, I will explore why these women's strong saxophone playing is associated with homosexuality in the cases of Burnside and Barton. I am less interested in whether they were actually lesbians than how and why my interviewees identify them as lesbians. Information regarding Burnside and Barton is largely drawn from historical black newspapers, which include *The Atlanta Daily World*, *The Chicago Defender*, *The New York Amsterdam News*, *The Pittsburgh Courier*, and *The Los Angeles Sentinel*. In contrast, Redd received attention in major magazines such as *Down Beat*, *Melody Maker*, *Jazz Magazine*, and *Jazz Journal* as well as in historical black newspapers.

The visibility/audibility of female jazz saxophonists in recent years has been helped by digital recording and communication technologies, college jazz education, outreach programs such as "IAJE Sisters in Jazz Collegiate Competition," which started in 1998, and events such as the "Diet Coke Women in Jazz Festival" at Dizzy's Club Coca Cola in New York City, which started in 2005. The development of computer technologies facilitated women with relatively inexpensive, easy, and effective self-promotion by using websites such as YouTube and

MySpace. In an age when these aids for women were unavailable, commercially produced recordings and press coverage were the only medium for them to be known to jazz fans, as well as the general public.

2.1 VI BURNSIDE

Violet Burnside, best known as a featured soloist of the Sweethearts of Rhythm, was born in Lancaster, PA in 1915. According to her obituary in the *Afro-American*, Burnside studied music at a conservatory in New York City.⁸⁵ She played in a few different all female bands before joining the International Sweethearts of Rhythm in late 1943. She participated in the group's USO tour in 1945 and stayed in the band until 1948. During these years, Burnside became known among musicians and predominantly black jazz fans as a strong swing style improviser. Reviewing her performance with the Sweethearts at the Regal Theater in 1946, *The Chicago Defender* described her as "the nation's finest tenor sax artist."⁸⁶ When the Sweethearts toured American cities, some members of the band would participate in jam sessions at local clubs, and Burnside seems to have played head-to-head with male musicians. For example, *The Pittsburgh Courier* reported on a jam session at the Riviera in St. Louis in November 1947, a "Special feature of the occasion will be a battle of saxophones between Vi Burnside, sensational sax star with the Sweethearts, and Jimmy Forrest, local tenor saxman, whose hot combo will

⁸⁵ "Vi Burnside, World's Greatest Female Saxophonist, Dies Here," *Afro American*, 12/15/1964, 15.

⁸⁶ Al Monroe, "Swinging the News," *The Chicago Defender*, 6/15/1946, 10.

share the band stand.”⁸⁷ Forrest was no mediocre St. Louis saxophonist – his song “Night Train” reached number one on the Billboard R& B chart in 1952, and he later joined the Count Basie Orchestra. Moreover, Al Monroe of *The Chicago Defender* vividly describes how Burnside impressed him at the jam session battling with the notable Gene Ammons⁸⁸ at the Savoy Ballroom in Chicago in May 1948. “Of all the jam sessions we’ve witnessed the first real one brought together Gene Ammons of combo fame and Vi Burnside of the Sweethearts of Rhythm at Savoy Sunday night. They stood toe to toe, horn to horn and battled it out to the approval of more than 2000 raving jitterbugs. WHO WON? ‘Tis beyond this scribbler to say—since they both ‘sent’ him.”⁸⁹ These reports reflect on only a small part of Burnside’s active career, yet, almost nobody knows these stories.

In October 1948, *New York Amsterdam News* reported that Burnside played with her all-star girl combo at the Baby Grand Café in Harlem, NYC. Band members were from the Sweethearts and consisted of both “Negro and white.” The article continued, “Vi who can blow out on that tenor sax with some of the best male jump artists is just about a show within herself.”⁹⁰ In January 1949, *The Los Angeles Sentinel* announced that Burnside, “the greatest feminine saxophonist in the world” has left the Sweethearts to form her own band and will start a “three month one-nighter tour of principal cities in the South, prior to a series of jazz concerts and dances in California, Nevada, and other West Coast cities.”⁹¹ A three-month tour of the so-called chitlin’ circuit demonstrated her popularity and success as a jazz musician – notable

⁸⁷ George B Stafford, “St. Louis Scene,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, 5/31/1947, 2.

⁸⁸ Although Ammons was still twenty three years old at the time, being the son of boogie-woogie pianist Albert Ammons, he started his musical career rather early and had already toured with Billy Eckstein and Woody Herman by then.

⁸⁹ Al Monroe, “Swinging the News,” *The Chicago Defender*, 5/15/1948, 8.

⁹⁰ “Amusement Row: . . . From the Reindeer Feedbox,” *New York Amsterdam News*, 10/23/1948, 25.

⁹¹ “Lena Horne and Billy Eckstine to Star in Pic?” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, 1/13/1949, 1.

musicians from Count Basie to The Jackson 5 also established themselves through performing at chitlin' circuit venues. Moreover, her success was confirmed by her participation in *New York Amsterdam News* 11th Annual Benefit Show at Brooklyn Academy of Music in February 1949, where her all-girl band shared the stage with such notable musicians as Jimmy Lunceford, Sy Oliver, and Charlie Parker.⁹² Her activities, however, were only reported on the black newspapers.

Burnside continued to be active in the early 1950s, as reported in the article "Vi Invades Rendezvous," which reports her success at Joe's Rendezvous in Chicago.⁹³ *The Pittsburgh Courier* constantly ran articles on her performance throughout Pennsylvania as late as April 1953. Notably, she was in Panama for a seven-week engagement at a local theatre in December 1952.⁹⁴ At some point, Burnside moved to Washington DC where she worked at a musicians union.

As shown above, Burnside had a successful career as a soloist in one of the most prominent all-girl big bands during the 1940s and as a bandleader at the end of the 1940s and the early 1950s. As mentioned, though, all of her existing recordings are as a sidewoman (though as a main soloist) of the International Sweethearts of Rhythm, which are scattered on several different albums. The only readily available CD, *Hot Licks: Rare Recordings from One of the Best American All Girl Big Bands of the Swing Era*, was released in 2006,⁹⁵ sixty years after her prime time. Other recordings are out of print, but several video clips are available on YouTube as well as a few DVDs that compiled swing music. Although these recordings are not of

⁹² Tony Washington, "All Brooklyn Is Set for Tonight's Show," *New York Amsterdam News*, 2/5/1949, B1.

⁹³ "Vi Invades Rendezvous," *The Chicago Defender*, 11/4/1950, 21.

⁹⁴ "Vi's Combo in Panama," *The Chicago Defender*, 12/6/1952, 2.

⁹⁵ *Hot Licks: Rare Recordings from One of the Best American All Girl Big Bands of the Swing Era* (Sound of Yesteryear, 2006)

particularly high quality, we can hear her robust sound and solid technique especially demonstrated in the up-tempo songs.

Burnside died in 1964 in Washington D.C. Although she disappeared from historical black newspapers between November 1955 and her obituary in December 1964, she reportedly performed at a jazz festival in D.C. in 1964. While she did not have the recognition she deserved or was given enough opportunities to be recorded, she was “held in high regard by her peers and participated in tenor saxophone battles with them....”⁹⁶ How did audiences and fellow musicians perceive her? Since her active years were the 1940s and the first half of the 1950s, there are few musicians alive who still remember Burnside.

For example, legendary saxophonist Jimmy Heath (1926-) heard the Sweethearts when he was a youth and recalls that Burnside played very strongly. “She played hard like a man, I don’t know what her preference sexually was (laugh), but I think she was a homosexual. I find that homosexual female is more aggressive like a man in everything they do... I think that’s a part of their make up as being who they are, they play more aggressive.”⁹⁷ He equates Burnside’s strong playing with masculinity and her homosexuality, “being who she was.” In his mind, Burnside’s saxophone performance was not “womanly”; thus, it was “manly.” Consequently, a woman who plays “like a man” would be homosexual. His ideas also strongly suggest that a person’s sexuality serves as his/her core identity, determining who s/he is and what s/he does.

In our casual conversation, Frank Wess (1922-) mentioned that Burnside was very active in New York perhaps in the 1960s, and he actually has played with her. I asked him in what context he played with her and how she sounded. Since it is more than 40 years ago, Wess does

⁹⁶ Howard Rye, “Burnside, Vi.”

In *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, 2nd ed., edited by Barry Kernfeld. *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/J530400> (accessed November 5, 2009).

⁹⁷ Jimmy Heath, personal communication with author (Aug 31, 2009)

not remember exactly. He recalls, however, that they sometimes played together in jam sessions at a place called Colonial Inn in Queens, New York. He says, “She didn’t play bebop. She played in an older style... like Swing.”⁹⁸ Another thing that he mentioned suddenly was, “She was gay, you know.”⁹⁹ While Wess did not display any homophobic attitudes, I found it interesting that he remembered and mentioned that Burnside was gay in the earlier part of our conversation. It is uncertain if he wanted to give me “insider information” that Burnside was gay. Perhaps, Burnside being gay sticks out in his memory because Burnside’s status as a strong player is associated with her being gay in his mind.

On the other hand, a conversation with Billy Taylor progressed quite differently. After his initial statement mentioned above, he continued, “There were so many women who were really good musicians I have come in contact with in my lifetime. There are almost as many good female ones as male ones. It’s a shame that that part of it is not written about, because it’s a part of history, and just it’s ignored.”¹⁰⁰ Our conversation continued as follows:

YS: How did you know Vi Burnside?

BT: She worked with Bill Baldwin, it was a band in D.C., that’s where I heard her first. After World War II, she was one of the in demand players. She played brilliantly.

YS: How did the audience and fellow musicians perceive and react to her?

BT: She was a star. She had solos. ... There was no difference in quality between female and male bands.¹⁰¹

After another several minutes of conversation about Burnside, I asked, “Some people I interviewed mentioned that she played very strong like a man, and she was gay. Did people talk about it?” He answered, “Yes, that’s one of the reasons that perhaps she didn’t get as much of

⁹⁸ Frank Wess, personal communication with author (August 31, 2009).

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Billy Taylor, 2009.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

attention without mentioning that aspect of her life because... gay people in show business were accepted in a way that they were not by the general public. That part was hard to live with for anybody, and there was less of it within the show business.”¹⁰² He suggests that her homosexuality might have worked negatively for her career although the show business was relatively tolerant to alternative sexual orientations. I was struck that Taylor did not mention Burnside’s sexual orientation until I asked. When I told him how I felt, he responded, “Well, I forgot about it until you asked me.”¹⁰³ It is hard to speculate whether the subject did not come to his mind or he deliberately avoided it. However, it is obvious that Taylor has quite different attitudes toward the relationship between jazz saxophone playing and sexuality than those held by Heath and Wess. All three interviewees praised Burnside’s playing as strong and brilliant. However, while her homosexuality was important for Heath and Wess to mention in talking about her saxophone performance, it was merely additional information that has nothing to do with her playing in Taylor’s story.

2.2 WILLENE BARTON

The accurate birth and death dates for Willene Barton are not available.¹⁰⁴ Barton was born in Oscilla, Georgia circa 1925, and her family moved to Long Island, New York when she was ten. Soon she started to study the clarinet and switched to tenor saxophone when she entered

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ According to Cobi Narita, Barton died in September 2005.

junior high school. After graduating from Manhattan High School, she started to study with saxophonist Walter Thomas and guitarist/trombonist/composer Eddie Durham. Through them, she secured an audition for a Sweethearts spin-off band Anna Mae Winburn was organizing in 1952.¹⁰⁵ Having landed the job, Barton toured the US extensively with this all-girl band, where she learned “how to play.” She claimed that she “couldn’t play, didn’t know anything about structure or anything”¹⁰⁶ at the time.

Black newspapers started to cover Barton’s activities in February 1953 when she and tenor saxophonist Myrtle Young, one of the former Sweethearts, formed an all-girl band and performed at Pine Room of the Parker House in Pittsburgh.¹⁰⁷ *The Pittsburgh Courier* raved about the band’s performance at several clubs in Pennsylvania throughout the year. The next year, Barton formed a new all-female band called the Four Jewels, whose publicity photo appeared in *The Pittsburgh Courier* in May 1954.¹⁰⁸ The band appeared at the famous Crawford Grill for four weeks in November in the same year. *The Courier* reported, “These girls do not depend upon their sex to sell, they can really play and they look good, too.”¹⁰⁹ The paper praises their musical ability as well as feminine beauty. As Barton herself recalls in an interview with Linda Dahl, the Four Jewels was very successful.¹¹⁰ According to several articles in the *Courier*, the band toured extensively in the southern cities as well as New York and Canada.

¹⁰⁵ Sally Placksin, *American Women in Jazz, 1900 to the Present: Their Words, Lives, and Music* (New York: Wideview Books, 1982), 228.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ “Myrtle Young’s All-Girl Combo Sensational in Pine Room Bash,” *The Pittsburgh Courier* 2/14/1953, 22.

¹⁰⁸ “Photo Standalone 23—No Title,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, 5/29/1954, 29.

¹⁰⁹ “Four Jewels, Set to Open at Crawford Grill 2 Nov.1,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, 10/30/1954, 18.

¹¹⁰ *Stormy Weather: The Music and Lives of a Century of Jazzwomen* (New York: Putnam, 1977), 200.

In 1956, she formed another band that consisted of all males and regularly played at the club Shalimar in Harlem.¹¹¹ Her engagement there was reported both in *The Pittsburgh Courier* and *The Chicago Defender*. Later that same year, Barton started to play with organist Dayton Selby, with whom she made her only recording, *The Feminine Sax*,¹¹² in 1957. In this recording, she demonstrated her technical mastery as well as bluesy and hard-swinging feelings with a gutsy throaty sound. Subsequently, in 1959, she started a new group with another female tenor saxophonist Elsie Smith, who once played in the Lionel Hampton Orchestra. Barton described this band as “the wildest group you’ve ever heard.”¹¹³ The band also played at the Shalimar and *The Chicago Defender* and *The Pittsburgh Courier* reported respectively, “The sexiest saxophonists in show business, Elsie Smith and Willene Barton are wowing the boys in New York’s Red Randolph’s Shalimar,”¹¹⁴ and “Two of show business’ most talented and sexiest entertainers, Elsie Smith and Willene Barton brought their exciting quartet into New York’s famed Shalimar on Sept. 15. Elsie and Willene are proving to their jammed packed audiences that curves and good looks are not hindrances to their superb musical abilities as they give rhythmic figures in jazz and blues.”¹¹⁵ It is noteworthy that these papers particularly pointed out their physical attractiveness and sexiness and emphasized that their feminine quality did not affect their musical ability. Their engagement there was so successful that Sydney Poitier stopped by while he starred on Broadway in *A Raisin in the Sun*, as *The Chicago Defender*

¹¹¹ In the interview with Dahl, she mentioned different club and band members.

¹¹² *Feminine Sax* (Design Records, DLP 37: 1957)

¹¹³ Linda Dahl, *Stormy Weather: The Music and Lives of a Century of Jazzwomen* (New York: Putnam, 1977), 201.

¹¹⁴ “What Stars are Doing along Stem,” *The Chicago Defender* 5/16/1959, 18.

¹¹⁵ “Band Routes,” *Pittsburgh Courier* 9/19/1959, A7.

reported with a large picture showing him and the two saxophonists together.¹¹⁶ As she mentioned in her interview, the band stayed together until the end of 1960.¹¹⁷

Following the *Chicago Defender* article reporting the band's tour in Bermuda and Boston in January 1960, the next article that covered Barton was "Willene Barton Feels: Female Musicians Can't Create Ideas." It appeared in the *Pittsburgh Courier* in November 1964. In an interview with Major Robinson of *The Courier*, she states:

Although I first started with Anna Mae Winburn's all-girl orchestra, today I resent playing with girls because I find that they lack many necessary things essential to my developing into a well-known tenor sax artist. They don't seem to have the ability to create ideas as they play, a quality which I find in men. Also they lack the powerful drive and inspiration, particularly in the rhythm section, which gives me a desire to blow my heart out.¹¹⁸

Here, she differentiates herself from other female jazz musicians who "lack the powerful drive and inspiration." In fact, the similar attitude is seen in other contemporary female saxophonists I interviewed. These women seem to believe that the real success as jazz musicians is achieved through playing with male musicians. In other words, these women possess the idea that "women can't play" and that they are exceptional for women. The idea of female jazz instrumentalists as "exceptional" is also common in jazz criticism. In her dissertation on contemporary women improvisers, Dana Reason-Myers points out that jazz critics tend to exalt female instrumentalists as "exceptional" women in the male dominated field and alienate them from the larger jazz community and other female musicians.¹¹⁹ Contemporary female saxophonists' views on other female jazz musicians and all female projects will be discussed in the final chapter.

¹¹⁶ "Johnny Mathis to Headline Dick Clark TV Spectacular," *The Chicago Defender* 6/13/1959, 18.

¹¹⁷ Dahl (1977), 201

¹¹⁸ Major Robinson, "Female Musicians Can't Create Ideas," *Pittsburgh Courier* 11/21/1964, 17.

¹¹⁹ Dana Reason-Myers, *The Myth of Absence: Representation, Reception, and the music of Experimental Women Improvisers*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, San Diego, 2007, 68-70.

After the *Courier* article, ironically, the majority of press coverage emphasized her performances with all female bands and “women in jazz” events. Although she had a regular performance at the Purple Manor in Harlem in 1967 and early 1968, and a few performances announced in *The New York Amsterdam News*, the next major performance to attract newspaper coverage was in July 1979 at the second annual “Jazz Salute to Women” in which she participated as a member of “Big Apple Jazzwomen.”¹²⁰ Her performances were sporadically reported on *The Amsterdam News* up to August 1992.

Although she was active for over forty years in the jazz scene, I was only vaguely familiar with her name from the books mentioned above. When I started this project, I inquired whether anybody knew her. Although many jazz musicians did not even recognize her name, I found a few people to interview. My interview with alto saxophonist Lou Donaldson (1926-), who has been active in the jazz scene since the early 1950s and is also known for his outspokenness, was rather interesting. I first asked him when and how he got to know Barton. “In the 50s, in New York...she was working with Jazz Sisters. Jazz Sisters was a black group, they used to play at Small’s Paradise [in Harlem]. Paula Hampton on drums, Jean something, Bertha Hope on piano, Gloria on bass.”¹²¹ His statement clearly contradicts my archival research. Barton’s group in the 50s that included Gloria Coleman was called the Four Jewels, but neither Hope nor Hampton was a member. Barton played with these two musicians in the 1970s, and the group was actually called the “Jazz Sisters.” Our conversations continued as follows:

YS: Did you think that Willene played well?

LD: Yes, very good. She went to the same saxophone teacher I went to.

YS: Do you know how old she was?

LD: No.

YS: Younger or older than you?

¹²⁰ Jon Saunders, “Jazz Salute to Women...Part 1,” *New York Amsterdam News* 7/21/1979, 35.

¹²¹ Lou Donaldson, personal communication with author (August 10, 2009)

LD: I think she was a bit younger than I am. I'm not sure, because she was strange, you know [with a hand gesture]. You know, dyke. Everybody in the band was a dyke. That's why we used to call them Jazz Brothers, ha ha ha ha!!

YS: You mean, all of them?

LD: I'm afraid so.

YS: Really? I've never heard about that. Nobody told me.

LD: We knew that. They don't have to tell you. But Willene is a good player. She used to work with Dayton Selby, the organ player. He was a faggot. He was strange, too, so they fit right together.

YS: Oh my goodness. Nobody really knows these things.

LD: Everybody knows. I knew her very well. I sometimes played with her. She played more like a rhythm & blues. She didn't play bebop, you know, swing. She had a big tone.¹²²

As his first statement shows, he mixed up some facts, and his story may not be plausible. However, I found the way that he remembered and told the story intriguing. In his mind, she was active in the 50s playing with the group called the Jazz Sisters, who consisted of gay black women. He mentioned Barton being gay when I asked her age, not her sexuality. In addition, he claims that the all female group, Jazz Sisters, was working at one of the major jazz clubs in Harlem and that its members were all gay. Further, he mentioned that Barton's male musical partner was also gay. He even said, "They [members of Jazz Sisters] would steal your girlfriend,"¹²³ suggesting that these women were interested in women. Why did he give me all these information I never asked for? Donaldson clearly associates these talented and successful female jazz instrumentalists with homosexuality. He chose to talk about these musicians' sexuality because he considered it important in talking about them. It seems as though Donaldson thinks that these female instrumentalists and a gay male organist are outside the norms of sex and gender based on heterosexuality.

Subsequently, I interviewed Dr. Lonnie Smith (1942-), the organ player who worked with Barton in the 1960s. According to him, Barton hired him in her band when she needed an

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

organist for a show at the Purple Manor. Smith said, “She could play! She was strong.”¹²⁴ With the conversation with Donaldson in mind, I asked him if he and other musicians talked about Barton and her band mates’ sexual preference. He was hesitant to answer the question and said, “We knew that [they were gay], but they did that to keep up with the guys.”¹²⁵ I asked him for further explanation, but he refused. Perhaps, he meant that Barton and other female instrumentalists acted like a man in order to get along well with other male musicians. Then he continued, “Anyway, if you play strong, first thing comes to mind is, she plays like a man. That’s pretty sad though. When you saw her [Barton], I mean, visually, you could tell, she’s strong, there is no daintiness there, you know, even her demeanor wasn’t like, ‘Hi’ (in very high voice), little heavier, like one of the guys.”¹²⁶ His statement suggests that her “manliness” comes from both her strong saxophone playing and her mannerisms. Interestingly, unlike Smith, Donaldson never mentioned how Barton talked or acted. In other words, while Donaldson seems to associate Barton’s homosexuality with her strong playing, Smith uncomfortably discloses her homosexuality (though he never said the word) suggested by her saxophone performance as well as her demeanor, which, he thinks, helped her to blend into the male dominated jazz scene as “one of the guys.” As also shown in his statement, “that’s pretty sad” about the connection between musically strong playing and men, Smith tries to avoid an essentialist association of musical sound with gender.

Both Donaldson and Smith’s description of Barton challenges her image depicted in the old newspapers: she was one of “the sexiest saxophonists” in a bare shoulder dress showing her

¹²⁴ Lonnie Smith, personal communication with author (August 12, 2009)

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

feminine figure in several pictures. In addition, toward the end of the “Willene Barton Feels: ...” article mentioned above, Robinson writes about Barton’s personal life:

Playing niteclubs [*sic*] up and down the East Coast, Willene is very critical of the males she meets who become her admirers. Last year, a boyfriend in Baltimore caused her embarrassing moments when the finance company repossessed a horn he had given her as a gift because he didn’t keep up the payments on it. While not anxious to rush into marriage she isn’t above saying “yes” to the right man, providing he meets her criteria. In her opinion he must be progressive, have an appreciation for her femininity and not be too jealous of the attention she gets from male café patrons.¹²⁷

Why did he include this anecdote about a “boyfriend” and the criteria for her husband into the article? Neither is related to the main subject of this article—how she feels about her fellow female musicians. I shall not speculate whether Barton was actually heterosexual or homosexual, but this portrayal clearly constructs Barton as being heterosexual.

Another person who knew Barton was bassist/guitarist/organist/pianist/singer Gloria Coleman. She played with Barton in the 1950s as a bassist and in 1982 as a pianist for the band “Big Apple Jazzwomen” at the Women’s Jazz Festival in New York City. In a phone conversation, I asked about her involvement with Barton’s band in the 1950s. Her answer was curt and her voice did not show very much emotion, “Yeah, we worked together.”¹²⁸ Then I mentioned, “You also played with her in the 80s as a pianist.” She immediately said, “No, no, no. I played with my own band.”¹²⁹ I was puzzled and explained that I saw the newspaper article reporting a women’s jazz festival in New York where she and Barton performed together. I said, “You weren’t part of the festival?” She strongly denied saying, “No, they have bad people they

¹²⁷ Major Robinson (1964)

¹²⁸ Gloria Coleman, personal communication with author (August 20, 2009).

¹²⁹ Ibid.

put on there.”¹³⁰ It is uncertain whether she actually participated in the festival as member of the band. However, it is clear that she does not want to associate herself with the festival or Barton. She repeated that she had her own band, and Barton worked with another male organ player.

I attempted to contact Paula Hampton, the drummer, who worked with Barton in the late 1970s and early 80s. Responding to my email inquiry, she wrote:

If I had any information on Willene, I would be more than happy to share it with you, however, I was only a member of a band that Willene played with. I never even had an opportunity to visit her house, meet her Mother or any of the things that a friend would experience. I spoke with Carline Ray¹³¹ and Carline said the same thing. Willene was a very private person and I never deigned to intrude on her life. I didn't even know when she passed away until she was buried.¹³²

This response seemed to be odd, since my inquiry was about Barton's musical career, not her personal life. It could be my over-interpretation, but Hampton might have been wary that I would ask questions regarding their private lives. Although Barton had a successful career as a jazz saxophonist and had worked over forty years, sadly, people rarely talk about her life and music.

2.3 VI REDD

Elvira Redd was born in Los Angeles in 1928. Her father Alton Redd was a jazz drummer from New Orleans, who worked with such jazz greats as Kid Ory, Dexter Gordon, and Wardell Gray. Redd started to play alto saxophone around the age of 12, when her great aunt

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Carlene Ray is a bassist who worked with the International Sweethearts of Rhythm in the 1940s. Both Ray and Hampton were the members of the Jazz Sisters.

¹³² Paula Hampton, personal communication with author (September 15, 2009)

gave her a horn and taught her how to play. It was not her first musical experience, however, as she had already begun singing at church when she was five. Around 1948 she formed a band with her first husband, trumpeter Nathaniel Meeks. She played the saxophone and sang, and began performing professionally. She had her first son when she was in her late 20s, and her second son with her second husband, drummer Richie Goldberg, a few years later. It was in the 1960s that Redd's career as a jazz saxophonist/singer peaked.

The Los Angeles Sentinel's coverage of her musical career starts in August 1961, when she had a weekly gig with Goldberg and an organ player at the Red Carpet jazz club.¹³³ In the same year, Redd appeared at the club Shelly's Manne-Hole. In 1962 she performed at the Las Vegas Jazz Festival with her own group. *The Los Angeles Sentinel* reported, "Another first for the Las Vegas Festival on July 7 and 8 is achieved when Vi Redd, an attractive young girl alto sax player, becomes the first femme to be one of the instrumental headliners at a jazz festival. As a matter of fact, Miss Redd, may well be the first gal horn player in jazz history to establish herself as a major soloist."¹³⁴ A few months later the *Sentinel* wrote, "Vi Redd, first woman instrumentalist in participating in the recent Las Vegas Jazz Festival is jumping with joy as she was placed 5th in the *Down Beat* critics poll,"¹³⁵ which was a huge accomplishment.

In 1964 she toured with Earl Hines in the US and Canada, including engagements in Chicago and at Birdland in NYC. The *Chicago Defender* reported their appearance at the Sutherland Room: "Featured with 'Fatha' Hines in his showcase are Vi Redd, a sultry singer who also plays the saxophone as well or better than many male musicians."¹³⁶ In 1966, she played at the Monterey Jazz Festival with her band; the next year, she traveled to London by herself to

¹³³ "NYC Visitor Returns Home," *Los Angeles Sentinel* 8/17/1961, C3.

¹³⁴ "Vi Redd Headlines Jazz Bash," *Los Angeles Sentinel* 6/28/1962, C1.

¹³⁵ "Gertrude Gipson...Candid Comments," *Los Angeles Sentinel* 8/9/1962, A18.

¹³⁶ "Last Chance to See 'Fatha,'" *The Chicago Defender* 8/29/1964, 10.

play with local musicians at the historic jazz club Ronnie Scott's. She was initially invited there as a singer and was scheduled to perform there for only two weeks, but due to popular demand her performance was extended to ten weeks. Typically, Ronnie Scott's featured an instrumental group with a lesser-known vocalist as an opening act. Bassist Dave Holland, who played with Redd suggests that she both played and sang, and was enthusiastically accepted by the London audience¹³⁷. Prominent jazz critic Leonard Feather writes, "Booked in there ...only as a supporting attraction...she often earn[ed] greater attention and applause than several world famous saxophonists who appeared during that time playing the alternate sets."¹³⁸ Jazz critic/photographer Valerie Wilmer echoed that sentiment in *Down Beat*, noting that Redd "came to London unheralded, an unknown quantity, and left behind a reputation for swinging that latecomers will find hard to live up to."¹³⁹ Redd's London appearance was extremely successful.

The summer of 1968 was another high point in Redd's music life. She made a guest appearance with the Dizzy Gillespie Quintet at the Newport Jazz Festival in early July. This performance caught the eye of writers and critics who attended the Festival. Photographer/writer Burt Goldblatt describes this concert as follows:

At one point he [Gillespie] introduced female sax player Vi Redd as "a young lady who has been enjoyed many times before..." Later while she warmed up with pianist Mike Longo, Dizzy interjected, "That's close enough to jazz," convulsing the audience once again. But despite all the male-chauvinist-inspired humor she encountered, Vi fluffed it off and played a fine, Bird-inspired solo on "Lover Man."¹⁴⁰

In the accompanying photograph, Redd was wearing a very short dress, fishnet stockings, and high heels. Bassist Paul West was in Gillespie's band at this concert. I asked him if he

¹³⁷ Dave Holland, personal communication with author (May 8, 2005).

¹³⁸ Leonard Feather, liner notes to Vi Redd, *Bird Call* (United Artists Jazz, Stereo 15016, 1962)

¹³⁹ Valerie Wilmer, "Caught in the Act," *Down Beat* 35/4 (1968), 34-35.

¹⁴⁰ Burt Goldblatt, *Newport Jazz Festival: The Illustrated History* (New York: The Dial Press, 1977), 154.

remembered this concert, which took place almost thirty-seven years before our phone conversation. “No, not at all. She must have just sat in with us. If someone like Billie Holiday or Sarah Vaughn sat in, I would have remembered. But Vi Redd? I don’t remember her at all.”¹⁴¹ On the other hand, pianist Mike Longo remembered the concert very well. According to him, Redd sat in with Gillespie’s band on many occasions whenever they toured California. “She always sounded good and she was very cool as a musician and a person.”¹⁴² More interestingly, he denied Gillespie’s chauvinistic attitude which Goldblatt mentioned. “That was a routine joke Dizzy made every night. Vi was tuning up with me and Dizzy said that’s close enough for jazz, meaning it doesn’t have to be as accurate as Western classical music. Dizzy was one of the very few people who hired female musicians like Melba Liston. He had so much respect for Vi.”¹⁴³

Two renowned jazz critics, Stanley Dance and Dan Morgenstern, also reported on this performance in *Jazz Journal* in the UK and *Down Beat* in the US respectively. Dance writes, “[Gillespie] provoked loud guffaws from the crowd by introducing ‘a young lady who has been enjoyed many times before.’ Vi Redd seemed to take this gallantry in her stride ...”¹⁴⁴ Despite Longo’s statement, Gillespie’s introduction of Redd and the audience’s reaction suggest a chauvinistic atmosphere. Dance’s description of Redd’s saxophone performance is neutral, mentioning only “Bird-influenced.” Morgenstern, on the other hand, calls Redd a “guest star” and states, “Miss Redd sings most pleasantly...and plays excellent, Parker-inspired alto. To say she plays well for a woman would be patronizing—she’d get a lot of cats in trouble.”¹⁴⁵ Certainly, that Redd was a female saxophonist wearing feminine clothing evoked male-female

¹⁴¹ Paul West, personal communication with author (May 5, 2005)

¹⁴² Mike Longo, personal communication with author (May 6, 2005)

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Stanley Dance, “Lightly & Politely: Newport, ’68,” *Jazz Journal* 21/9 (1968), 4.

¹⁴⁵ Dan Morgenstern, “Newport Roundup,” *Down Beat* 35/18 (1968), 34.

tensions on the stage in these writers' minds. However, as suggested in Longo's statement, open-minded musicians themselves actually did not care so much that Redd was a female saxophonist.

Later in the summer of 1968, Redd traveled to Europe and Africa with the Count Basie Orchestra as a singer. As we have seen, she performed publicly at several prestigious clubs and jazz festivals, which attracted writers' attention and elicited passionate reaction from audiences especially in Europe during the late 1960s. Around 1970, she started to perform less in order to stay home with her children and taught at a special education school. About five years later, at the age of forty-seven, she gradually resumed her performing career. In 1977 Redd was appointed as a Consultant Panelist to the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities in Washington, DC. For the past 30 years she has been working as a musician and educator, giving concerts, touring abroad, and lecturing at colleges. In 2001, she received the Mary Lou Williams Women in Jazz Award.

Although Redd's performing career peaked in the 1960s, she did not have many opportunities to be recorded. In his article in *Down Beat* magazine in 1962, Leonard Feather offers an anecdote showing how difficult it was for female jazz instrumentalists to get recorded. "Redd sat in with Art Blakey, who promptly called New York to rave about her to a recording executive. The record man's reaction was predictable: 'Yes, but she's a girl...only two girls in jazz have ever really made it, Mary Lou Williams and Shirley Scott...I wonder whether to take a chance...'"¹⁴⁶ This story demonstrates that female jazz instrumentalists with the exception of a few keyboardists do not fit into the dominant gender ideology that persists in the recording industry.

¹⁴⁶ Leonard Feather, "Focus on Vi Redd," *Down Beat* 29/24 (1962), 23.

Redd's two recordings as a leader were both produced by Feather, who discovered Redd through the recommendation of the drummer Dave Bailey. Bailey explains, "I met Vi probably at a jam session in LA around 1962. Everyone told me that she sounded like Bird. When I heard her play, I was blown away. I thought she deserved attention, so I mentioned her to Leonard."¹⁴⁷ Feather went to hear Redd at the Red Carpet, the club mentioned earlier. Strongly impressed with her playing, Feather helped Redd to be recorded by United Artists. In fact, Feather had greatly supported Redd's career not only by producing her two records but also by writing articles about her for *Down Beat* magazine. He also paved the way for her to perform at Ronnie Scott's as well as booking her for the Beverly Hills Jazz Festival in 1967.

In her first album *Bird Calls*¹⁴⁸, released in 1962, Redd recorded ten tunes: five were instrumentals, one a vocal, and she both sang and played on four tunes. When she was asked if she "had control over what [she] wanted to play" on the record, she answered that Feather had the idea of recording Charlie Parker related tunes.¹⁴⁹ Her second album, *Lady Soul*¹⁵⁰, was released in 1963. On this record, Redd sang on the majority of tracks, more than on the first recording. Out of eleven tracks, three were vocal tunes, two instrumental, and six combined vocals and saxophone. Even on these six tunes, her saxophone solos were limited. Interestingly, four tunes were blues. Jazz critic John Tynan reviewed *Lady Soul* in *Down Beat*'s "column of vocal album reviews" and wrote, "A discovery of Leonard Feather, Vi Redd may be more celebrated in some quarters as a better-than-average jazz alto saxophonist than as a vocalist. In *Lady Soul* Miss Redd the singer dominates on all tracks excepting two instrumentals, 'Lady

¹⁴⁷ Dave Bailey, personal communication with author (June 1, 2005)

¹⁴⁸ Vi Redd, *Bird Calls* (United Artists Jazz, Stereo 15016, 1962)

¹⁴⁹ Vi Redd, interview with Monk Rowe (February 13, 1999)

¹⁵⁰ Vi Redd, *Lady Soul* (Atco 33-157, 1963)

Soul,' a deep-digging blues, and the ballad 'That's All'."¹⁵¹ Dave Bailey, who played drums on this recording, mentioned, "I think Ertegun, the owner of Atlantic, selected the tunes we recorded. I think they were trying to get her more recognized as a singer."¹⁵² The change from the more instrumental album to a more vocal and bluesy approach hints at their effort to follow traditional gender constructions in the recording industry. In fact, Redd herself did not like the second album mentioning, "It wasn't the right thing to do."¹⁵³ Though I asked for more explanation, she did not share her thoughts. Her two recordings as a leader went out of print. The first album was reissued from Solid State (a division of United Artist) by Feather in the late 1960s. One tune from the second album was included on a compilation album titled *Women in Jazz: Swing Time to Modern, volume 3* in 1978. However, these albums also went out of print soon thereafter.

As a sidewoman, she participated in several recordings playing a few songs on each album. For example, she performs on two songs on trombonist Al Grey's 1965 record, *Shades of Grey*¹⁵⁴. According to Redd, these two songs, which were both instrumental, were the best recordings she made. In 1969, she joined the recording session of multi-instrumentalist Johnny Almond's jazz-rock album, *Hollywood Blues*¹⁵⁵, playing alto sax on two tunes. Her last recording was on Marian McPartland's *Now's the Time*¹⁵⁶, which was recorded immediately after Redd resumed her performing career. McPartland organized an "all-female band" for a jazz festival in Rochester, NY. On this live recording album, she played alto sax on several songs.

¹⁵¹ John Tynan, "Vi Redd-Lady Soul," *Down Beat*, 31/4 (1964), 33.

¹⁵² Dave Bailey, 2005.

¹⁵³ Vi Redd, personal communication with author (September 5, 2009)

¹⁵⁴ Al Grey, *Shades of Grey* (Tangerine TRCS1504)

¹⁵⁵ Johnny Almond *Hollywood Blues* (Deram SML1057)

¹⁵⁶ Marian McPartland, *Now's the Time* (Halcyon HAL115)

Both Grey's *Shades of Grey* and McPartland's *Now's the Time* are now out of print. Although Almond's *Hollywood Blues* also went out of print, it was reissued by a Japanese label in 2005. The CD, however, was reissued probably because Almond and his rock band the Mark-Almond Band were popular in Japan. Besides Almond's CD, only four of her recordings are currently available on CD: *Chase!*¹⁵⁷ by Dexter Gordon and Gene Ammons, *Blue Dex: Dexter Gordon Plays the Blues*¹⁵⁸ by Gordon, *Live in Antibes, 1968*¹⁵⁹ and *Swingin' Machine: Live*¹⁶⁰ by the Count Basie Orchestra. *Chase!* is a live album recorded in 1970 (reissued as a CD in 1996) on which Redd sings "Lonesome Lover Blues." *Blue Dex* is a compilation album released in 1996 that includes "Lonesome Lover Blues" from *Chase!*. Count Basie's *Live in Antibes* was recorded when Redd toured Europe with the Count Basie Orchestra in 1968. *Swingin' Machine* actually is identical to *Live in Antibes*, on which she sang three blues tunes with a brief saxophone solo on the last song¹⁶¹. Interestingly, in contrast to the records that have never been reissued as CDs, her two blues singing recordings multiplied into four CDs.

Redd had a recording date with drummer Max Roach for the Crescent label in London during their engagement at Ronnie Scott's in 1967. Roach's band was one of the featured attractions while Redd did the opening act for ten weeks. According to Stanley Cowell, the pianist in Roach's band at the time, Roach and Redd met for the first time in London. It is likely that Roach was impressed with Redd's performance at Ronnie Scott's and decided to record her with his band. However, the record was never released as an album. Although Cowell stated,

¹⁵⁷ Dexter Gordon and Gene Ammons, *Chase!* (Prestige, 1996)

¹⁵⁸ Dexter Gordon, *Blue Dex: Dexter Gordon Plays the Blues* (Prestige, 1996)

¹⁵⁹ Count Basie, *Live in Antibes, 1968* (France's Concert, 1988)

¹⁶⁰ Count Basie, *Swingin' Machine: Live* (Charly UK, 1999)

¹⁶¹ Redd is credited only as a singer in the liner notes. Therefore, people who are unfamiliar with Redd's playing may not realize she played the saxophone solo.

“Roach wasn’t happy with the music we played,”¹⁶² it is not clear why the recording was not released. In a recent phone conversation with Redd, I asked her about this recording session. She remembered that she sang a gospel song, “In the Garden” with a jazzy arrangement, although she does not recall if she played the saxophone.¹⁶³ I asked Stanley Cowell if he remembered what tunes they recorded and whether Redd mostly played the saxophone or sang, but he could not recall details of the session. Trumpeter Charles Tolliver, who was credited on this recording date, had no recollection of this session either.¹⁶⁴ However, both Cowell and Tolliver remembered an affair between Redd and Roach very well. Cowell asserted, “I think the recording had more to do with their relationship than music.”¹⁶⁵ It is uncertain whether this recording session was a result of their extramarital affair, and it is beyond the scope of this work. Yet, I find it interesting that these two musicians remembered the affair and talked about it. It might be because extramarital affairs are considered to be a nontraditional union to some extent. It was unfortunate that the recording was never released. But more regrettably, this recording session left them thirty-eight years later with little more than a memory of her affair with a bandleader.

It is important to note that Redd had more opportunities in public performances than in recordings. It is possible that musicians recognized her excellence as a saxophonist and hired her and/or invited her to sit in with them. Who gets recorded, however, is not necessarily determined by recognition and reputation among musicians. In the end, Redd’s two recordings as a leader were made with the help of Leonard Feather, who was a renowned white male jazz critic. Strangely, she did not have the opportunity to be recorded as a leader at the peak of her career in the late 1960s. Moreover, most of her recordings went out of print and became “collector’s

¹⁶² Stanley Cowell, personal communication with author (May 15, 2005)

¹⁶³ Vi Redd, 2009.

¹⁶⁴ Cowell telephoned Tolliver during our interview.

¹⁶⁵ Stanley Cowell, 2005.

items.” Not only who gets recorded but also who gets reissued and continues to be heard possibly reflects traditional gender norms in the recording industry. Redd has been obscured and forgotten partly because she did not have many opportunities to be recorded and her recordings have not been reissued as CDs in the United States.¹⁶⁶

In an extensive interview with Monk Rowe of Hamilton College Jazz Archives, Redd explains how she joined the Count Basie Orchestra, “They needed somebody that could sing the blues, and I mostly sang rather than playing, those guys had some problems with me playing.”¹⁶⁷ I also asked her about her experience with the Basie Orchestra. She said, “He [Basie] didn’t let me play [alto saxophone] much because Marshal [Royal, the lead alto player for the Basie band] didn’t like it. When I was singing, they’re happy, but as soon as I start playing, they didn’t like that.”¹⁶⁸ This statement also demonstrates that she was accepted more as a singer than as a saxophonist.

Feather states, “she [Redd] has too much talent. Is she a soul-blues-jazz singer who doubles on alto saxophone? Or is she a Charlie Parker-inspired saxophonist who also happens to sing?”¹⁶⁹ There are mixed views on whether her main instrument is a saxophone or her voice. When pianist Stanley Cowell recalled Redd performing in London, his impression was that Redd only sang. This is possibly because he thinks that she was a better singer than a saxophonist. Cowell lived in LA from 1963 to 1964, where he saw Redd performing at local jazz clubs. He suggested, “She was a good saxophonist. But too many great saxophonists were around. And she

¹⁶⁶ Japanese record label WEA reissued Redd’s second album *Lady Soul* in December 2007, but it has been discontinued as of October 2009. EMI Music Japan reissued *Bird Call* in December 2010.

¹⁶⁷ Vi Redd, interview with Monk Rowe (February 13, 1999).

¹⁶⁸ Vi Redd, 2009.

¹⁶⁹ Leonard Feather, liner notes to *Lady Soul* (1962).

could really sing.”¹⁷⁰ On the other hand, Mike Longo stated, “I didn’t know she was a singer. I always thought she was a saxophonist because she always came to sit in with us and only played saxophone.”¹⁷¹ It is difficult to imagine that Redd never sang with Gillespie’s band until the Newport Jazz Festival. Longo continued, “You know, gender doesn’t matter to music. It doesn’t matter who plays.”¹⁷² Longo’s gender-neutral attitude recognizes Redd as a jazz instrumentalist more than others do.

Dave Bailey told me, “She could have made it either way. She could play as good as the guys. And she was an awesome singer.”¹⁷³ He compares her to men only when he describes her saxophone performance. His statement suggests saxophone’s association with men. Bailey does not hesitate to say, “Women don’t associate themselves with the instruments.”¹⁷⁴ It is not women but society that has disassociated women from the instruments. Although Redd was raised in an exceptional environment—family members, neighbors, and classmates were established musicians — her career was not exceptional. Even her father was unwilling at first to hire her in his band. Redd says, “I guess he had his chauvinist thing going, too.”¹⁷⁵

Cowell also recalled that Redd played very strongly “like a man, and that was what I liked about her.”¹⁷⁶ Although Redd demonstrates her sensitivity and elegance in her beautiful ballad playing, it is her strength and gutsy blues feeling that seem to be most appreciated as a talented saxophonist. Cowell continued, “And she was tough, soulful, and culturally black. She could curse you out, cut you down with her words.”¹⁷⁷ His description about her perfectly fits

¹⁷⁰ Stanley Cowell, 2005.

¹⁷¹ Mike Longo, 2005.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Dave Bailey, 2005.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Redd, 1999.

¹⁷⁶ Cowell, 2005.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

the stereotypical image of black womanhood that people expect from a blues performer. As Patricia Hill Collins contends, blues provided black women with safe space where their voice could be heard.¹⁷⁸ In the classic blues era, more women than men were recorded. Redd's strong connection with the blues, however, was sometimes taken negatively among musicians. Cowell stated, "Some young musicians weren't willing to work with Vi, because they thought her music was not progressive enough."¹⁷⁹ Cowell also thought that Redd did not develop her musical style adequately and remained in her comfortable realm of the blues. The blues might have been her comfort zone not only musically but also culturally and socially.

In addition to black women's association with the blues, the stereotypical dichotomy "men are instrumentalists, women are singers" still exists in the jazz world. Because of these cultural constructions, Redd was seen as a blues woman and consumed as a singer more than a jazz saxophonist, despite her considerable talents and contributions as an instrumentalist.

2.4 CONCLUSION

There are some common threads in the case studies of these three female jazz saxophonists. They are all talented jazz saxophonists who actively performed throughout the US and Europe. However, they had few opportunities to be commercially recorded partly because they did not fit into the gender ideology the recording industry has long maintained. As a result, they were left out of the dominant jazz discourse and tended to be forgotten as time went by. In

¹⁷⁸ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* (New York and London: Routledge, 2000), 105.

¹⁷⁹ Cowell, 2005.

addition, the ways these women talked and written about demonstrate a complex discourse of gender and sexuality in jazz.

In the case of Burnside, both Jimmy Heath and Frank Wess remembered her as a good musician, but her strong playing was associated with her perceived homosexuality in their stories. Both Heath and Wess are far from chauvinistic or homophobic. Rather, they actually have helped female instrumentalists in developing their career by hiring them and recommending them to other musicians. What is questionable in the way they talked about Burnside is their strong adherence to a binary construction of sex and gender, one based on heterosexuality. To them, Burnside's strong saxophone playing is a masculine gender signifier that constructs her as homosexual. In addition, Heath presents his idea of "lesbian identity" as the source of homosexual women's strong playing. He named a few other female jazz musicians (both African American and white women) he identifies as lesbians and mentioned that they also play aggressively. He believes in an essentialized identity possessed by all lesbian women. This is problematic because there is no universal identity of lesbians, heterosexuals or any other categories, as I discussed in Chapter 1. Moreover, as Adrienne Rich argues, there is a huge range of women identified experiences, what she calls "lesbian existence," whether they identify themselves as lesbian or not.¹⁸⁰

Similarly, Barton is remembered by Lou Donaldson as a strong, "dyke" saxophonist. Donaldson's account of Barton and the musicians she performed with excludes these musicians from his idea of normative sex, gender, and sexuality. The way Donaldson told the story is hugely different from the way Heath and Wess did. While both Heath and Wess never displayed a homophobic attitude and were respectful for Burnside, Donaldson almost made fun of those

¹⁸⁰ Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," *Signs* 5/4 (1980), 631-660.

“strange” musicians who he thinks are “dykes” and a gay man. At the same time, however, their underlying ideas are fundamentally the same. In their mind, strong playing of these female saxophonists is associated with their homosexuality.

This perspective is analogous to the association of female athletes with lesbians. Among a number of literatures that have discussed the assumption of female athletes being lesbians, Karen Peper asserts that the roles of female, athlete, and lesbian have been “misconstructed in such a way as to provide a ‘logical’ connection to one another.”¹⁸¹ Female athletes are not feminine, so they must be masculine. In turn, masculine females are queer or “dykes.” It is clear that this (il)logic is based on a binary construction of male-female and masculine-feminine. And if a person does not fit into this construction, s/he must be queer/homosexual.

Redd’s case presents more issues. Partly because she was married three times and because she also sang, her sexuality was never called into question even though she was perceived as a strong player as some of my informants mentioned. However, as demonstrated by the anecdote regarding her recording session with Max Roach, her heterosexuality caused a problem as well. In her fellow male jazz musicians’ minds, her extramarital affair with the bandleader left stronger impression than the recording session itself. Because these two fellow musicians have taught at prestigious jazz programs, their stories can be heard and remembered. Furthermore, as examined above, she was frequently accepted more as a blues singer than as a jazz saxophonist.

As I have shown, historical black newspapers informed the black community of the accomplishments of these women. According to Maxine Leeds Craig, the black press was one of

¹⁸¹ Karen Peper, “Female Athlete = Lesbian: A Myth Constructed from Gender Role Expectations and Lesbiphobia.” In *Queer Words, Queer Images: Communication and the Construction of Homosexuality* E. Jeffrey Ringer, ed. (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 95

the sites of cultural production where “African Americans created and sustained symbols, meanings, and cultural rankings that countered dominant white views of blacks.”¹⁸² These female saxophonists’ successful career in jazz must have been a huge achievement for black women at the time. As Eric Porter suggests, jazz had become a site for African American artistic achievement”¹⁸³ in early twentieth-century American society. Therefore, the black press was eager to inform the black community about their success. Especially in the case of Barton, whose homosexuality and masculine demeanor were emphasized by my interviewees, these papers exaggerated her feminine and heterosexual attractiveness in their report. In other words, black press tended to situate her within a heterosexual matrix partly because the black community is typically homophobic.¹⁸⁴ Therefore, while fellow musicians and black press seem to depict Barton in almost contradictory ways, they both are structured by the same dualism of sex and gender based on heterosexuality. This is part of complex process for jazz to have developed a heterosexual and masculinist gender norms.

These case studies illustrate how female jazz instrumentalists—especially those who play the instruments traditionally associated with men— have historically become obsolete, invisible, and inaudible even though, as Billy Taylor suggests, they have always existed. Although each of these women is sometimes referred to as a woman who opened the door for other women, their impact seems to be limited. For instance, Redd told me that she saw Burnside performing with the Sweethearts when she was twelve. Responding to whether Burnside inspired her, Redd instantly said, “No, not at all.” Similarly, though Barton later recalled that she admired Burnside

¹⁸² Maxine Leeds Craig, *Ain't I a Beauty Queen?: Black Women, Beauty, and The Politics of Race* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 45.

¹⁸³ Eric Porter, *What Is This Thing Called Jazz?: African American Musicians As Artists, Critics, and Activists* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2002), 2.

¹⁸⁴ For example, see Delroy Constantine-Simms, ed., *The Greatest Taboo: Homosexuality in Black Communities* (Los Angeles: Alyson Books, 2001). Also, homophobic sentiments are prevalent in the lyrics of hip hop and reggae.

and her apprenticeship was with all-female bands, she preferred performing with male musicians. In addition, as mentioned earlier, most contemporary female saxophonists do not know these women. For these reasons, the contributions of these female saxophonists did not affect the masculinist discourse of jazz. In turn, female jazz saxophonists tend to perform masculinity in their musical performance, which will be discussed in following chapters.

While this chapter has focused on how these female saxophonists are written and talked about in order to provide the backdrop of gender performativity among female jazz saxophonists, these three women also embodied a gender performance. As some of my interviewees commented, both Burnside and Barton demonstrated strong musicianship that was often considered to be “masculine.” While Redd presented black womanhood when she sang the blues, she played the saxophone “like a man.” In other words, some people perceived that they performed gender outside the norms of women. In addition, when talking about her experiences of encountering machismo, she said, “You have to get kind of—you don’t have to particularly be masculine but you have to be forceful. You have to be aggressive and say hey, I want to be heard too, you know?”¹⁸⁵ Though it might not have been masculine, Redd had to perform the saxophone in a certain way to get her music heard. These three accomplished female saxophonists’ “masculine” performances have been passed on to the next generations.

¹⁸⁵ Monk Rowe, “Vi Redd.” (Hamilton College Jazz Archive, 1999).

3.0 CARESS THE NOTES OR GET UP AND BURN: GENDERING MUSICAL SOUND IN JAZZ

As discussed in the previous chapter, instrumental jazz has preserved a “masculinist” discourse based on heterosexuality despite the presence of female instrumentalists. In the case studies of the female saxophonists, talented female jazz saxophonists were perceived as “masculine”—they played like men—whether they were considered to be homosexual or heterosexual. Now, what was masculine about their performance? While some of my interviewees insisted that they do not perceive elements in jazz in terms of femininity or masculinity, others mentioned that they are conscious of a range of expressions that are associated with masculinity and femininity in music. This chapter will explore what elements of music have become to signify femininity and masculinity in jazz. As mentioned earlier, masculinity and femininity are not essential, universal, or ahistorical. While this work draws on Judith Butler’s notion of gender as performative, Joan Scott’s idea of gender as an analytic category is highly relevant to Butler and useful here. Scott asserts that gender “provides a way to decode meaning and to understand the complex connections among various forms of human interaction”¹⁸⁶ as well as signifies relationships of power.¹⁸⁷ Further, Scott suggests that the categories of man and woman are empty and overflowing because “they have no ultimate,

¹⁸⁶ Joan Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *The American Historical Review* 91/5 (1986), 1070.

¹⁸⁷ Scott (1986), 1072-1073.

transcendent meaning” and “contain within them alternative, denied, or suppressed definitions.”¹⁸⁸ Therefore, “gendering” does not only mean that things are dominated by men/women but also signifies the power relationship between things that are associated with masculinity and femininity. In the examples of historical facts, Scott suggests the association of “domination, strength, central authority, and ruling power” with masculinity, and of “enemies, outsiders, subversives, weakness” with femininity. This power relationship, as Scott asserts, is embedded in many areas in society, and I suggest that music is not an exception.

Utilizing Scott’s notion of gender as an analytic category and building on the work of Robert Walser, David Ake, Ingrid Monson, Krin Gabbard, and others, this chapter first attempts to “gender” various jazz and saxophone styles in chronological order, from New Orleans jazz in the 1910s to Neo Classicism in the 1980s. Subsequently, I will examine how various elements in jazz saxophone performances can be typically considered masculine through examining interview results. My aim here is to demonstrate that meanings of femininity and masculinity are not universal or timeless.¹⁸⁹ Butler asserts, “Gender is the mechanism by which notions of masculine and feminine are produced and naturalized, but gender might very well be the apparatus by which such terms are deconstructed and denaturalized.”¹⁹⁰ In this sense, as Butler claims, gender is a norm, which, unlike a stereotype, is subject to change. This chapter will show that musical elements in jazz are part of gender norms.

¹⁸⁸ Scott (1986), 1074.

¹⁸⁹ This point is articulated very well in relation to music by Susan McClary. See Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, & Sexuality*. (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2002 [1991]).

¹⁹⁰ Butler (2004), 42.

3.1 JAZZ AS A “MASCULINE” MUSICAL GENRE

New Orleans/ Dixieland style jazz that emerged around 1910 featured a march-like 2/2 beat created by drums, tuba, banjo, and piano, and collective improvisation of trumpet, clarinet, and trombone. Though the first jazz recording in 1917 was made by the Original Dixieland Jass Band, which consisted of seven white men, early practitioners of this style were predominantly black and Creole musicians in New Orleans. In many cases, the trumpet took a main melody and the clarinet and the trombone provided counter melodies. Though the saxophone (e.g. soprano saxophonist Sidney Bechet) was sometimes included in the ensemble, the sound of clarinet is more strongly associated with this style than the saxophone. Melodies were relatively simple, smooth, and mainly consisted of notes from diatonic scales. Whereas the earlier style had few solo improvisations, the later style included individual improvisations though not too long or virtuosic. While there are not overly “masculine” elements in the music except that most practitioners of this music were male, the ideal trumpet sound at the time, represented by Buddy Bolden and Louis Armstrong, was big, robust, and “phallic” as Krin Gabbard claims. He states, “On the most obvious level, the phallicism of the jazz trumpet resides in pitch, speed of execution, and emotional intensity, all of which Armstrong greatly expanded in the 1920s.”¹⁹¹ In addition, jazz was developed where drinking and prostitution took place. For example, it is well known that Jelly Morton provided music at the brothel when he was a teenager. Though most of

¹⁹¹ Krin Gabbard, 108.

the historical documentation never discussed female jazz musicians, some female musicians existed in the New Orleans jazz scene.¹⁹²

As the center of jazz was shifted from New Orleans to Chicago, then to New York City in the 1920s, the style of jazz was transformed. The ensemble became larger and required written arrangements. Coupled with the dance craze of the time, big band dance music of the swing era (ca. 1925-1940) was extremely popular and commercially successful all over the country and Europe. The saxophone section, usually consisting of three to five saxophones, was an integral part of the ensemble, adding harmony of the mid register with violin-like sound.¹⁹³ Saxophonists sometimes doubled the flute and clarinet. In the case of Benny Goodman's and Artie Shaw's orchestra, the clarinet was added to the band as a main solo instrument. Although the clarinet was one of the star instruments up to the swing era, it lost its popularity in jazz bands in part because the clarinet does not have the volume and edge required in more "masculine" style of jazz after the swing period. The music in the swing style was mainly for dancing. Each tune is short and heavily arranged with a minimum room for improvisational solos. Melodies are singable and memorable for the general audience. While African American bands, such as Count Basie, Fletcher Henderson, and Duke Ellington's bands, contributed greatly to the formation of the swing style, most commercially successful bands were white bands such as those of Benny Goodman, Tommy & Jimmy Dorsey, Glen Miller.

Tracy McMullen, in her article on a Glenn Miller re-creation band, suggests that whiteness in the swing era was associated with " 'cultured' (read: feminized)" because music of

¹⁹² See Dahl (1977), Handy (1981), Placksin (1982), and Sherrie Tucker, "Women in African American Music: Jazz." In *African American Music: An Introduction*. Mellonee V. Burnim and Portia K. Maultsby, eds. (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), 528-542.

¹⁹³ Jazz saxophonists up to the Swing period often could double the violin, which may be related to a violin-like sound of the earlier jazz saxophonists.

white bands such as the Paul Whiteman orchestra was considered as “feminized version of jazz—‘cultured,’ commercial, and conspicuously white.”¹⁹⁴ In his discussion of the Onyx Club in the early 1930s, Patrick Burke illustrates how commercially successful white swing musicians at the Onyx who “played during the day formulaic stock arrangements of popular melodies in studio groups”¹⁹⁵ musically and personally emulated African American musicians, which paradoxically contributed to construct their white masculine identity. Burke contrasts black masculinity that was linked to technical virtuosity, spontaneity, authentic personal expression, purest music-making, and freedom with white masculinity that is associated with commercialism, formulaic arrangements, and tedious and restricted studio work. As these examples suggest, masculinity and femininity in the context of performing jazz in the swing period was intersected by blackness and whiteness. Yet, I am not suggesting that all the black and white bands in this era signified the same masculinity and femininity. For example, while the music of Duke Ellington’s orchestra often performed meticulous and refined arrangements, the Count Basie Orchestra used roughly assembled head arrangements and featured hard-swinging feels. Therefore, they demonstrated different types of masculinity: the former may be considered to be less masculine or feminine and the latter to be more masculine.

One of a few saxophonists who are considered to be less masculine or even feminine among my interviewees is Johnny Hodges (1903-1970). He became prominent while working with the Duke Ellington Orchestra as a lead alto and a soloist. His unique tone and performance style are characterized by a fast and wide vibrato, highly expressive bending, sweeping and

¹⁹⁴ Tracy McMullen, “Identity for Sale: Glenn Miller, Wynton Marsalis, and Cultural Replay in Music.” In *Big Ears: Listening for Gender in Jazz Studies*. Nichole Rustin and Sherrie Tucker eds. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 132-133.

¹⁹⁵ Patrick Burke, “Oasis of Swing: The Onyx Club, Jazz and White Masculinity in the Early 1930s,” *American Music* 24/3 (2006), 327

sliding notes, and song-like melodies. Don Heckman states, “The most influential prewar alto saxophone sound was initiated by Johnny Hodges with a style that was rich with elegant, sometimes florid lines, filled with bent notes and glissandos, expressed with a strikingly lush, vocalized sound.”¹⁹⁶ Many perceive these traits as beautiful, pretty, sensitive, delicate, sexy and feminine. Hodges’s musical characteristics are closely related to the style of the music in the swing era. While his style is greatly admired among saxophonists and emulated specifically in ballad playing and certainly influenced a number of saxophonists, it is not a major part of saxophone styles after bebop perhaps because styles after bebop call for more aggressive and eloquent approaches with a harder sound. Similarly on the tenor saxophone, Lester Young is often referred to as less masculine. Virginia Mayhew, contrasting Young with Coleman Hawkins,¹⁹⁷ described Young’s style as “lighter and more sensitive.”¹⁹⁸ Young’s sound was succeeded by tenor players in the cool period.

Bebop grew out of after-hour jam sessions of musicians who became tired of repeatedly playing dance music charts without enough room for individual expression. Whereas swing dance music provided musicians with limited opportunities for solos, the bebop style featured extensive solos. As opposed to big bands in the swing period, most bebop bands consisted of three to five people. The music typically followed a format: a theme, improvisation of each performer with or without trading, and a closing theme. Bebop’s musical characteristics are represented by Charlie Parker’s saxophone style—fast tempo (heard in the songs such as “Donna Lee,” and “Thriving Up a Riff”), bright and edgy sound, angular melody lines with wide leaps, irregular length of melodies, fast changing chord progressions enriched by substitute chords,

¹⁹⁶ Don Heckman, “The Saxophone in Jazz.” In *The Oxford Companion to Jazz*. Bill Kirchner, ed. (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, 2000), 601.

¹⁹⁷ The styles of Coleman Hawkins and Lester Young are often discussed as contrasting.

¹⁹⁸ Virginia Mayhew, personal communication with author

long solos, and an intense feeling. In his article on Ornette Coleman and the New York jazz scene in the late 1950s, David Ake explains how bebop established “masculine” musical style. He suggests that bebop’s physical strength (faster, louder, longer, tougher) and complexity (intricate lines, dense harmonic structure) are closely tied to the genre’s masculine image.¹⁹⁹ Similarly, Ingrid Monson mentions, “...the ‘subcultural’ image of bebop was nourished by a conflation of the music with a style of black masculinity that held, and continues to hold, great appeal for white audiences and musicians.”²⁰⁰ She considers it problematic that white musicians draw on the images of black musicians in creating “hipness” and that whites tended to romanticize blackness as drunk, drug-addicted, hyper-sexual man with peculiar fashion and demeanor. In addition, Monson claims that musical innovations black musicians made in bebop also symbolized their racial achievement.²⁰¹ Parker’s saxophone style was emulated by most saxophonists at the time. Those included Sonny Stitt, Lou Donaldson, Dexter Gordon, and Gene Ammons.

Although, as Ake suggests, notions of masculinity “were challenged and refigured,”²⁰² physical strength has been crucial part of mainstream/straight-ahead jazz to this day. Since the intricacy of melody lines has been further progressed, and harmonic structure has been developed in many different directions after bebop, melodies and harmonies characteristic to bebop can be considered conservative, old-fashioned, easy, and even not advanced enough in the present time. Even in the 1960s, Stanly Cowell noticed that younger musicians considered Vi Redd’s bebop playing too old for the time. Of course, to be able to play in the bebop style was

¹⁹⁹ Ake, 30.

²⁰⁰ Ingrid Monson, “The Problem with White Hipness: Race, Gender, and Cultural Conceptions in Jazz Historical Discourse” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 48/3 (1995),402

²⁰¹ Monson (1995): 409-412

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 25.

associated with proficiency and masculinity at some point. As seen in Chapter 2, both Frank Wess and Lou Donaldson mentioned that Vi Burnside and Willene Barton played in swing style, not bebop. They both seemed to claim that these women were good players but not as advanced as other male players at the time.

After bebop, the newly emerged style was cool jazz, represented by Miles Davis (1926-1991)'s 1949 recording, *The Birth of Cool*. The music on this recording has characteristics rather contrasting to bebop. While bebop was mostly played by small ensembles (trio, quartet, or quintet), this recording was done by a nonet, consisting of trumpet, trombone, French horn, tuba, alto saxophone, baritone saxophone, piano, bass, and drums. The ensemble has subdued, soft, and warm sound emphasizing a lower register due to the use of French horn, tuba and baritone saxophone in the ensemble. While bebop featured extensive solo improvisation, the songs on the recording have precise and elaborated arrangements and limited room for solo improvisations. Though the basic structure of chord progressions and the melody lines in the improvisation are based on bebop, the execution of the performance creates laid back and less intense feelings. Lee Konitz, alto saxophonist on this recording, is another one many of my interview subjects cited as "feminine" saxophonist. His sound is light, airy, dark, warm, and round. His improvisation with the ensemble presents a smooth and floating feeling instead of an edgy and hard-swinging one of Charlie Parker. These characteristics of cool jazz can be interpreted as less "masculine" or "feminine" comparing with bebop. The music of cool jazz is often associated with classical music, perhaps because it has a large portion of written parts, as well as with "white" because practitioners of cool jazz were predominantly, but not exclusively, white musicians.²⁰³ Therefore, "white" sound stereotypically signified less masculine, classically influenced and

²⁰³ Cool jazz became prominent among white musicians in California, and also was associated with studio work and film music that black musicians were not allowed to fully access.

intellectual music in the cool period, which in part resonates with white masculinity demonstrated in the swing era. Besides Konitz, such saxophonists as Stan Getz, Warne Marsh, and Paul Desmond had a similar style and were active during the cool period.

Hard bop emerged in the second half of the 1950s and its sound is symbolized by such bands as Art Blakey & the Jazz Messengers, Cannonball Adderley Quintet, and Clifford Brown-Max Roach Quintet. Their music was inspired by gospel, the blues, and rhythm & blues. Melody lines and harmonic progressions are based on bebop, but they can be simpler at times. Many songs in this period are made of simple riffs with the blues or blues-like changes. The music in the hard bop era can be described as earthy, soulful, bluesy, hot, and happy. In this period, a number of alto and tenor saxophonists became prominent: Sonny Criss, Jackie McLean, Phil Woods, John Coltrane, Sonny Rollins, Benny Golson, Johnny Griffin, Hank Mobley. Among them, John Coltrane's saxophone playing, throughout his transition of hard bop, modal, and free jazz styles, demonstrated incomparably powerful yet poignant sound, virtuosic technique ("sheets of sound"), harmonic innovation and complexity, extended solos, and outpouring sprits, which created his masculine and spiritual persona.

Relating to the hard bop style, a distinct saxophone style emerged: "Texas Tenor." The Texas Tenor style featured a big sound with a bluesy feeling, which was developed by African American players. Although some musicians of this style exclusively performed in R&B bands, others, such as Johnny Griffin, Eddie 'Lockjaw' Davis, and Illinois Jacquet, played in both jazz and R&B bands. In his discussion of R&B saxophone style, Doug Miller describes the saxophone sound preferred in this style as fat, earthy, dirty, coarse, funky and raunchy, which, he claims, is closely associated with African musical concepts. He further suggests that this saxophone style was extremely popular with young white working- and middle-class Americans

as the photograph of Big Jay McNeely shows.²⁰⁴ In this photo, McNeely, with sweat on his forehead, is blowing the saxophone hard, lying down on his back on the stage.²⁰⁵ Enthusiastic fans, predominantly young white males, appear to be screaming and frenzied over his performance. Though Miller never analyzes this saxophone style in terms of gender, his description as well as the photo suggests that the saxophone performances in this style are associated with black masculinity, which was adored and consumed by young whites.

In the end of 1950s, Miles Davis and his associates applied a modal approach to jazz improvisation. Though Davis experimented with this approach in his previous albums, his 1959 album *Kind of Blue* fully explored modal improvisation. Hazel Carby claims, “The ability of jazz music to subvert dominant understandings of masculinity came to full fruition in the album *Kind of Blue*, evident in the musical relationship among Davis, Coltrane, Adderley, Evans, Paul Chambers, and James Cobb.”²⁰⁶ Carby recognizes in the recording a democratic “male musical partnership” and “the very circularity and refusal to resolve the tension through any single climax in the album that poses a significant challenge to musical phallogocentricity.”²⁰⁷ While I am not certain if I agree with Carby’s reading of the recording, *Kind of Blue* certainly has quite different atmosphere from the music around the same period. All the song selections are in medium to medium-slow tempo and have no fire or speed that characterized bebop and hard bop. Especially, Davis’s understating solos that embrace spaces and silence set the tone of this recording. Krin Gabbard states that Davis “was fully capable of shooting spikes into the upper

²⁰⁴ Doug Miller, “The Moan within the Tone: African Retentions in Rhythm and Blues Saxophone Style in Afro-American Popular Music,” *Popular Music* 14/2 (1995), 59-63.

²⁰⁵ This photo taken by Bob Willoughby is in Miller’s article as well as in the book Paul Lindemeyer, *Celebrating the Saxophone* (New York: Hearst Books, 1996).

²⁰⁶ Hazel V. Carby, *Race Men* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 161.

²⁰⁷ Carby (1998), 161-164.

register and running changes at breakneck speed. He could play loud too, but the typical Miles Davis solo primarily communicated vulnerability, emotion, and thoughtfulness”²⁰⁸ and considers his style “post-phallic” style in comparison with Armstrong and Dizzy Gillespie’s phallic one. Here, vulnerability, emotion, and thoughtfulness are the opposite of what Armstrong and Gillespie musically represented: big, robust, and sometimes piercing sound in a higher range and eloquent improvisation.

Free jazz of the 1960s was signaled by the recording, *The Shape of Jazz to Come* by Ornette Coleman, which was released in late 1959. The ensemble on this album consisted of Coleman on a plastic alto saxophone, Don Cherry on a pocket trumpet, along with a bassist, and a drummer. This pianoless format provided harmonically less restricted foundation of improvisation. Free jazz generally negates the form, chord progressions, and a metric feel. Improvisation in the free jazz style largely depends on melodic and rhythmic motives and interaction among musicians. David Ake claims that Coleman’s ensemble represents alternative masculinity because of their improvisational style without chord changes and Cherry’s rather “weak” trumpet. He states, “As we have seen, the cutting contest was one of the most conspicuous (perhaps the most conspicuous) locations of masculine gendering in jazz performance. But all of this was undone—or at least thrown into question—by the Coleman group. It simply makes no sense to stage ‘cutting contests’ over a tune with a fluid form.... There are no chord changes to run, nothing here to ‘conquer.’”²⁰⁹ In addition, Ake suggests, Coleman’s

²⁰⁸ Krin Gabbard, *Hotter Than That: The Trumpet, Jazz and American Culture* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2008), 195

²⁰⁹ David Ake, “Re-Masculating jazz: Ornette Coleman, “Lonely Woman,” and the New York Jazz Scene in the Late 1950s,” *American Music* 16/1 (1998), 33.

offstage demeanor, shown especially in his “aversion to the sexual overtones in the jazz environment,” is contrasting with masculine and virile one of Miles Davis and Red Garland.²¹⁰

The 1970s saw the jazz rock/fusion style, which was initiated by Miles Davis’s recording, *Bitches Brew* released in 1970. Although this recording was critically acclaimed and established the genre of fusion, it did not impact so much on mainstream jazz. Some musicians, such as Sonny Rollins and Donald Byrd, made fusion records in the 70s. Because of the popularity of the fusion style, the 70s is usually considered as an unproductive period for straight-ahead jazz. From the 1970s on, multiple styles have co-existed in the jazz scene instead of one new style dominating the scene: Dixieland jazz musicians (such as The Preservation Hall Jazz Band), bebop/hard bop influenced musicians, avant-garde musicians, and fusion/smooth jazz musicians have produced music to this day. In the 1980s, however, young African American musicians such as Wynton (trumpet) and Branford (saxophones) Marsalis revived mainstream jazz and created a trend, which was called “Neo-Classicism.” Their music was based on bebop/hard bop but advanced in harmony and rhythms. Young, African American male musicians such as Marsalis brothers, Donald Harrison (as), Kenny Garrett (as), Terrence Blanchard (p), Kenny Kirkland (p), Charnett Moffett (b), and Jeff Watts (ds) were marketed as “Young Lions,” which were closely tied to the notion of black masculinity represented in Wynton Marsalis’s Grammy awarded album *Black Codes (From the Underground)* (1985). The title track of this recording, “Black Codes,” composed by Wynton Marsalis, demonstrates rhythmic complexity and the strong association with black music in New Orleans. The introduction starts with the groove based on 5/8, changes to 4/4 and has one measure of 2/4 before getting to the theme. According to Marsalis, the bass line of the theme is based on New Orleans funk tune called “Hey Pocky

²¹⁰ Ake (1998), 34-36.

Way,” and the melody of the theme alludes to New Orleans drummer James Black’s “Magnolia Triangle.”²¹¹ Although the theme is basically in 4/4, a 2/4 or 2/3 measure is occasionally inserted between phrases, which prevents a listener from getting into a comfortable groove. The irregular length of each phrase may be due to cueing instead of counting beats. This song, along with other selections from this recording, represents the similar attitude among black male musicians when bebop first emerged: they created the music that refuses to be easily understood and imitated.

Among these Young Lions, Kenny Garrett is one of the most influential alto saxophonists after Charlie Parker. Garrett introduced a completely new concept of alto saxophone sound, melody lines, and a delivery style, all of which are drastically different from those in bebop and hard bop. I would suggest that Charlie Parker masculinized alto saxophone sound of swing style represented by Johnny Hodges by removing fast and deep vibratos, expressive bending and sliding notes, and by playing intricate lines in fast tempos. Subsequently, Garrett further masculinized the style represented by Parker in his sound, improvisational style, and body movement/demeanor. Garrett’s sound is significantly darker than Parker’s and is closer to tenor saxophone. Mark Gilbert and Gary Kennedy state that Garrett’s vocabulary is based in the style of John Coltrane, McCoy Tyner, and Woody Shaw.²¹² These musicians developed melody lines utilizing pentatonic scales and fourth intervals. Garrett adopted their approaches instead of bebop-oriented chromatic melody lines that clearly outline chord progressions. Melodies consist of pentatonic scales and fourth intervals tend to obscure chord progressions. The tension is created by melodies remote to the chord progressions and is released by coming back to the

²¹¹ Wynton Marsalis, “Notes to ‘Black Codes.’” Wynton Marsalis Enterprises.

²¹² Mark Gilbert and Gary W. Kennedy. “Garrett, Kenny.” In *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, 2nd ed., edited by Barry Kernfeld. *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/J573800> (accessed February 1, 2010).

melodies that suggest the chords. The way Garrett holds his horn is peculiar: his head is slightly tilted to the left and his back is hunched. He swings his body back and forth moving his horn up and down, which is contrasting to Hodges and Parker's almost static performance. Garrett's sound, style, and demeanor are widely imitated by a number of younger alto saxophonists.

As we have seen, masculinity and femininity in jazz performances are manifested in different ways, and what each signifies has been changed over time. In other words, gender norms regarding sound and performance styles of jazz have been created and recreated through repeated jazz performances over the years.

3.2 JAZZ AS DISCOURSE

Analysis of the music itself of jazz and popular music in general has been underdeveloped partly because music, unlike language, has not traditionally been considered to be discursive.²¹³ In addition, popular music is often considered not to have complex form and structure that Western Art Music does. Musical analysis of jazz frequently follows the model of the analysis of Western art music, which attempts to prove that jazz improvisations do have forms and structures that give the work coherence and value. I do not intend to do this type of formalistic analysis in this study because it does not illuminate gendered meanings of musical aspects in jazz. Here, Robert Walser's discussion of musical meaning regarding heavy metal is useful. According to him, "musical meanings are contingent but never arbitrary."²¹⁴ Further, he

²¹³ I use discourse here to "refer to any socially produced way of thinking or communicating" as Robert Walser argues. Robert Walser, *Runing with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Hannover, NY: University Press of New England, 1993), 29.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

asserts, “There is never any essential correspondence between musical signs or processes and specific social meanings, yet such signs and processes would never circulate if they did not produce such meanings.”²¹⁵ Subsequently, he presents a series of discursive parameters in relation to the musical practices of heavy metal. Building on his idea, the remainder of this chapter will discuss musical elements and practices that constitute jazz performance with an emphasis on the saxophone and gender norms.

3.2.1 Swing

Swing feel is a forward moving rhythmic feel that is essential to many styles of jazz performances. Some may explain swing as the way eighth notes are played: the first eighth note is longer than the second, and the second is approximately the same as the third eighth note triplet. Others suggest that swing is produced by “playing just behind or just ahead of the beat before returning to on-beat performance and resolving the phrase’s rhythmic tension.”²¹⁶ It can be also explained in the way quarter notes are played: emphasis is placed on two and four in a swing-type pulse.²¹⁷ Swing is also the feeling that makes people tap their feet, bob their heads, and get up and dance. In addition, since jazz originates in African American culture, swing is often associated with African American experience. In his discussion of rhythmic feels in jazz, Paul Berliner mentions, “In addition to metaphorizing swing in terms of dance, many performers also emphasize the importance in their upbringing of black social dance, which sensitized them to the subtleties of rhythmic expression, training them to interpret time and to absorb varied

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Paul Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 198.

²¹⁷ Ingrid Monson, *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 27-28.

rhythms through corresponding dance steps and other patterns of physical motion.”²¹⁸ While this only explains the connection between swing and African American cultural practices, the essentialist association of swing with African Americans is prevalent.

For example, white Canadian trumpeter Ingrid Jensen recalled that her male friend once told her, “Oh, but you know what they say, ‘White people can’t swing.’” She answered to him, “Well, that’s your problem, because I’m a white woman and I *can* swing.” She chose jazz instead of classical music because she could not play eighth notes straight. Jensen emphasized her familiarity and immersion in jazz by saying, “Swing is in my blood”²¹⁹ In Jensen’s story, not being able to swing is associated with being white instead of being a woman.

Similarly, in my interviews with female saxophonists that are predominantly white Americans, swing or a rhythmic sense was talked about in the context of race instead of gender. When discussing their musical inferiority to their male counterparts, women often mentioned their lack of power (stamina), volume, and technique as well as melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic complexity instead of a swing feel. Among many elements in music, excellence in swing feel is frequently linked to African Americans instead of males.

3.2.2 The Saxophone

While the saxophone is not necessarily essential to any jazz performances, the sound of the saxophone is associated with jazz more than any other genre. As mentioned in the Introduction, while the saxophone is often placed in the middle of a masculine-feminine

²¹⁸ Berliner (1996), 152.

²¹⁹ Wayne Enstice and Janis Stockhouse, *Jazz Women: Conversations with Twenty-one Musicians* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004), 155-156.

continuum, the number of girls in middle school playing the saxophone is still limited, according to the Abeles study in 2009. In fact, some of my interviewees first played the flute or clarinet, more feminine in the continuum, before switching to the saxophone. Among the female jazz saxophonists I interviewed, their views on the instrument vary. Carol Sudhalter (1943-), the oldest female informant currently working in the New York area, demonstrated a very conservative idea, saying, “I didn’t even know that women could play saxophone.”²²⁰ She started to play the flute while she was at Smith College majoring in botany. She chose the flute because she thought it to “be something lightweight that a woman could play.”²²¹ Then she picked up the tenor saxophone when her father died in 1975 because she thought he would not have approved of her playing the saxophone. In fact, her father and brother played the saxophone. She could not declare that she wanted to play the saxophone until her father’s death. While her view is perhaps related to her generation, the youngest saxophonist I interviewed, Grace Kelly (1992-), mentioned that she was aware that saxophone is a masculine instrument because “there’re lots of guys who play it and I had hardly seen any female players.”²²² Though this idea did not stop Kelly from starting to play the saxophone, I find it interesting that Kelly, who is almost fifty years younger than Sudhalter, still saw the scarcity of female saxophonists. Karolina Strassmayer, in her late thirties, suggested that the saxophone is not a girls’ instrument by saying, “When I started to play the saxophone, at the age of 17 years old, part of the thrill to me was that it was something that women commonly wouldn’t do. I was kind of attracted to the saxophone because it was something unusual. You know at that age, as a teenager, you wanna rebel, and

²²⁰ Carol Sudhalter, personal communication with author, 8/10/2009.

²²¹ W. Royal Stokes, *Growing Up with Jazz: Twenty-four Musicians Talk about Their Lives and Careers* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 28.

²²² Grace Kelly, personal communication with author, 10/26/2009.

wanna do what's a little bit unusual.”²²³ While recognizing the saxophone as a male or masculine instrument had prevented Sudhalter from playing it first, it encouraged Strassmeyer to play it. Here, the instrument choice can be part of gender norms that regulate and normalize femininity and masculinity. While Sudhalter first performed her gender within a norm, she later moved outside. Of course the norm can be different depending on the time and place. Sudhalter made her decision to play the flute during the early 1960s in the US while Strassmeyer spent her teenage years in Switzerland during the 1980s. These women who performed gender outside the norm are actually contributing to the process of changing and deconstructing this norm.

Most other interviewees did not feel that saxophone is a masculine instrument, and they described their motivation to play the instrument such as, “It was a cool instrument” and “I just loved the sound.” And some said that they had to switch from either the flute or the clarinet to the saxophone in order to join the jazz band. They all emphasized that they never thought that the saxophone was associated with men or masculinity. Interestingly, several interviewees shared the experience that they realized the saxophone’s masculine image when they encountered a chauvinistic attitude among their colleagues or when they were told by audience members, “I’ve never seen a girl play the saxophone.” This suggests that a gender norm regarding the instrument choice is so naturalized that it never occurred to these women until it was reminded by their colleagues or the audience members. It is also possible that these women had unconsciously denied to see the norm.

Several interviewees mentioned that middle school was one of the deciding points regarding what instrument one should play, at least in the United States. For example, Lily White mentioned, “In middle school, they started putting girls and boys into bands, they encouraged all

²²³ Karolina Strassmeyer, personal communication with author, 4/20/2000.

the girls to play clarinet and flute, boys were playing brass instruments, it was kind of like this unspoken thing. And I didn't wanna play clarinet or flute. And the guy said you can't play saxophone, you have to play clarinet. So I sang in a choir for three years." Because of the band director who did not allow her to play the saxophone, she once gave it up although she had started playing the saxophone when she was eleven. She did not resume playing it until she entered college. This "gendering" of musical instruments in middle school seems to vary according to the location, school, and instructor since some of my interviewees had an encouraging environment in terms of choosing the saxophone in middle or elementary school. As Abeles' most recent study suggests, however, middle school students' instrument choice has not been changed significantly. In other words, the gender norm regarding the instrument choice has not been dramatically changed since the 1970s.

Some interviewees have encountered sexism regarding the saxophone when they became older. Barbara Cifelli said, "When I got older, I played with fewer and fewer women. I don't think the saxophone is masculine, but when I was in undergraduate jazz ensemble...one guy said, 'you gotta have balls to play sax.' I was so shocked."²²⁴ Debra Kreisberg had a similar experience. "I never felt like the sax is masculine until I started to get around other guy musicians. I felt I didn't fit in here, you know, macho vibe."²²⁵ Jenny Hill, after dealing with men saying things such as "You can't get a career in this [performing jazz], it's not for you," quit Indiana University and went to Berklee College of Music in Boston, where she had slightly better experience. However, she remarks, "Still they had the same problem. 90% of students were men at that time [in the mid 1980s], and you showed up to play, and a director would say,

²²⁴ Barbara Cifelli, personal communication with author, 5/5/2000.

²²⁵ Debra Kreisberg, personal communication with author, 5/3/2000.

‘Are you here to play? Why are you here?’ You have your horn and everything, you know.”²²⁶

These women spent their college years during the 1980s when women in college jazz programs were rather rare. My interviewees in their 20s or younger who attended college in the past ten years did not encounter this type of overt sexism in college although they were/are still minority in the jazz program. As these examples indicate, the sexism they experienced is related to the saxophone as well as to the context of playing jazz. Most of those who do not think the saxophone is masculine actually feel that jazz is a masculine genre because of the obvious male domination in the jazz scene.

Compared to the trumpet and the trombone that are also typically seen in jazz ensembles, the saxophone seems to be more accessible for women, especially when they are young, because it is physically less demanding than other two. In his interview with Molly Murphy, Jimmy Heath answered to the question, “Why do you love saxophone?” by saying,

Well, the saxophone has a voice quality. If you’re playing a soprano it’s a feminine sound, if you’re playing the tenor it’s more masculine. ... The saxophone is a very communicating instrument, it has a string-like quality. You can play the saxophone like Ben Webster who plays the tenor like it’s a cello. It has a very lyrical possibility when you play. The brass instruments are kind of harsh although, when they put the mutes in, they get beautiful.²²⁷

He suggests that the sound of saxophone can express wide range of emotion. Even the more masculine tenor can be lyrical while the brass instruments tend to be harsh and more masculine unless using mutes. For these reasons, saxophone is gendered in a slightly different way—less masculine than the trumpet and the trombone. This is another reason for the saxophone to be a more accessible instrument for women. Further, as Heath suggests, tenor saxophone may be

²²⁶ Jenny Hill, personal communication with the author, 5/9/2000.

²²⁷ Interview by Molly Murphy for the NEA, January 13, 2007 Edited by Don Ball, NEA.
http://www.nea.gov/honors/jazz/jmCMS/master.php?id=2003_01&type=int, accessed 23 June 2009.

considered as more masculine than alto and soprano saxophones. Perhaps also because of its manageable size, more women choose to play the alto saxophone than tenor and baritone saxophones.²²⁸ In addition, Heath's statement suggests that there are different degrees of masculinity and femininity in saxophone performance depending on "how you play." This leads us to examining the delivery style of the saxophone.

3.2.3 How Should Jazz Saxophonists Sound?

Before discussing the delivery style and the sound of the saxophone, I would like to present the ideas my informants demonstrated regarding the style of jazz and popular music in general. Jimmy Heath mentioned to me, "You know, men messed it up. 'I can play longer and harder than you.' Look at today's music. How loud, and violent, aggressive! Oh my god, it's crazy."²²⁹ Heath suggests that music today is overly "loud, violent, and aggressive" because men have created and practiced it. Pianist George Colligan posted this statement on his Facebook wall in October 2009, "Eddie Condon said that Bix Beiderbecke's sweet dark trumpet tone sounded like 'A girl saying yes.' How much of today's music sounds like a girl saying, 'Get the hell away from me or I'm calling the cops'?"²³⁰ Although Colligan does not associate today's music with men, he also laments the music in the recent jazz scene does not express soft and

²²⁸ Heath mentioned that he noticed some female baritone saxophonists in high school and college jazz bands. He thought that they chose to play baritone saxophone because they want to prove that women can handle the biggest saxophone.

²²⁹ Jimmy Heath, personal communication with author, 8/15/2009.

²³⁰ Colligan quoted Condon's statement from his autobiographical book. Condon writes, "All my life I had been listening to music, particularly on the piano. But I had never heard anything remotely resembling what Beiderbecke played. I realized that music isn't all the same, that some people play so differently from others that it becomes an entirely new set of sounds. Finally Beiderbecke took out a silver cornet. He put it to his lips and blew a phrase. The sound came out like a girl saying yes. Eberhardt smiled at me. 'How about Panama?' he said. I was still shivering and licking my insides, tasting the last of the phrase. ... I hoped I would be stuck forever with Beiderbecke." Eddie Condon, *We Called It Music: A Generation of Jazz*. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1992), 84-85

delicate feelings that Condon associated with a girl's submissiveness. Both musicians observe the music today including jazz as loud and aggressive.

There are many types of jazz songs—from aggressive, fast, “burn-out” tunes to tender, delicate, slow ballads—and different feelings and emotions can be expressed in jazz performances. If we tentatively label these songs and emotions as feminine and masculine, feminine ones would include slow ballads that are delicate, lovely, beautiful, pretty, sexy, soft, tender, sweet; and masculine ones would include fast tunes that are strong, loud, aggressive, forceful, fierce, and hard-swinging. Among these types of emotions and feelings, masculine ones have been developed and emphasized in jazz (and perhaps popular music in general) over feminine ones, as Colligan and Heath suggested.

Carol Sudhalter was one of the few people who were not hesitant to discuss music in terms of femininity and masculinity. Sudhalter started to play baritone saxophone besides flute and tenor in the early 1980s, and she told W. Royal Stokes, “My feeling about the bari was that it expressed my female energy, where the tenor expressed my male energy.”²³¹ When I asked her to elaborate this statement, she said, “I feel that my female part is more on a baritone, and my male part is tenor. It's hard to explain...when I play the tenor I feel more like I'm a guy. But I think another person might think different way.”²³² Her association of playing tenor saxophone with being a man may be associated with her strong consciousness of the saxophone as a masculine instrument.

Some interviewees shared their thoughts that they had to play in a certain way in order to be accepted as a qualified jazz saxophonist among other musicians. Sharel Cassity remarked, “I think, to get respect on the bandstand, you have to show that you can play all tempos, any keys,

²³¹ Stokes, 31.

²³² Sudhalter (2009).

make all the changes.”²³³ Tia Fuller mentioned, “At one point, in my early 20s, I felt that I had to play loud all the time...but it wasn’t musical. Another thing, even now sometimes, I get intimidated when I play with someone playing a lot of notes...”²³⁴ Laura Dreyer also stated, “There was a long period of time, where I felt like, because I was a woman, I had to prove that I could play fast. But at some point, where I thought, you know what, I wanna play music, I can prove that I can play fast now, I just wanna play music. And I felt like that was a big turning point for me because I was like OK now I feel like I wanna express myself.”²³⁵ Further, Dreyer continued, as other women also suggested, “But I think that goes for any musicians, young musicians at certain level.” Then she added, “But being a woman, I think I felt more of a pressure.”²³⁶ Karolina Strassmeyer once said, “I do feel that sometimes we are being pushed, you know, we have to play aggressively, you have to show that you can play loud, strong, fast... lot of the times, there is not much room for expressing your tender loving feelings.”²³⁷ These statements demonstrate that jazz calls for certain types of musical expression (loud, fast, long, and eloquent)—the ones that are established in the bebop period—especially in situations such as jam sessions where one has to demonstrate that “s/he can play.” Though this “proving oneself” seems to obsess both men and women in the early stage of their career, women feel more pressure to prove that they can play strong because they tend to be assumed that they play like a girl. This idea derives from gender norms—loud, strong, fast playing is associated with masculinity.

²³³ Sharel Cassity, personal communication with author, 7/24/2008.

²³⁴ Tia Fuller, personal communication with author, 7/30/2008.

²³⁵ Laura Dreyer, personal communication with author, 7/22/2008.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Strassmeyer (2000).

Cassity also stated, “Women tend not to show their delicate side because it’s so stereotyped. Some people just hear you doing that and say, oh she’s weak or something.”²³⁸ She explained how her fellow alto saxophonist Jaleel Shaw sounded gentle and delicate in his ballad playing at the performance with the Roy Haynes band the night before the interview. Cassity said,

I would love to play like that, but someone would say, ‘Can you put a little more oomph behind it next time?’ ‘Can you try a little harder?’ I get that a lot from bandleaders. They always think I’m hesitant or afraid. A lot of times, I’d like to leave more space. I don’t like to dominate everything all the time. But they think that they need to push me to do that [play aggressively] because I’m a woman and I’m probably very timid. It’s like a funny thing. So when I show up on some gigs, even women bandleaders say, ‘I want more, I want more, come out the gate burning!’ I know I have to get up there and burn, play loud, and take over. It’s OK but in a perfect world, I can just show up and play like myself. I don’t think that it’s timid or bad to be feminine. I think that’s taken as a weakness.²³⁹

This statement suggests that there is an assumption that female saxophonists would *naturally* sound “feminine”—gentle, delicate, and weak. When men play delicately it is taken positively as his gentle side, as shown in one of the best selling jazz CDs, *The Gentle Side of John Coltrane*. However, if women play delicately or femininely, it tends to be negatively taken as being timid or weak. This suggests that there is an assumed connection between musical sound and a performer’s personality or identity. Moreover, Cassity’s statement demonstrates that she sometimes performs “masculinity” because of the expectation from bandleaders.

Strassmeyer recently reflected on the issue. Answering my question, “How do you want to sound?” she said,

The first years as a musician, I was just concerned of to prove myself, to play the way the guys would say, ‘Yeah, she can play,’ and to be accepted, to be respected, and when you play from that place, you always wanna prove that you can do it. And I became very

²³⁸ Cassity (2009).

²³⁹ Ibid.

dissatisfied with that because it's not fun. It's not fulfilling. When you play music and just thinking about 'Am I doing the right thing?' 'Do they accept me?' It's horrible.²⁴⁰

This statement confirms the importance of acceptance among other predominantly male musicians for musicians in their earlier stage. Further, she stated,

For me, it has been the issue how comfortable I am with soft side, with the lyrical and romantic side. I think, it depends on how comfortable you are with going to that place that is more vulnerable, it may not be as impressive to people at first. So the more I become comfortable with who I am, the more I can go to that place, the more I can write something just pretty or lyrical. That comfortable with more vulnerable approach to music is not about proving that you can do it, or just wanting to wow people.²⁴¹

Strassmeyer suggests that "feminine" approach to music is vulnerable because it would not impress people in the way masculine, virtuosic playing would do. "So I think, if I can make a general statement for women in jazz, we can be a lot more comfortable with the feminine side, we can expand a lot more in that direction. I think it would enrich the music, and it would enrich our personal lives, too."²⁴² She thinks that women, including herself, tend to be uncomfortable with the "feminine" music making. In jazz, and perhaps in many music genres, "masculine" approach to music has been favored over "feminine" one, and "masculine" side has been developed more than "feminine" one because it can be virtuosic, impressive, and crowd-pleasing.

On the other hand, Greg Osby (1960-), who has been active in the New York jazz scene since the mid 1980s and now teaches at the Berklee College of Music, has a somewhat different view. He claimed,

I think that women musicians have a better hand on their emotional sides. I think women are far more sophisticated and smarter than men. Women are not afraid to express

²⁴⁰ Strassmeyer (2009).

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid.

feelings men won't do because they don't want to be perceived as weak. They wanna cry but they don't cry. Women have this ability and it all comes out in music, it's better for art. You shouldn't hold back. A lot of great musicians I know sound like they don't have any emotions. I think there are a lot men can learn from women just to be complete."²⁴³

Osby observes that music has been developed by men in the way certain emotions—"feminine" ones—are masked. He also thinks that certain musical sound and expressions can be perceived as weak. Though he did not use the word "feminine," the feelings he mentioned are associated with feminine, hence, weak. I responded to him, "But some women feel that they're afraid of showing their soft and feminine side and tend to overcompensate." Osby said, "Yes, I find that in some women but mostly in men because men have bigger ego. Usually it's seen in women drummers, because drums are really physical. But saxophone, you can get away with it because there is no [singular] sound of the saxophone sound, you can be sweet, pretty, have edge, angular, rough, dirty, gritty."²⁴⁴ It is not so important whether men or women can express their feelings and emotions better in their performance here. More interestingly, Osby also thinks that jazz today lacks "feminine" side. Perhaps, both men and women are afraid to play "femininely" because they do not want to be considered "weak." While this weakness can be connected to musical weakness for both men and women, it can be read as effeminate, not manly enough especially for men. However, music performance might be one of the few places where men can reach this emotional realm without being afraid too much about being criticized as not masculine enough. Another point to note in Osby's statement is that he perceives the drums as more physical (hence "masculine") than the saxophone, which can express a wider range of feelings and emotions.

As we have seen, women tend to feel uncomfortable in performing music within gender norms because they are assumed to be timid and weak, which does not conform to the

²⁴³ Greg Osby, personal communication with author, 11/13/2009.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

masculinist discourse of jazz. On the other hand, men who perform within gender norms successfully satisfy the expectation and the masculinist discourse. In addition, some men can also perform music outside of their gender norms, which is often positively taken as sensitive and delicate. Although some men might be afraid of being criticized as effeminate, as Osby suggested, jazz saxophone performance can be one of very few spaces where men can perform their gender outside of the norms.

3.2.4 Improvisation

Improvisation is one of the elements that are essential to the jazz performance. As mentioned, while both cello and saxophone are located in the middle of feminine-masculine continuum in the Abeles study, more women play cello perhaps because of its association with orchestra. Why are there fewer female jazz instrumentalists? Several people mentioned that improvisation is something with which women tend to have problems. Tenor saxophonist Janelle Reichman stated,

In a band or orchestra, you practice your part and your instrument and you go in and you play your part in the greater context and you're not necessarily on the spot. But jazz demands that you just have to put yourself out there, you know, it's really scary at first. You're taking a solo and making it up and you could sound bad at first. I just don't think girls in general like taking risks like that. I don't know why, it's a strange thing. Young boys seem to be just... they wanna dive into things, thrown themselves in, and girls are more shy about it.²⁴⁵

Alto saxophonist Katja Endemann also mentioned, "When it comes to jazz, one big thing I notice with my students too is that...we have to take a big risk in a solo, women don't like it too much,

²⁴⁵ Janelle Reichman, personal communication with the author, 8/17/2008.

and they're worried about messing up, they wanna be neat and prepared, they're comfortable when they have a written out music."²⁴⁶ Both Reichman and Endemann suggest that women feel more comfortable in playing a written-out part, blending with other performers instead of taking a risk in spontaneously improvising a solo. Although they do not mention what causes the differences, they think that women and men have different attitudes toward improvising a solo.

This issue is also discussed in Kathleen McKeage's dissertation I mentioned in the Introduction. One of her research questions dealt with "differences in attitudes towards jazz across gender and jazz participation status."²⁴⁷ She divided the students into four groups: women who still played jazz, women who quit jazz, men who still played jazz, and men who quit jazz. Both men and women who continued to play jazz had more positive attitudes about jazz than men and women who had quit jazz. However, the answer to "I enjoy improvising solos" was exceptional: women who were still playing jazz had less positive feelings about improvisation than the men who quit playing.²⁴⁸ McKeage suggests that women's negative feelings about improvisation reflect women's reluctance to both solo and improvise.²⁴⁹ Erin Wehr-Flowers attributes differences between males and females regarding jazz to "social psychology" rather than ability. From empirical data, she demonstrates that females have less confidence, more anxiety, and less self-efficacy attitudes toward learning jazz improvisation and these differences are affected by socially constructed ideas of males and females.²⁵⁰

Alto saxophonist Tia Fuller notices that men and women have different attitudes in improvising, which, she thinks, derive from the way boys and girls are raised. She said,

²⁴⁶ Katja Endemann, personal communication with the author, 8/1/2008.

²⁴⁷ McKeage (2003), 99.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ McKeage (2003), 100.

²⁵⁰ Erin Wehr-Flowers, "Differences between Male and Female Students' Confidence, Anxiety, and Attitude toward Learning Jazz Improvisation." *Journal of Research in Music Education* 54/4, 345.

When we were young children, outside, you'd always see the little boys playing in the dirt, you'd always see them lighting stuff on fire, experimenting, and really just being extremely spontaneous. But usually we're in a house, playing with Barbies... being safer, unless we were tomboys. I really think that from that being ingrained in us subconsciously at an early age, that carries through our role as quote-unquote a woman or a lady. A lady is not supposed to set on fire, a lady is not supposed to be experimental, run up the tree, jump off, break a leg, or whatever. It's more accepted for a man. So in a middle school or elementary school, when all the instruments are presented, of course, we have gender specific instruments. Flute, violin, piano, those are all the female oriented instruments, and the saxophone, drums are for men. Then, in particular, dealing with jazz, you have this language that is extremely experimental. ... And a lot of times, women are not supposed to do that or women are turned away from that.²⁵¹

Here, Fuller uses the word “experimenting,” referring to the experimental and spontaneous aspects of jazz improvisation. She attributes different behaviors of men and women to society and culture in which we are raised. Fuller’s notion of “our role as a woman or a lady” strongly suggests prevalent idea of gender roles in society. Further, gender roles here can also function as Butler’s gender norms, which produce and regulate gender. Elements involved in improvising—being experimental, spontaneous, risky, “out there” alone—are part of gender norms that are associated with masculinity.

In addition, improvisational styles can signify masculinity and femininity as well. Lily White mentioned that male musicians she encountered tended to dismiss her and other women saying, “She’s good, but she’s not harmonically advanced.” It seemed as though she was somewhat insecure about her soulful improvisational style that does not employ advanced harmonic substitutions. This is related to the way Stanley Cowell described Vi Redd’s music in Chapter 2. He suggested that Redd stayed within her comfortable zone of blues and bebop styles instead of developing her musical languages that would fit the stylistic transitions in jazz during the 1960s. When talking about female energy and male energy about baritone and tenor

²⁵¹ Tia Fuller (2008).

saxophone, Carol Sudhalter said, “On a baritone I like to sound melodic, on tenor, I like to sound more horizontal, more bebop.” She relates baritone (femaleness or femininity) to linear/melodic and tenor (maleness or masculinity) to horizontal/bebop. Since “linear/melodic” is characteristic to the swing style improvisation, it can be said that Sudhalter associates swing with femininity and bebop with masculinity, which resonates with what each style signified to people who experienced the transition of the styles.

Trumpeter Ingrid Jensen’s statement is also relevant here. When talking about her experience at the Berklee College of Music, Jensen said, “There were no role models on trumpet. I was the first female jazz trumpeter, as far as I know. And there were only a handful of other women instrumentalists who could play pentatonic, altered, outness kind of things, let alone swing through some changes.”²⁵² According to Jensen, her phrasings that consist of pentatonic and altered scales and deviate chord progressions in contrast to bebop phrasings that stays within the progressions are fairly advanced and only a limited number of women could use this type of improvisational technique. Moreover, Sharel Cassity praised her fellow musician Tia Fuller, saying, “Tia does a few things that separate her from being a girl category, real aggressive thing, rhythmic thing, percussive thing, a lot of notes...certain things men do.”²⁵³ She associates Fuller’s rhythmically complex, percussive, and aggressive improvisation with being beyond a girl category. Further, in the experiment of audience reception of videotaped performances, saxophonist and educator James Alston associated an improvisational style based on patterns or formulas with women and a more aggressive and emotional delivery style and rhythmic flexibility with men. From these examples, it can be said that various elements regarding

²⁵² Wayne Enstice and Janis Stockhouse, *Jazzwomen: Conversations with Twenty-One Musicians* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 2004), 150.

²⁵³ Cassity (2009).

improvisational styles are associated with masculinity and femininity, and the same element can signify both femininity and masculinity in different contexts. In general, things that are risky and aggressive are associated with masculinity, which also change in the context and the time period. Therefore, improvisation and improvisational styles are also part of gender norms and the norms are contingent. While any women who improvise would perform their gender outside the norms of women, Tia Fuller may be further outside than Vi Redd.

3.2.5 Jam Sessions—Cutting Contests

While jazz performance has been widely taught at schools in recent years, the jam session is still an important place for younger musicians to receive hands-on instructions from more experienced musicians. Jam sessions can be a particularly male-dominated space. In my experience as a professional jazz saxophonist in New York City from the late 1990s and the early 2000s, women, except for singers, were always minority at the jam sessions. The reasons for this can be various: most jam sessions take place late night at places where alcohol is served; clubs and bars hosting jam sessions may be located in unsafe neighborhoods. In addition, conventions surrounding jam sessions can exclude women from participating in them. Jam sessions emerged as an essential place to nurture the style of bebop in the end of the swing era. David Ake observes that bebop was developed as virtuosic music, and its “performance norms gave rise to an increasingly competition-based jazz community.”²⁵⁴ He suggests that cutting contests—unofficial battles on stage, namely, jam sessions—are one of many manifestations of competition

²⁵⁴ Ake (1998), 29.

in the jazz community. “The winner of the contest... receives all the honor and glory befitting jazz royalty...and more important, the chance for the better gig the next night.”²⁵⁵ Musicians at the jam sessions have to show their ability when they take a solo because they may be hired by somebody who likes their playing. Therefore they tend to get very aggressive.

Usually, a host band would play a set and the stage will be opened up for people to sit in. There are typically two ways for a session to be organized in recent years. One way is that musicians write down their names and instruments on a sign up sheet. Subsequently, a host will call up musicians to organize a band to play. This is a more democratic and organized way of leading a jam session. While a good session host would make sure everyone at the session can get to play before the session ends I have seen the case where some people could not get to play because of a bad organization or time constraint. The jam session can be run in another way in which a host leaves the stage open to anybody who wants to sit in. In this situation, who gets to play depends on many different factors. In many cases, musicians who personally know the host are more likely to be invited to sit in because he would call them up on stage by their names.²⁵⁶ Sometimes, musicians would form a line to roughly indicate the order of sitting in. However, some people ignore the line. Technically, whoever jumps in and play gets to play as much as s/he wants.

Regarding jam sessions, many of my interviewees had negative thoughts and experiences. Virginia Mayhew mentioned, “Most of the time, music at the jam sessions is not music to me. It’s about who can play the most notes the fastest.”²⁵⁷ Jenny Hill also stated, “I don’t consider the jam sessions the most musical situation. They’re just trying to be the best,

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ I intentionally wrote “his” since I have never encountered a female jam session host in New York City between 1997 and 2005. However, Virginia Mayhew and Claire Daly mentioned that they have hosted jam sessions.

²⁵⁷ Virginia Mayhew, personal communication with author, 5/8/2000.

fastest, loudest person.”²⁵⁸ Katja Endemann, however, said, “Jam sessions are very stressful. But sometimes there is a really good session, it depends.”²⁵⁹

Tia Fuller said,

I remember when I first moved out here [New York] and I was checking out the jam sessions, and I remember seeing how the men just would push you to the side, and once I experienced that a couple of times, I was like, hold up, I’m here and I’m playing just like you’re playing. So it’s almost like you have to have that dominant nature, that aggressive nature inside of you. You have to tap into that because I didn’t really have that before I moved out here from Colorado. Nothing else New York has taught me to tap into the other side of what a lot of people call being a ‘B’ or, you know, being more aggressive, so people can take you seriously. You have to have that edge.²⁶⁰

Fuller emphasized that musicians at the jam session have to be aggressive in order to be heard. Since musicians at the jam session are very competitive, if one does not strongly demonstrate his/her presence and intention to participate, s/he would be pushed aside. Especially, as Fuller mentioned, women tend to be considered timid and less aggressive and often dismissed. Strassmeyer mentioned, “To a certain degree, it is also a personality, but I do think being a woman, it’s just the way we are raised like that, as a woman, you are not aggressive, you wait until someone say, it’s your turn, would you like to play now? We like that. But if you wait, you are not gonna get to play. So yes, you do have to be aggressive sometime.”²⁶¹ Strassmeyer’s statement suggests the connection between the way women are raised and their behavior as a musician. Here, aggressiveness signifies masculinity, and women are not supposed to be aggressive within gender norms.

Cassity’s experience at the jam session is a typical one:

²⁵⁸ Hill (2000).

²⁵⁹ Endemann (2008).

²⁶⁰ Fuller (2008).

²⁶¹ Strassmeyer (2000).

There is this jam session I go to on Thursdays. The bandleader would say he doesn't want too many people to play on one song. People get excited and they cut in front of you. Already three horn players played. So when one person cut in front of me I put my horn down. The bandleader would say, 'Where were you, you gotta go play' 'But so many people already played and it's getting long.' 'So what? You gotta stop being timid! You gotta take charge. You can play, you can be aggressive. You're good enough to do it.' It's not about that. It's not musical.²⁶²

Cassity's point is that if a man acted the way she did, the bandleader would not think that he was intimidated and that musicians at jam sessions typically do not try to make their performances musical. Many of my interviewees, both men and women, agreed on the latter point. Jimmy Heath stated, "Jam sessions are almost like a sports event. Even Lester Young didn't like the idea of a battle, but audiences liked it."²⁶³ Surely, competitions entertain audiences. As seen in the Chapter 2, black newspapers often excitedly reported the battles at the jam session. And some may think that competitions and rivalry would inspire and motivate musicians and consequently advance music. Tenor saxophonist Anat Cohen mentioned, "I think competition is great. That's why I live in New York."²⁶⁴ Music is certainly not about competition. However, cutting contests have been an essential part in the development of jazz styles. The competitiveness as well as aggressiveness also signifies masculinity, and it may not produce the most musical performance. As Cassity's case suggests, even if a woman stays within the norm for purely musical reason, it can be taken as weakness. Therefore, women have to perform masculinity at the jam session.

²⁶² Cassity (2009).

²⁶³ Jimmy Heath (2000).

²⁶⁴ Anat Cohen, personal communication with author, 8/12/2008.

3.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter has shown that jazz has developed as a “masculine” musical genre. In addition, I discussed that various elements of jazz saxophone performance can signify masculinity and femininity. However, as demonstrated in the first section, the meaning of masculinity and femininity in jazz varies depending on the time period and other factors.

The trumpet was a star instrument in the New Orleans style and its big and robust sound of Buddy Bolden and Louis Armstrong represented masculinity at the time. Subsequently, commercially successful white musicians of the swing era enacted cultured and feminized version of masculinity. In the bebop period, the most prevailing version of masculinity and its musical embodiment relating to physical strength and complexity. Intellectual, smooth sounding cool jazz influenced by classical music can be considered less masculine. Hard swinging, blues-oriented music of hard bop regained masculinity of the bebop period. The association of masculinity with blackness was further developed in the music of hard bop. Miles Davis’s modal approach to improvisation and his minimalistic trumpet style presented another version of masculinity—the one that is not afraid of showing vulnerability. Unrestricted by chord progressions, form, or metric rhythm, Ornette Coleman’s saxophone style and his off-stage demeanor created different masculinity in the idiom of free jazz, which “worked to downplay the phallogocentric aspects of jazz music, destabilizing positions of masculinity and prestige in the jazz community, particularly among black musicians.”²⁶⁵

As jazz styles experienced transition, so did saxophone styles. The sound of Charlie Parker, Lee Konitz (Paul Desmond, Stan Getz), Cannonball Adderley (John Coltrane), and

²⁶⁵ Ake (1998), 40.

Ornette Coleman represented the style of bebop, cool jazz, hard bop, and free jazz respectively. Although jazz saxophone styles have presented different types of masculinity, the most prevalent saxophone styles tend to conform to current constructions of masculinity in jazz discourse.

As discussed above, female saxophonists who perform jazz within gender norms are considered to be timid and weak. Therefore, they have to perform gender outside the norm in their music performance even when they want to perform within the norm. Of course, not all the female performers are consciously performing masculinity and femininity in their musical performance. In fact, some interviewees never felt the way I have discussed. For instance, answering my question, “Have you felt that you are expected to play in a certain way to be accepted as a jazz musician?” Anat Cohen asserted, “Yes, play good. But if you are asking if I was expected to be playing like a man, then, no. I didn’t feel like I have to. I always want to play just what the music asks for.”²⁶⁶ Cohen feels strongly that music is gender neutral, and she has never thought of gender when she performs music. I consider her attitude that musical sound never constitutes gender norms to be a kind of gender performance, the one that ignores gender norms.

While one of the purposes of this chapter is to demonstrate non-binary nature of masculinity-femininity by showing different types of masculinities, it might have inadvertently perpetuated this binary at the same time. This point is articulated by Butler: “The question of what it is to be outside the norm poses a paradox for thinking, for if the norm renders the social field intelligible and normalizes that field for us, then being outside the norm is in some sense being defined still in relation to it. To be not quite masculine or not quite feminine is still to be

²⁶⁶ Cohen (2008).

understood exclusively in terms of one's relationship to the 'quite masculine' and 'quite feminine.'"²⁶⁷

²⁶⁷ Butler (2004), 42.

4.0 “ARE YOU STRAIGHT OR GAY?”: INTERSECTION OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN JAZZ

As discussed in Chapter 2, talented, musically strong female saxophonists have historically tended to be associated with homosexuality. In addition, a number of contemporary female saxophonists shared stories of being assumed to be lesbians in my interviews. This chapter explores the connection between female jazz saxophonists and sexuality in relation to strong heterosexual gender norms in the jazz world. Why are female jazz instrumentalists assumed to be homosexual and male ones to be heterosexual? Why are lesbian instrumentalists more visible than gay male musicians in jazz? I argue that gender norms based on heterosexuality that have been persistent in jazz and broader culture have strongly affected people's perception of jazz musicians and their sexuality. I also suggest that homophobia in jazz is closely associated with the masculine-sexuality myth. First, I will examine how sexuality has been discussed in the jazz community with an emphasis on homophobia in jazz. Second, I will explain how heterosexual gender norms work in the perception of female saxophonists and speculations regarding lesbianism. Third, I will explore if there is a correlation between sexuality and music. Finally, I will suggest that heterosexist and sexist gender norms in jazz should change in order for female jazz instrumentalists to be visible and audible.

4.1 HOMOPHOBIA AND MASCULINE-SEXUALITY MYTH IN JAZZ

As briefly discussed in the Introduction, an assumption prevails in masculinist jazz discourse that gay males are almost nonexistent in jazz and that the gay population does not appreciate jazz.²⁶⁸ Further, homosexuality tends to be hidden in jazz writings except for the work that focuses on homosexual subjects such as Billy Strayhorn. The 2002 panel discussion held by the National Arts Journalism Program at Columbia University, however, shows growing interest among jazz journalists in the relationship between homosexuality and jazz. A panel titled “Destination Out” focused on “whether jazz is still a macho stronghold and what that means for a gay musician.”²⁶⁹ Four gay male jazz musicians on the panel—Andy Bey (singer/pianist), Gary Burton (vibraphonist), Fred Hersch (pianist), and Charlie Kohlhase (saxophonist)—, and moderator, jazz critic Francis Davis mainly explored homophobia in the jazz world. Gary Burton mentioned a letter titled “~~Faggots~~—Gays in Jazz” that was published on *JazzTimes*. Giovanni Petranicht, who wrote the letter, states, “1) Homosexuality is abnormal. 2) Jazz players who are gay can’t swing!”²⁷⁰ Although it is somehow surprising to see that *JazzTimes* published this openly homophobic letter, it illustrates the degree to which homophobia in the jazz world is present and tolerated. The panelists present some of the reasons and conditions for homophobia in the current jazz scene.

First, as Davis suggests, “there was a resounding lack of attention to it [homosexuality] in the jazz press.”²⁷¹ Davis implies that the jazz press purposely ignores the issue of homosexuality.

²⁶⁸ Sales (1984) and Gill (1995).

²⁶⁹ Francis Davis, “Destination out,” <http://www.najp.org/events/talkingjazz/transcript1.html>

²⁷⁰ Giovanni Petranicht, “~~Faggots~~—Gays in Jazz,” *JazzTimes* (April/2002), 19.

²⁷¹ Francis Davis, 3.

Burton claims, “Jazz people, interviewers, didn’t bring it up,”²⁷² and adds that it would be valid to ask him what it is like to be a gay jazz musician in the macho world of jazz. Later in the discussion, a jazz journalist in the audience claimed that he would not ask any question that seemed not to be relevant to the person’s music. One’s sexuality or private life (wife, husband, girlfriend, boyfriend, and so on) may not be directly connected to his/her music. Yet, jazz journalists would probably ask heterosexual musicians about their partners and children. Why not about their homosexual partners?

While Hersh’s and Burton’s experiences in coming out and being gay in the jazz community are relatively positive, Bey’s comment shows the negative experiences and his anger. Since Bey was the only African-American on the panel, Davis asked whether it is “tougher for a black musician to come out than it would be for a white.”²⁷³ Although Bey insists that it is more difficult for a black musician, he did not explain the definite reasons. He only expressed his resentment to the media that “pick[s] who they want to pick”²⁷⁴ to make him/her a star. He probably suggests that the white-controlled media contribute to create the homophobic environment as well as help produce trends. Why would it be more difficult for a black musician to come out?

It might be related to homophobia in black communities in general. As shown in rap and Jamaican dance-hall lyrics, for example, homophobic sentiments permeate black popular music. In his article, “My Gay Problem, Your Black Problem,” Earl Ofari Hutchinson reveals his own homophobic fears and attempts to explain the origin of these fears: “From cradle to grave, much of America drilled into Black men the thought that they are less than men. This made many

²⁷² Ibid., 3.

²⁷³ Davis, 13–14

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 14.

Black men believe and accept the gender propaganda that the only real men in American society were white men.”²⁷⁵ Because of such societal pressures, some African-American men question their masculinity that has been renounced in American society in the course of history, and subsequently are disturbed by the lack of masculinity in gay men, especially black gay men. He also suggests that a comprehensive survey on black attitudes toward gays conducted in 1995 found that “there was less antigay sentiment among the more educated, less religious, and more affluent blacks, but only if the gay male was white.”²⁷⁶ Antigay feeling among black communities is also reflected in the fact that black press hardly covers a number of national black gay conferences held since 1987. In short, Black mass media have contributed to strengthening homophobia in black community.

In the panel discussion above, Davis states, “early jazz provided an outlet for a kind of male assertiveness that African-American men were otherwise prohibited from expressing.”²⁷⁷ In other words, homophobia in African-American communities may in part derive from African-American men’s fear that their masculinity is subverted, which encourages them to locate a site in which their masculinity is alive, such as in the jazz world. Jeffrey Escoffier’s article provides different account on the early stage of jazz. He traces the changing relationship between jazz and homosexuals over the course of jazz history. According to Escoffier, “In the early twentieth century, African-American music and dance provided homosexual subcultures with expressive styles and social rituals.”²⁷⁸ Moreover, he points to jazz’s close association with steamy nightlife and the red light district in New Orleans, where African-Americans and homosexuals were

²⁷⁵ Earl Ofari Hutchinson, “My Gay Problem, Your Black Problem,” Delroy Constantine-Simms ed, *The Greatest Taboo: Homosexuality in Black Communities*(Los Angeles, New York: Alyson Books, 2000), 3

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 5.

²⁷⁷ Davis, 5

²⁷⁸ Jeffrey Escoffier, “Jazz.” www.glbtc.com/arts/jazz.html

greatly accepted. In his account, early jazz actually was a haven for homosexuals. However, Escoffier suggests that, as swing and big-band music became popular and mainstream in the 1930s, jazz lost its function as a subculture, and homosexuals represented a smaller proportion of jazz fans.

Another reason for antigay sentiment among black communities is from their religion. bell hooks suggests, “Clearly, religious beliefs and practices in many black communities promote and encourage homophobia. Many Christian black folks are taught in churches that it is a sin to be gay.”²⁷⁹ In addition to Christianity, other religions such as Islam are also strongly against homosexuality. Homophobia in African-American communities might affect black gay men’s difficulty in coming out. As we have seen, homophobia in jazz is a result of the masculine sexuality myth, and is also strengthened by homophobia in the black community in general, which in turn is greatly motivated by the subversion of African American men’s masculinity.

While homophobia might be more overt in the black community, it is also seen in American society at large. In his article, “Masculinity as Homophobia,” Michael Kimmel, one of the leading scholars of masculinities studies, suggests that American men are afraid of other men. He states, “Homophobia is a central organizing principle of our cultural definition of manhood. Homophobia is more than the irrational fear of gay men, more than the fear that we might be perceived as gay.... Homophobia is the fear that other men will unmask us, emasculate us, reveal to us and the world that we do not measure up, that we are not real men.”²⁸⁰ According to Kimmel, homophobia is a fundamental feeling men possess to protect their masculinity. In

²⁷⁹ bell hooks, “Homophobia in Black Communities,” Delroy Constantine-Simms ed, *The Greatest Taboo: Homosexuality in Black Communities*(Los Angeles, New York: Alyson Books, 2000), 69

²⁸⁰ Michael S. Kimmel, “Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity.” In *Theorizing Masculinities* (Thousand Oaks and London: Sage Publications, 1994) 131.

sum, homophobia is prevalent in American society in general though it is more visible in the areas where heterosexual masculinity is embraced.

4.2 WOMEN DON'T COME OUT

At the National Arts Journalism conference mentioned above, there was no female panelist. According to the organizer, although they invited female gay jazz musicians, no one was available or willing to participate in the panel. Davis proposed that, “It might be even tougher for women to come out, because they already have a lot to prove, anyway.”²⁸¹ This statement suggests that lesbian jazz musicians are suffering both from sexism and heterosexism in the male dominated jazz world. Although it might have been difficult to find gay female jazz musicians for this event, it seems that lesbian jazz musicians are more visible than male gay musicians. Sherrie Tucker’s article “When Subjects Don’t Come Out” questions how we can write about sexuality when interview subjects do not come out. While conducting her research on all-woman big bands during the 1940s, she encountered a number of women who suggested homosexuality among women yet never came out. I found particularly interesting that some women disclosed somebody else’s homosexuality and told Tucker not to talk or write about it. While she does not offer the solution for the question, her insight into the meaning of coming out is valuable. Drawing on Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s notion of the closet, Tucker suggests that coming out involves much more than in/out of the closet, that a gay person can be closeted in

²⁸¹ Davis., 1.

one situation and out in the other, and that some gay people may understand their sexuality in a different way.

My interview subject Lisa Parrott, an openly gay jazz saxophonist who is originally from Australia, did not have any problem in coming out. “I come from a much more open culture. Sydney has a big gay scene,”²⁸² Parrott says. She observes that American society in general is less tolerant toward homosexuality. It is reflected, for example, in immigration laws. Parrott is married to an American woman. If they decide to live in Australia, her partner has a legal right to live there. On the other hand, Parrott cannot obtain a green card although she is married to an American citizen. Parrott says, “I see gay people here in the United States are more closeted than gay people in Australia. None of my friends in Australia is closeted.”²⁸³ It is reasonable to think that gay people in the US tend to be more closeted. However, it does not explain why women have more difficulty than men to come out.

Especially in the jazz world, as we have seen, homophobia is based on straight men’s obsession with masculine sexuality. Therefore, it can be said that homophobia in jazz is targeted more towards gay men than towards gay women. If that is the case, “masculine” gay female musicians may be more acceptable than “effeminate” gay male musicians. As I mentioned earlier, while the number of female jazz musicians is much fewer than that of men, female gay jazz musicians are more visible than male gay jazz musicians. Yet, as reflected in my own difficulties with finding an interview subject, it is hard to determine if a person is willing to answer the interview questions even though I have information that the person is openly gay. Besides, how would I know that the information is correct? At one point while interviewing musicians for Chapter 2, I was delighted to “discover” that two tenor saxophonists were gay. I

²⁸² Lisa Parrott, personal communication, 12/13/2003.

²⁸³ Ibid.

realized, however, that the information my informants disclosed does not determine these musicians' sexuality. In addition, as Tucker's article mentioned above implies, identification of a person's sexuality is rather complex. For example, though Parrott, perhaps partly for the sake of convenience, identifies herself as a lesbian and is married to a woman, she mentioned that she might be bisexual to be precise because she has had male partners. She said, "But I prefer having emotional relationships with women." This shows that sexual desire does not necessarily determine a person's sexual identification and vice versa. Indeed, there is a wide range of a woman identified experience as Adrienne Rich claims and the wide variability of non-heterosexual desires as Judith Halberstam suggests.²⁸⁴

This rather open conversation with Parrott above was truly exceptional. I interviewed five other women whom others identify to different degrees as lesbians. Although I did not ask them questions specifically related to homosexuality, there were a plenty of moments either one of us could bring up issues of sexuality. Yet, it did not happen for different reasons in each case. One of them told me that she is not a lesbian, somehow out of the context in the early part of the interview. These women who are read as lesbians may be "performing" homosexuality in some situations and heterosexuality in the context of talking about jazz performance. Another interviewee mentioned her female partner in a very casual way a few times in our conversation, but when I asked her about her lesbian partner, she suddenly shut down completely. It was inadvertent for me to have used the term lesbian because she may not identify herself as a lesbian even though she lives with a female partner. It is also possible that she felt uncomfortable in talking about sexuality with me as a researcher.

²⁸⁴ See Adrienne Rich (1980) and Halberstam (2002)

4.3 FEMALE JAZZ SAXOPHONISTS—ARE YOU GAY?

“Some guitar player saw me play and he liked me, but he goes, ‘But I assumed you were gay.’” – Lily White²⁸⁵

“When I went to Julliard, I was one of three girls in the program. And the other two were very feminine. They all thought I was gay and they told me I just didn’t know it yet.”—Sharel Cassity²⁸⁶

“I was playing at this club... because I was playing so aggressive, this man came up to me, ‘Wow, you play really aggressive. Are you straight? Are you gay? Do you like women?’—Tia Fuller²⁸⁷

These are only a few examples of the similar stories the female saxophonists shared with me. Here, I will explore the association of female jazz instrumentalists with lesbians. This equation consists of three assumptions: Jazz is a masculine music genre; therefore, females who play jazz very well, especially on instruments normally associated with men, should be masculine; masculine females are gay. Although the first statement might sound over-generalized, this study thus far has demonstrated its validity to some extent. As discussed in Chapter 3, jazz instrumental performances are filled with stereotypically masculine elements and masculine approach to the genre has been emphasized and embraced among both musicians and audiences. In the dominant discourse of jazz history, legendary, innovative, notable jazz instrumentalists have been men. Therefore, jazz music tends to be associated with typical masculinity, manliness, or characteristics of men. Here, masculinity is used in the most conventional way. This masculinity, or “hegemonic masculinity,” is based on heterosexuality and patriarchy. According to R. W. Connell, “With growing recognition of the interplay between gender, race, and class it has become common to recognize multiple masculinities.”²⁸⁸ Further, he suggests that hegemonic masculinity is not a fixed character type but the one that occupies the

²⁸⁵Lily White (2008).

²⁸⁶Sharel Cassity (2008).

²⁸⁷Tia Fuller (2008).

²⁸⁸R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 76.

hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations.²⁸⁹ As mentioned in Chapter 3, though different types and versions of masculinities are present in jazz performances (some of them may be perceived as feminine or effeminate), one type of masculinity that some have tried to preserve and others have sought after is the one associated with romanticized notions of African American men, namely, black masculinity. This is why talented female saxophonists often receive the comment (meant to be a compliment), “You sound like an old [heterosexual] black man.”

The second statement, “females who play jazz very well, especially on instruments normally associated with men, should be masculine,” needs more explanation. It is perhaps fair to say that women who can play masculine music very well on a masculine instrument are masculine. Yet, how are they masculine? This is related to both their visual appearance and their saxophone sound. Visually, a woman playing the saxophone is not pretty or feminine in conventional ways. The shape of the saxophone can represent a phallic symbol as the trumpet does in a slightly different way,²⁹⁰ and a saxophonist has to put the mouthpiece in her mouth. In addition, in playing the saxophone, a performer’s cheeks and neck are swollen and veins come out. When improvising, a performer is engaging with a creative process and her face often contorts and her mouth frowns. Some of my interviewees mentioned that they hate to see the pictures or videos of themselves playing because they hardly look pretty. Laura Dreyer said, “When I see a picture of me playing, I wanna throw up. I know other female saxophone players feel that.”²⁹¹ Further, as discussed in Chapter 6 in detail, female jazz saxophonists tend not to dress too femininely because they want to be recognized as a musician first not as a woman. While they do not try to look like a man, they often choose to wear a pair of pants instead of a

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 76.

²⁹⁰ See Krin Gabbard’s “Signifyin(g) the Phallus: Mo’ Better Blues and Representations of the Jazz Trumpet,” *Representing Jazz* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995), 104–130.

²⁹¹ Dreyer (2008).

skirt/dress and do not wear too much make-up or jewelry, which completely contrasts with how female jazz singers are expected to dress on stage.

Aurally, their playing is often perceived as masculine. Most interviewees have received a comment, “I’ve never seen a woman playing sax *like that*.” This suggests that people have expectation of how a female saxophonist would sound. One specific comment Janelle Reichman received from an audience member explains it better: “We saw you come up there, you’re this skinny little timid looking woman, and we couldn’t believe that the sound came out.”²⁹² This comment clearly shows that Reichman’s masculine tenor saxophone sound and her conservative yet feminine look (or just her being a young white woman) did not match in this audience’s mind. Grace Kelly shared an episode that she once sent her recording to enter a saxophone competition, which was blindly reviewed. She was selected as one of the finalists and the judges were amazed and said, “Oh my god, we had no idea you’re the thirteen-year-old Asian saxophonist. We thought you were a forty year old black man.”²⁹³ As these examples demonstrate, we associate musical sound with certain type of body—we have assumptions at least about a performer’s sex, race, and age, and expect a certain type of attire depending on musical genres. When we hear a musically strong jazz saxophone performance, we tend to imagine a male performer, which evokes masculinity.

Now, can women be masculine? In her groundbreaking work, *Female Masculinity*, Judith Halberstam claims that existing scholarship has studied masculinities as being possessed by men. Halberstam suggests that female masculinity has its own cultural history and not simply a derivative of male masculinity and that studying female masculinity helps us to understand male

²⁹² Janelle Reichman (2008).

²⁹³ Grace Kelly (2009).

masculinities.²⁹⁴ In exploring and historicizing diverse forms of female masculinity, she concentrates on a variety of queer female masculinities because she believes that female masculinity becomes problematic and disturbs gender norms when it involves nonnormative sexuality. According to Halberstam, female masculinity becomes threatening and unacceptable when coupled with lesbian desire. In her discussion of the stone butch, a mode of female masculinity, she suggests that masculinity has historically played an important role in lesbianism.²⁹⁵ “Because masculinity has seemed to play an important and even a crucial role in some lesbian self-definition, we have a word for lesbian masculinity: butch.”²⁹⁶ Then quoting Gayle Rubin, Halberstam goes on to explain that butch is “the lesbian vernacular term for women who are more comfortable with masculine gender codes, styles, or identities than with feminine ones.”²⁹⁷ According to Rubin, some butches demonstrate their masculinity in clothing and hairstyle, and “others actually experience themselves as male.”²⁹⁸ These descriptions of lesbian masculinity significantly differ from masculinity “performed” by female jazz saxophonists. While they may sometimes wear mannish clothes, they do that for blending into other men on stage, not for wanting to feel like a man, in most cases.²⁹⁹ Masculinity of some butches is visually perceived, and in others’ case, masculinity is linked to their identity. In addition, masculinity here is related to sexual desire for women. Though there are some lesbian jazz saxophonists in this study, my discussion of masculinity does not necessarily involve lesbian

²⁹⁴ Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 77.

²⁹⁵ Halberstam, 119.

²⁹⁶ Halberstam, 119-120.

²⁹⁷ Gayle Rubin, quoted in Halberstam 120.

²⁹⁸ Halberstam, 120.

²⁹⁹ One exception is the case of saxophonist Carol Sudhalter. In the interview with W. Royal Stokes, she mentions, “My feeling about the bari was that it expressed my female energy, where the tenor expressed my male energy. Now I don’t know if anyone else could make sense of that but that’s always the way I felt about it.” W. Royal Stokes, *Growing Up With Jazz: Twenty-four Musicians Talk About Their Lives And Careers* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 31. When I asked her about this statement, she said, “I feel like a man when I play tenor.” Yet, her feeling may not be associated with sexual desire.

desire. As discussed in Chapter 3, female jazz saxophonists' masculine performance is produced aurally by musical sound and visually by the body that is sincerely and seriously engaged in music making. To Halberstam, masculine performance of female jazz saxophonists may not be as disturbing as that of butch lesbians in society at large. In my opinion, however, masculinity performed by female jazz saxophonists would threaten and disturb gender norms that have been persistent in the jazz world precisely because it does *not* involve lesbian desire.

The third statement, "masculine women are gay," derives from an assumed connection between gender and sexuality. As briefly discussed in Chapter 2, only masculine men and feminine women exist under the rigidly heterosexual matrix of gender that has been persistent in the jazz world. Therefore, those who are outside this matrix are "queer"/homosexual. In addition, this view is also related to men's anxiety that they are not sufficiently masculine. As discussed above, black heterosexual males may fear that their masculinity is subverted in American society because of the past. Moreover, men in general possess anxiety because of the fragility of hegemonic masculinity. Kimmel quotes sociologist Erving Goffman's statement,

In America, there is only 'one complete, unblushing male': a young, married, white, urban, northern heterosexual, Protestant father of college education, fully employed, of good complexion, weight and height, and a recent record in sports. Every American male tends to look out upon the world from this perspective.... Any male who fails to qualify in any one of these ways is likely to view himself... as unworthy, incomplete, and inferior,

and asserts that this is the definition of "hegemonic" masculinity.³⁰⁰ Connell also states, "Normative definitions of masculinity, as I have noted, face the problem that not many men actually meet the normative standards. This point applies to hegemonic masculinity. The number

³⁰⁰ Michael S. Kimmel, "Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity." In *Theorizing Masculinities* 125.

of men rigorously practicing the hegemonic pattern in its entirety may be quite small.”³⁰¹ Therefore, hegemonic masculinity throws the majority of straight men into a state of anxiety. As a result, straight men tend to become insecure about their own masculinity, desire to see the display of male masculinity in other heterosexual males, hate to see the lack of masculinity in gay males, and feel threatened by performed masculinity as demonstrated in the example of female jazz saxophonists. In other words, straight men’s fear of lacking masculinity promotes to create masculine sexuality myth and homophobia in jazz. Moreover, since insecure heterosexual men are intimidated by performed masculinity, they try to associate masculine heterosexual females with gayness and situate them outside of the matrix where only heterosexual men and women are present. Because of this, female jazz saxophonists tend to be invisible regardless of their presence in the jazz world.

4.4 IS JAZZ A SAFE HAVEN FOR LESBIAN INSTRUMENTALISTS?

While interviewing tenor saxophonist Janelle Reichman, member of all female big band Diva as well as its small unit Five Play, I mentioned, “I’m not interested in who is gay or not. I’m interested in why people associate a strong sax player with being gay.” Reichman responded to me saying, “But the thing is, this is what really interests me is that if you take all the female jazz musicians in the world and pull them together, you’re gonna have a higher percentage of lesbians than in just a general population. In the big band Diva, it’s probably at least a third or

³⁰¹ Connell, 79.

half lesbians.”³⁰² Similarly, alto saxophonist Erica von Kleist, former member of Diva said, “I would say fair percentage of women who are jazz musicians I know are gay.”³⁰³ Is it really the case that there is a larger ratio of lesbians in jazz than in a general population? If a third of Diva members is gay, does it automatically mean that the same ratio of female jazz instrumentalists is gay? I found it intriguing that these female jazz instrumentalists themselves assumed the connection between jazz and lesbianism. In fact, in both formal interviews and casual conversations with random musicians, both men and women, I have heard numerous stories and rumors about lesbian musicians in Diva. Some current or former members of Diva frequently complained that people asked them how many of the members are gay and if they have been hit on by lesbian members. These speculations are never made regarding all male big bands. This is not because there are more female gay jazz instrumentalists than male ones but because the former is more visible than the latter. More importantly, people hardly assume that male jazz instrumentalists are gay.

After complaining about how she was assumed to be gay because her roommates were gay and she did not dress femininely, Laura Dreyer said, “There are a lot of gay women that I feel they have an easier time because they don’t have to deal with that. And they can be friends with men.”³⁰⁴ She thinks that lesbian jazz musicians have advantages in that they do not have to be assumed as gay and that they do not have to experience “some elements of sexual tension”³⁰⁵ with male musicians. Though Dreyer considers being lesbian is an advantage in identification of sexual orientation, they may have different types of difficulties, such as being misread as heterosexual. The majority of female saxophonists I interviewed mentioned difficulties in

³⁰² Reichman (2008).

³⁰³ von Kleist (2008).

³⁰⁴ Dreyer (2008).

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

developing camaraderie with fellow male musicians and finding male mentors, both of which are crucial to be successful in the jazz scene. For instance, Sharel Cassity stated, “Oh one thing I noticed, a lot of the male musicians have the mentor. I had some teachers that are really good. But every mentor I took on ended up hitting on me, making some kind of move. So I never really got to have a good relationship with great musicians. That’s always been one thing missing that I wish I could still find. ... No one wants to help without getting benefit.”³⁰⁶ Alto saxophonist Matana Roberts also writes in her essay titled “Gender Issues in Jazz and Improvised Music Part 1,” “You really start to notice the differences when a few male musicians who use [sic] to be your mentors recognize your budding womanhood as a chance for them to use their influence to be sexual leeches. It’s at this point that you have to develop certain emergency bells in your psyche- watching carefully to make sure you are not vulnerable to those creepy guys out there that really don’t have your creative growth in their best interest.”³⁰⁷ These statements show that women have to experience some types of sexual harassment derived from male subordination of women based on heterosexuality. In addition, as Roberts implies, women’s age affects the relationship with male mentors because if she is a child, she is unlikely to be considered as male mentors’ sexual interest in most cases. This is shown in the case of Grace Kelly (1992-), who has had male mentors such as Lee Konitz, Phil Woods, Wynton Marsalis, and Frank Morgan since she started to play saxophone at ten. If age is one way to avoid heterosexual male subordination, can women’s homosexuality be another one as Dreyer assumed?

Kristy Norter and Virginia Mayhew, both identified as lesbians, proved it the opposite way. Norter told me her experience when she first moved to New York City: She went to a late night jam session at a jazz club for networking. After she played, a well-known young male

³⁰⁶ Cassity (2008)

³⁰⁷ Matana Roberts, “Gender Issues in Jazz and Improvised Music Part 1,” *Fat Ragged 4* (self published)

bassist approached her and said, “You sound great. Do you have a card? Do you wanna hang out and have some sessions?” Since she liked the idea of having sessions with him, they exchanged their cards. That night, she emailed the bass player hoping to arrange a jam session. He immediately responded saying, “I thought you’re cute. Do you wanna go on a date?” Norter was upset because the male bassist took advantage of her aspiration to make connections and be successful in the New York jazz scene. She said, “If he said, ‘I don’t really like your playing, but do you wanna go on a date?’ That would have been much better.”³⁰⁸ Clearly the male bassist used his power as a man and a successful jazz musician to get what he wanted.

Mayhew’s case was more appalling. She started to work with late Al Grey, legendary trombone player, in the early 1990s. When she got a gig at the old Birdland in the mid 1990s, she hired Grey. But right before the gig, he told Mayhew that if she does not sleep with him he would not do the gig. Mayhew unwillingly decided to hire somebody else, and the management of the club was extremely unhappy because they wanted her to play with somebody with a big name. Mayhew said, “I couldn’t believe he put me in that position.”³⁰⁹ This also shows that Grey used his power and status to manipulate Mayhew’s ambition for success. He perhaps thought that Mayhew might sleep with him in order to get him on her gig.

Did Norter and Mayhew’s lesbian identities change the way these male musicians interact with them? It is possible that they read these women as heterosexual. It is also possible that they were uncertain of these women’s sexual orientation. Another possibility is that they deliberately challenged these women’s homosexuality in hope of changing/”fixing” it. In whichever case, they were put in a vulnerable position as a woman. Cassity mentioned that she once pretended to

³⁰⁸Kristy Norter (2008).

³⁰⁹ Virginia Mayhew (2009).

be a lesbian to avoid heterosexual tension. “You know what happens? They still hit on me.”³¹⁰ It seems that women’s sexual orientation does not influence very much on the interaction with heterosexual male musicians who attempt to sexually take advantage of vulnerability of female musicians.

Then, why are lesbian instrumentalists more visible than male homosexual instrumentalists or lesbian singers in the jazz scene if their sexuality does not work too favorably for them? One hypothesis is that they may not be as threatening as heterosexual female instrumentalists to heterosexual males in jazz as I mentioned above. Judith Halberstam claims that masculine lesbian women disturb gender norms while masculine heterosexual women can be tolerable in society at large. In the jazz world, however, masculine sounding heterosexual women are more frightening than lesbian ones because they cannot be excluded from the heterosexual matrix. In addition, since female jazz singers are surrounded by different discourse—feminine, or perhaps, hyper-feminine one—stereotypical image of lesbians does not fit in it.

4.5 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SEXUALITY AND MUSIC

Why is the assumption that there are more lesbians in jazz than in general population plausible to some people? In fact, I must admit that I had the impulses to speculate on the relationship between jazz and lesbian women and the scarcity of gay males in jazz. It seemed to be reasonable to think that “masculine” music attracts “masculine” people, including many (but not all) lesbians and heterosexual men. Assumptions such as Reichman’s, regarding lesbian

³¹⁰ Cassity (2008).

population in the Diva Jazz Orchestra and in the jazz community, appeared convincing prior to careful considerations. As this project progressed, however, I have come to realize that the issue is not so simplistic. It is difficult to identify lesbians in the first place. As mentioned earlier, there is a wide variety of non-heterosexual desire, and self-identification as a lesbian is also elastic. One may identify herself as a lesbian in one situation, but not in another. Coming out as a lesbian is another issue. One might come out in one place, but not in another, which also involves safety and comfortableness. In the case of the Diva Jazz Orchestra, its all female membership as well as leader Sherrie Maricle's alternative sexuality may be creating a safer and more comfortable environment for lesbian instrumentalists to come out. Therefore, it is not logical to expect the same ratio of lesbians to be present in the jazz world. And for the same reasons, it is also difficult to determine the ratio of lesbians in the general population.

This type of myth regarding lesbian population is prevalent in other male dominated or "masculine" fields. For example, Karen Peper, in the end of her article "Female Athlete = Lesbian," raises this issue quoting the statistics by Alfred Kinsey. According to her, while Kinsey reports suggest that one out of ten people is "exclusively homosexual," the ratio of lesbians participating in athletics is suggested at 30 to 60 percent. She further states, "If this is indeed the case, an interesting question is raised—why might there be a higher ratio of lesbians participating in athletics than found in the general population?"³¹¹ Her hypothetical answer to this question is that female athletes and lesbians merge together because they both identify themselves as "outsiders" from "gendex role."³¹² Her argument is based on a clear division of

³¹¹ Karen Peper, "Female Athlete = Lesbian: A Myth Constructed from Gendex Role Expectations and Lesbiphobia." In *Queer Word, Queer Images: Communication and the Construction of Homosexuality*. E Jeffrey Ringer, ed. (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 204.

³¹² Peper 204-205. "Gendex role" is the term Peper coined to denote the interconnectedness of sex and gender role construction.

female and male “since biological attributes make it apparently ‘easy’ to label an individual as either of the female sex or the male sex regardless of age, race, or economic status”³¹³ and on the strong connection between sex and gender. I disagree with her because age, race, and class definitely affect how people identify their sexuality and that of others. Further, she states, “The ‘reputation’ of athletics as a haven for lesbians may encourage women who are in the process of constructing their role as a ‘lesbian’ to begin their search for role models on the fields and courts.”³¹⁴ Since she claims that she is a lesbian athlete, this might have been the case for her. However, I must question her notion of “constructing their role as a ‘lesbian’” because it implies that there is a certain type of identity all lesbians would construct and that their role models can be found in athletics.

Lisa Parrott believes that being gay and being a jazz musician are not related. Parrott asserted, “Because I have been a jazz musician a lot longer than I have been gay, and my music hasn’t been changed since I became gay.”³¹⁵ She recognizes the difference between men and women, but not in homosexual and heterosexual in music making: “As a woman, I think, I approach music differently from men. I don’t think there is a difference between me and my sister [in the approaches to music],”³¹⁶ who is an active heterosexual jazz bassist in New York City. Her statement is interesting because most female musicians I talked to denied that there are differences between men and women regarding music performances. Of course, there is no essential quality of men’s or women’s music and Parrott certainly does not claim that. In Parrott’s case, it can be said that she identifies herself more with her gender than with her sexuality in the context of playing jazz saxophone. She emphasized, “For me personally, the

³¹³ Peper, 199.

³¹⁴ Pepper, 205.

³¹⁵ Parrott (2003).

³¹⁶ Ibid.

bigger issue was still more about being female playing music rather than being gay playing music.”³¹⁷ In the jazz world, while gender matters more than sexuality for women, it seems to be the other way around for men. Parrott’s disassociation of her homosexuality from her music is similar to what an out gay jazz pianist Fred Hersch mentioned in his recent interview with David Hajdu: “I’m attracted to beauty and lyricism, but I don’t play the way I do because I’m gay. I play the way I do because I’m Fred.”³¹⁸ Of course, we cannot generalize these two musicians’ views to conclude that there is no connection between a person’s sexuality and his/her music. In fact, there might be someone who claims that his/her music represents or deeply involves with his/her homosexuality/heterosexuality.

Musicologist Suzanne Cusick, in her personal account of her relationship with music, ponders over “whether there might be a lesbian aesthetic, that is, a preference for certain kinds of music that somehow reflected the patterns of lesbian desire or lesbian pleasure.”³¹⁹ Defining “lesbian” as “not an identity...but rather a way I prefer to behave, to organize my relationship to the world in a power/pleasure/intimacy triad,” she suggests, “*this* meaning of ‘lesbian’ can be detected in my musicality.”³²⁰ She finds “love” in music and lesbian relationship with her “love” in both her teaching and performing music. I find her account of the connection between her sexuality and musicality revealing and valid. In addition, the ecstatic feelings of both listening to and performing music are often compared to human sexual experiences. Yet, these experiences are rather individual than general, and not specific to homosexuality or heterosexuality. It can be said that there is no universal quality of homosexual or heterosexual music. Therefore, the

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ David Hajdu, “Giant Steps—The Jazz Pianist Fred Hersch”
http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/31/magazine/31Hersch-t.html?_r=1

³¹⁹ Suzanne Cusick, “On a Lesbian Relationship with Music: A Serious Effort Not to Think Straight.” In *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology* (New York & London: Routledge: 2006/1994), 69.

³²⁰ Cusick (1994), 73.

connection between jazz and gay females and heterosexual males is nothing more than speculation based on heterosexist gender norms.

4.6 CONCLUSION

There is persistent homophobia in the jazz community, which supports heterosexual gender norms. As discussed above, homophobia seems to affect gay women and men differently: it is targeted more toward men than women. However, women tend not to talk about their sexuality openly, especially in relation to their musical performance. While vibraphonist Gary Burton questioned why jazz journalists never ask how his homosexuality affects his musical life in the masculine jazz world, majority of my interview subjects who are identified as lesbians are not willing to discuss their personal life in relation to their musical life. Female jazz instrumentalists, although they may not be as despised as gay male jazz musicians are, might still feel unsafe or uncomfortable to openly talk about their sexuality as they are in a minority as women and already at a disadvantage when competing for jobs in a male-dominated field presumed to be essentially masculine.

The association of musically strong female saxophonists with lesbianism is persistent in the jazz world, which manifests in different levels as norms of gender and sexuality can work as stereotypes as well. Older male jazz musicians' comments referring to tenor saxophonists Vi Burnside and Willene Barton as a lesbian or "dyke" shown in Chapter 2 and the comments contemporary female saxophonists received may be considered as prejudiced or ignorant. Yet, the same idea can be seen in a subtler way, such as in the speculation about the connection

between lesbian population and male dominated fields. Although the latter may seem to be more reasonable and plausible than the former, both are based on the same heterosexist gender norms that are usually taken for granted. Female jazz saxophonists' masculinity is performed by "masculine" musical sound, attitudes, and their body as a musician that is absorbed into the creative moment whether the performer is heterosexual or homosexual. Their musical performances strongly evoke a male body as where the musical sound originates. In other words, these women perform the saxophone outside gender norms. Under the strict heterosexual matrix, women outside gender norms of women are automatically associated with homosexuality.

Sexuality, as I defined in the Introduction, is not a simple binary of heterosexuality and homosexuality. Instead, there are various sexual desires and orientations that are not simply categorized into heterosexuality or homosexuality, and both heterosexuality and homosexuality contain a broad range of desires. Besides, sexuality is not a person's identity but it is rather "doing straightness or queerness"³²¹ as Moya Lloyd suggests. As one of my interviewees who I thought was lesbian came out as heterosexual, one can "perform" sexuality. How should then female saxophonists "perform" sexuality in order to be visible/audible in the jazz world? Women who demonstrate strong musical proficiency tend to be perceived as lesbians and excluded from the heterosexual matrix. Yet, women who play strong and "perform" heterosexuality are more threatening to men than lesbian musicians. In addition, (hetero)sexual harassment is not uncommon to both heterosexual and homosexual women. Therefore, women have to negotiate both heterosexist and sexist discourse of jazz. In order for these women to be heard and seen in jazz, heterosexist and sexist gender norms that have been persistent in the jazz world have to change.

³²¹ Moya Lloyd, "Performativity, Parody, Politics," *Theory, Culture, & Society* 16/2 (1999), 197.

5.0 “TWO STRIKES” AND “DOUBLE NEGATIVE”: INTERSECTION OF GENDER AND RACE

The previous chapters have shown that masculinist discourse of jazz is intertwined with sexuality and race. Women who demonstrate strong musicianship are often associated with masculinity and homosexuality. Similarly, masculinity is typically associated with blackness. As I discussed in Chapter 3, certain musical elements, stylistic features, and performance practice of jazz are associated with blackness (often read as masculinity in jazz) and whiteness (read as femininity) although things each signifies are not stable and constantly defined and redefined. In other words, norms of race and gender are closely related, and both are constantly changing.

The female jazz saxophonists I interviewed for this project are predominantly white American and white Europeans because there are simply only few African American, Asian American and Hispanic American female saxophonists in the current New York jazz scene. Some non-black female saxophonists told me that they have received comments such as, “You sound black,” or “Are you sure you don’t have any black person in your family?” suggesting that their performances signify blackness. These are meant to be compliments because sounding “black” connotes authentic jazz performance in this context in the same way as sounding like a man.

This chapter illustrates how race and gender intersect in the experiences of female jazz saxophonists. I will discuss how “blackness” affects female saxophonists in their “performing”

gender in the context of jazz. More specifically, I will explore how female jazz saxophonists understand blackness that has been associated with the origin and authenticity of jazz in relation to their music performance. What does “blackness” mean to non-black women and black women? Why are there so few African American female jazz instrumentalists while there were a number of them in the earlier period?

Linda Williams discusses how race, gender, and class intersect in the experiences of African American female jazz musicians through the interviews and her own experience as an African American jazz saxophonist. She recognizes three positions that both African American feminist criticism and her research findings share. Named “*Speaking blackness*,” the first position “prioritizes issues of race over issues of gender”³²² and is advocated by women who were born before 1945. The second position, which she calls “*Speaking feminist*,” critiques racism and sexism on the equal terms and is held by women who were born between 1945 and 1965. She labels the third position taken by women born between 1965 and 1985 “*Speaking class*,” which analyzes how class intersects the experiences of race and gender. While this categorization is probably applicable to general African American female population, it is questionable if it is relevant to women in the jazz world in particular. Especially, Williams discusses female singers and instrumentalists together, which I find problematic because singers and instrumentalists (and depending on which instrument) are “gendered” and “raced” differently. Although it is plausible that African American women share some common experiences, an African American female singer may have more in common with a white female singer than with an African American female saxophonist in their experiences. Even people who play the same instrument and are in the same age group may not have similar experiences or

³²² Linda Williams, “Black Women, Jazz and Feminism.” In *Black Women and Music: More than the Blues* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 120.

ideas. For example, as this chapter will show, two young African American female saxophonists I interviewed (both were born between 1965 and 1985) demonstrate rather different views on race and gender. I suggest that gender and race need to be analyzed in a more nuanced way than Williams' approach because they are sensitive issues and talked about differently depending on the situation and context.

5.1 BLACKNESS, AUTHENTICITY, AND DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS

As mentioned, the majority of the female jazz saxophonists I interviewed are American and foreign white women. Their views regarding their being non-black are rather diverse. Saxophonist/singer Lily White worked with such legendary African American and Cuban American musicians as pianist/singer Jay McShann (1916-2006), trumpeters Mario Bauza (1911-1993), Dizzy Gillespie, and organists Jimmy McGriff (1936-2008) and Jack McDuff (1926-2001) in the 1990s. In part because of her experiences in playing with these musicians, she developed her distinct style with gutsy and throaty sound imbued with bluesy and soulful feelings—typically considered to be very “black.” She said, “That’s the thing I’m good at. I’m not the right color,”³²³ and laughed. She implied that her saxophone playing does not match her beautiful medium long blond hair, light brown eyes, and fair skin. She continued, “I had a guy come up to me saying, ‘You should be playing stuff like Joni Mitchell. You should get back to your roots.’”³²⁴ This statement suggests the close tie between a person’s race and how s/he sounds. This male audience was disturbed possibly because White crossed over the racial line

³²³ White (2008).

³²⁴ Ibid.

musically, sounding “black.” While she did not identify this particular male audience’s racial background, she also mentioned, “White males are the ones the quickest to judge and quickest to make me feel horrible about who I am because I’m the only thing lower than they are.”³²⁵ These white men might have been jealous or threatened by her because she was fluent in the idiom of African American music and played with male African American jazz greats. According to White’s account, white male musicians feel inferior to African Americans in playing jazz authentically, and non-black women are the only ones who are less authentic than they are because they are neither black nor men. It is uncertain that her observation is valid or she actually believes in the idea. Yet, it is interesting that she told me about this hierarchy of musicians in the jazz world: black males, black females, white males, and white females.

Swedish alto saxophonist Amanda Sedgwick greatly respects and embraces the African American roots of jazz. She visited New York City several times in the late 1990s, lived in Atlanta from 2004 to 2006, went back to Sweden, then made three long visits to NYC between 2007 and 2009, and finally moved there in early 2010. While she has more work in Sweden, she wants to be in New York City. “I am here because I wanna learn jazz from the original culture.”³²⁶ I asked her how she feels about being a foreigner who plays jazz. She answered,

I know that I can never become an insider by virtue of my birth and where I was brought up. But it’s like for me, it’s a conscious decision...because I really love the culture where this music comes from, I wanna take as big part of it as I can as an outsider, that’s why I consciously... I don’t wanna live in a white neighborhood, it might sound really strange, but to me, America is so divided, white and black. And I mean, culturally and historically, white America is always mainstream. And jazz is first of all, it’s black music, by nature, it’s not mainstream.”³²⁷

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Amanda Sedgwick, personal communication with author, 10/8/2010.

³²⁷ Ibid.

Because she was born and brought up in Sweden, she thinks that she can never be a true insider of jazz. Though slightly hesitant, she suggested that she consciously made a decision to live in a black neighborhood because she wants to immerse herself in the culture jazz emerged from. She seemed to be very careful to choose the words perhaps because she did not want to sound like an essentialist. In fact, she also mentioned that there are some white musicians she really likes and admires. She then added, “We all sound who we are. That’s gonna come out form our instruments, all the experiences.”³²⁸ The word “experience” is frequently used in the conversation with musicians to signify something closely tied to how a person musically sounds. Especially, since jazz improvisation is often considered to reveal “who you are,” experience is an important part of playing jazz. Considering from what she mentioned, experiences to Sedgwick include both musical and life experiences.

On the other hand, the majority of my interviewees thinks that “blackness” has nothing to do with authenticity of jazz. White American Sharel Cassity, who frequently plays with such notable African American musicians as Jimmy Heath and Roy Hargrove, believes that a performer’s being African American does not guarantee authenticity of jazz performance. She asserted, “Music doesn’t have anything to do with skin color. It has to do with experiences, and so today, you see a lot of young people of all races really embracing our music, and what makes the music authentic or not is how deep they’re gone into the history of it.”³²⁹ Here, experience Cassity refers to is experience in performing and spending time with legendary musicians and learning the history of jazz. While she does not believe in biological determinism, she seems to adhere to the idea that “experience” of hanging out and playing with the jazz greats would give a performer some sort of authenticity. Experience and the immersion in black culture are often

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Cassity (2008).

closely connected in “the authenticating strategies”³³⁰ regarding African American music. Mickey Hess’s discussion of how white hip-hop musicians construct their authenticity within black expressive culture of hip-hop is relevant here. Hess suggests that “being true to yourself and to your lived experiences,” “immersion in black culture,” and the connection/interaction with and acceptance by black hip-hop artists are some of the ways for white hip-hop artists to authenticate themselves³³¹. These strategies are also applicable to jazz and are closely related to what Sedgwick and Cassity mentioned.

Erica von Kleist regularly plays with Arturo O’Farrill’s Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra and has played as a substitute a few times in Wynton Marsalis’s Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra. von Kleist claimed,

I don’t think most people playing jazz these days have true African roots. They’re not from Africa, even if you are African American. There are African Americans or Latinos that I know who know less about rhythms [than I do]. ... All that matters is how much study you give towards it. Even though I am white and I come from rich suburb in Connecticut, I still am influenced by where I am, New York City. I am influenced by all the music in my culture. ... My music is authentic to me.³³²

von Kleist clearly dismisses the idea of “African roots” as a marker of authentic jazz. She claims that being African American or Afro Caribbean does not guarantee a better rhythmic sense or knowledge that essentialists would assume. She also emphasizes that anyone can play jazz authentically through serious studying.

Along the same line, Laura Dreyer feels that jazz has developed in such a way that separates itself from African American roots, by saying, “I feel like jazz is so much multifaceted at this point. It’s really grown into so many different directions. I think maybe back in the 50s or

³³⁰ Mickey Hess, “Hip-hop Realness and the White Performer,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 22/5 (2005), 380.

³³¹ Hess, 2005, 375-380.

³³² von Kleist (2008).

60s, the strong voices were predominantly African American because of the culture that it came out of. ...I think people who have a feeling for the music are authentic. It doesn't matter where you come from."³³³ Dreyer suggests that jazz has been separated from African American origin in recent years and that a person's race is less important than his/her appreciation of jazz. In a similar way, Virginia Mayhew suggested, "Almost all the people who created jazz were African Americans, that's a fact. ... I have met a number of giants of jazz, they have no problems with me. You see black people who play intellectual music that doesn't swing, or European people who swing their ass off."³³⁴ She implies that truly great musicians do not care about performers' race or gender. Though she respects the African American origin of jazz, she emphasizes that a performer's race or nationality does not affect the way s/he sounds.

When talking about race, gender, and authenticity of jazz in our interview, Janelle Reichman stated, "You know, one of the greatest compliments I have ever got was, I was playing at a jazz club in Cincinnati and I was playing this ballad, and this person yelled out from the back of the room, 'You sound like an old black man!' (laugh), I thought that it was really great."³³⁵ Considering the context of our conversation, she meant that she can sound "authentic" although she is a white woman. In addition, her excitement in receiving this "greatest compliment" shows that she is aware of the discourse of jazz: strong connection between great jazz performance and (heterosexual) black male body. While she thinks, "If I love this music, I immerse myself in it, it's not gonna be any less authentic than if young African American boy does the same thing,"³³⁶ she also feels complimented about sounding like an old black man. In other words, she expressed

³³³ Dreyer (2008).

³³⁴ Mayhew (2009).

³³⁵ Reichman (2008).

³³⁶ Ibid.

somehow contradictory feelings of confidence as a white female jazz saxophonist and excitement of being associated with an old black male.

Interestingly, Erica von Kleist received a similar comment. She brought up this story when I asked her if she had been mistaken as a man from listening to her recording. “No, but I have a funny story.” When she played at a jam session on a cruise ship, one guy came up to her and said, “Oh Erica, you play so beautifully, you play like a big black man.”³³⁷ She said, “He meant it in a nicest possible way, he was just hilarious. It’s a compliment, I think.”³³⁸ Her attitude is slightly different from Reichman who showed her excitement without hesitation. Yet von Kleist also is aware of the discourse of jazz performance and she seemed to be happy to get the comment despite that she strongly denied the connection between blackness and authenticity of jazz.

Here, it is interesting to juxtapose the trumpeter Ingrid Jensen’s comment with those of Reichman and von Kleist. After stating that she does not believe in the idea of a white person and a black person sounding differently, Jensen told the interviewer, “Bobby Shew said after he heard me playing while he was backstage at a band festival, ‘Damn girl, I thought you were an old black guy playin’ like that up there. What a surprise to see a young white chick.’ I blushed and took it as a real compliment at the time, being fourteen years old and all that.”³³⁹ Jensen implies that she would not take it as a compliment now because she is confident that she is “a white woman and [she] *can* swing.”³⁴⁰ I am not suggesting that Reichman and von Kleist fell into a trap of the dominant discourse of jazz. Certainly, it is possible that these women consciously or unconsciously are conforming to and reinforcing the dominant norm in jazz,

³³⁷ von Kleist (2008).

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ Enstice and Stockhouse (2004), 156.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

which intersects gender, race, age, and sexuality. However, they might also be manipulating the norm in order to be accepted in the jazz scene better. Here, it can be said that playing like an old, big, heterosexual black man is a type of their gender “performance.”

While she believes that immersing herself in the music and being surrounded by great musicians give her the experiences for her to become a good jazz musician, Sharel Cassity is still concerned that there is a stereotype of “the jazz musician” who is a male and black. “I had a lot of people come up and tell me, ‘You don’t look anything like a jazz musician.’ They’re probably thinking someone black, someone male...so there are bands I would love to be a part of, maybe I wouldn’t be accepted, based on one of these two factors. I’m not perceived as a jazz artist by the public or a lot of people. It will take a chance to hire me because of that.”³⁴¹ Cassity’s statement is supported by Monique Guillory. In her article “Black Bodies Swingin’: Race, Gender, and Jazz,” she states, “[T]he image of black masculinity that circulates within these cultural arenas symbolize a stock prerequisite of the trade and allow for few radical deviations from the norm that fans come to anticipate and demand. These constructs remain consistent and are woven into the very fabric of the culture.... Thus, it is difficult to imagine a white woman as a jazz musician.”³⁴² While “black and male” is a mere stereotype of the jazz musician as Cassity thinks, it has also deeply permeated American culture and functions as the norm as Guillory suggests. Cassity further mentioned, “On the musicians side of it, not in the business side, people are more likely to hire black musicians, I think. Because they think it gives a certain authenticity.”³⁴³ Moreover, she told me about her fiancée Michael Dease, who is a young, talented trombonist.

³⁴¹ Cassity (2008).

³⁴² Monique Guillory, “Black Bodies Swingin’: Race, Gender, and Jazz” In *Soul: Black Power, Politics, and Pleasure*. Monique Guillory and Richard C. Green, eds. (New York and London: New York University Press, 1998), 213.

³⁴³ Ibid.

Cassity said, “He’s a quarter black. I notice the difference in how people treat him. If he is in a black band and as soon as [they discover that he is a quarter black], like ‘Oh, he’s one of us!’ All of a sudden, everyone wants him, he gets hired.”³⁴⁴ It is not certain that to what extent Dease’s being a quarter black actually affects his employment. However, it is notable to see how Cassity noticed the situation and talked about it. Cassity herself also frequently hires African American musicians in her band: the main personnel of her sextet in the latest CD are all African Americans (including a quarter black Dease) though two of the three guest artists are white; her quintet for the recent appearances in NYC consisted of all African Americans. Of course, her choice of musicians can be determined by many different factors. Yet, considering what she talked about her concerns with her being white and about her fiancé, she is fully conscious of performers’ ethnic backgrounds.

Reichman, von Kleist, and Cassity—white females in their twenties—all demonstrated some sort of contradictory attitudes when talking about race, gender, and jazz. Although they all are confident that their being white and female does not make their performance inauthentic, they are also keenly aware of the black masculinist discourse of jazz, which might negatively affect their status in jazz as Cassity suggested. Their attitude can be considered to be a double consciousness: their own view of being confident as a white female in jazz and viewing themselves through others’ “expectation and demand” for the jazz instrumentalist.³⁴⁵

While Cassity suggested that certain musicians—both black and white— prefer hiring African American musicians, Dreyer mentioned that it has more to do with the business and marketing of jazz. She attended Berklee College of Music in the 1980s with saxophonist

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 8.

Branford Marsalis. She recalled, “He was totally cool with me, very supportive.”³⁴⁶ Soon after being blown away by his brother Wynton’s playing, she witnessed the huge change in the music industry. “All of a sudden, George Butler, I guess he was with Columbia Records, saw this opportunity to market these two young African American guys that are really high level musicians, and everybody else jumped on a bandwagon, and it really changed the face of jazz.”³⁴⁷ According to Dreyer, the jazz scene, especially in her native California, was more integrated before. For instance, Art Blakey and the Jazz messengers included non-African Americans such as Joanne Brackeen (piano), Valery Ponomarev (trumpet), and Dave Schnitter (tenor saxophone) in the 1970s. When “Wynton years” came, everybody in the band was black, except for Benny Green. “They got into this young black guys wearing suits, that’s how they marketed them. And I was so pissed, I was like, whoa, there is no way I could ever even hope to be involved in that.”³⁴⁸ Dreyer, as a blond, blue-eyed woman, felt completely excluded from the jazz scene Marsalis brothers represented. Dreyer’s account vividly explains so called the “neo-classicism” movement during the 1980s, which was finally crystallized into the inauguration of Wynton Marsalis as the artistic director for Jazz at Lincoln Center in 1987.

Marsalis has been widely criticized among journalists as well as academics for his policy in directing Jazz at Lincoln Center. Because of his media exposure and fame, what he promotes as jazz is the official version of jazz to many people in the US. Especially his key role—narrating the “official version” of jazz history— in Ken Burns’s *Jazz* has made him as if he were a spokesperson of jazz. And his version of jazz excludes “what he considers ‘commercial’ or

³⁴⁶ Dreyer (2008).

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

avant-garde projects.”³⁴⁹ Herman Gray states that Marsalis’s work at Lincoln Center is canonizing and legitimizing jazz, which, quoting Nathaniel Mackay, “move[s] jazz from a ‘verb’ to ‘noun.’”³⁵⁰ In contrast to Marsalis, Gray further suggests, his contemporaries, including his brother Branford, “challenge and stretch the tradition.”³⁵¹ As McMullen suggests, the image of jazz promoted by Marsalis is closely associated with “the trope of black masculine hipness.”³⁵² Therefore, as Dreyer felt, some white women feel discouraged and excluded from the dominant discourse of jazz.

While some of my interviewees were critical of Marsalis’s conservative, sexist and (reverse) racist policy at Lincoln Center, Erica von Kleist strongly disagreed with them saying, “Wynton picks his band members out of musicality. His priority is music. He doesn’t care about anything else. He is the best bandleader I’ve ever worked with. He is really encouraging. I’m not gonna lie, there is politics, but it’s everywhere.”³⁵³ As mentioned, she participated in the band’s tour twice as a substitute for saxophonist Ted Nash, one of a few white band members of the band. von Kleist met Marsalis while she was still in high school, and when she moved to New York, he started to call her for rehearsals and concerts. von Kleist has kept in contact with Marsalis in part because she went to Julliard and has been a member of the Afro-Cuban Jazz Orchestra that was once affiliated with the Lincoln Center. Besides von Kleist, a young white female trombonist has performed with the band as a substitute. Presumably, she was hired because she studied with one of the members of the band. Therefore, a certain type of connection is required to be considered as a band member or a substitute because it is impossible for

³⁴⁹ McMullen (2008), 142.

³⁵⁰ Herman S. Gray, “Jazz Tradition, Institutional Formation, and Cultural Practice.” In *Cultural Moves: African Americans and the Politics of Representation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 47

³⁵¹ Gray (2005), 49

³⁵² McMullen (2008). 147.

³⁵³ von Kleist (2008).

Marsalis to know all the musicians, both male and female, in New York City. Although they are not regular members, Marsalis at least started to hire female musicians, which is a huge change for the band.

Because of its popularity, credibility, and visibility, the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra is influential. In the recent interview with the Wall Street Journal, Marsalis mentioned that he hopes to see the integration of age, gender, and any other aspects in jazz. Yet, he also said that his band has the greatest musicians in the world and that some of them have played together for seventeen years. In addition, he emphasized that he does not look for the music around the world to make his music something new, and that the band is most successful in playing the blues and music from their folk tradition.³⁵⁴ When he says “our music, American music” it seems to mean African American music since he referred to the blues and folk tradition. If he truly wishes for the “integration” in jazz instead of a mere lip service, his band can be more integrated, instead of keeping the same musicians for seventeen years. The concert von Kleist participated was aired nationwide on PBS several times, which possibly contributes to challenge the norm of the jazz instrumentalist as male, heterosexual, and black.

5.2 ARE WHITE AND FEMALE TWO STRIKES?

Since white women are the opposite of “black masculinity” in two ways in the traditional binary framework, I asked my informants how being white and female affect their interaction with other musicians and getting jobs. Dreyer mentioned, “When I first started playing [in New

³⁵⁴ <http://online.wsj.com/video/wynton-marsalis-talks-jazz-in-the-21st-century/FFA2312B-C74E-42DB-B44E-8780592C36AD.html>, accessed 22 Dec 2010.

York City], African American musicians were most welcoming to me. There were the ones who hired me for gigs, more than a lot of white musicians.”³⁵⁵ She thinks that she was accepted by African American musicians more being a woman than a white man perhaps because they did not feel threatened by her and sympathized with her for being minority in the jazz scene. As Dreyer speculated, white male jazz musicians might have been threatening to African American jazz musicians because they have always controlled the music industry and appropriated and commercialized what African Americans originally created.³⁵⁶ Her experience demonstrates that her gender worked favorable for her getting work in this context. Similarly, Lily White said, “I think I’ve gotten more attention being a white woman, instead of a white man. But there is also a flipside of that, you get more attention, but you get more resentment if you get gigs.”³⁵⁷ She shared a story, in which a white male musician mentioned that White got an award from the NEA for her jazz composition because she was “the right sex.” This is related to the idea of affirmative action. Since women are minority in jazz, some people suspect that they are favored just because they are women. Both Dreyer and White—both happen to be white, blond-haired women in their late 40s—have performed more with non-white male musicians. In the same way, Carol Sudhalter stated, “When I first moved to New York, the first people who are my mentors and supporters are generally older black sax players, who didn’t feel threatened or competitive with me, whereas young white male players weren’t so encouraging.”³⁵⁸ Sudhalter contrasted “old black” with “young white” musicians. The stories from these three women suggest that black male musicians were more encouraging to women than white male musicians

³⁵⁵ Dreyer (2008).

³⁵⁶ White appropriation/commercialization of African American creation can be seen in Benny Goodman’s commercial success using Fletcher Henderson’s arrangements, etc.

³⁵⁷ White (2008).

³⁵⁸ Sudhalter (2009).

were possibly because black males were threatened by white males as well as because white males felt competitive with white female musicians in getting work.

While Dreyer, White, and Sudhalter were associated more with African American musicians than with white male ones, Karolina Strassmayer stated, “I’ve always been in all kinds of circles [in New York,] musically, Latin music, black musicians...but of course mostly I circulate within white people, that’s natural, I guess, maybe not.” She implies that the New York jazz musicians can be “naturally” divided by race though she showed some hesitation. Similarly, Janelle Reichman recognizes the racial division that is hard for her to break in the jazz community in New York City. There are numerous cliques mainly according to different styles of jazz in the current New York jazz scene, and some of them are dominated by a single race or nationality. Reichman mentioned her experience after she moved to New York City in 2006, “In jazz music, of course, it’s all about the hang, so it’s just gonna be harder for me to break into a group of people, like all black men because they have similar experiences.”³⁵⁹ Because of their common experiences, Reichman thinks, African American men tend to feel comfortable in hanging out and working together. She plays with more white male musicians than African American ones. Here, African American men’s common experience is associated more with their being African American than with being men. The difficulty Reichman feels is perhaps due to “cultural capital” that she lacks as a white woman. Sally Ann Davies-Netzley, drawing on Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of cultural capital, suggests that successful women in the corporate world “attempt to display the forms of cultural capital that fit best with the male-dominated corporate scene.”³⁶⁰ She states that these women talk sports, politics, read the *Wall Street Journal*, and

³⁵⁹ Reichman (2008).

³⁶⁰ Sally Ann Davies-Netzley, “Women above the Class Ceiling: Perceptions on Corporate Mobility and Strategies for Success,” *Gender & Society* 12 (1998), 349.

brings up topics other male elites will be interested.³⁶¹ In addition, some corporate women feel that being white is essential to fit in the frequently all white male environment. This is quite contrasting with the mainstream jazz world where whiteness often works negatively.

Since Sudhalter, Dreyer and White's experiences were between the late 1970s and the 1990s, the situation in the New York jazz scene might have changed in the intervening twenty years. White male musicians in recent years may not feel as competitive with white female musicians as twenty years ago. According to White's story, white male musicians were discouraging and competitive with white female musicians due to their inferiority complex in playing jazz, which is "black" music. Therefore, more friendly relationships between white male musicians and white female musicians may also indicate the more confidence in white male musicians and the better relationship between male African American and white musicians. Although it is too optimistic and impetuous to conclude that the jazz scene is more integrated than the "Wynton years" of the late 1980s and the early 1990s, their relationship may have improved because of two factors.

First, the connection between African American musicians and "authentic" jazz has gradually become weaker, at least on the surface, as Dreyer mentioned. Of course, the origin of jazz is respected, but contributions of non-black musicians have been more appreciated in some circles and contexts although there is also a resistance to this idea as Marsalis's statement suggested. Second, jazz education has become more and more institutionalized. Jazz used to be learned through apprenticeship and in actual performance contexts such as at jam sessions and churches. Lately, however, jazz programs in high schools and colleges have developed dramatically and the majority of younger jazz musicians now are college educated. In contrast to

³⁶¹ Ibid.

spontaneous “hang” at jam sessions, the jazz programs are racially more diverse and integrated. It seems that the racial integration has changed the relationship between different races as well as different genders.

Young white female musicians’ difficulty in breaking into the circle of African American musicians may also be related to a heterosexual tension, which I also discussed in Chapter 4. White mentioned, “I don’t get hired by them [African American musicians] until they’re really old. I think that’s what happens. I think that’s why all people I’ve gotten hired from are very old. I think younger guys have this feeling like they’re supposed to score. So it’s gonna be an issue, which is kind of why I started my own band.”³⁶² White told me a story about when she toured Europe with a white bandleader and several young black male musicians who all “went out after the gig and tried to score with German and Scandinavian women.”³⁶³ She said, “Jazz is very homophobic music,” meaning, “there is a tradition of womanizing and ‘macho’ behavior that you don’t find in, say, classical orchestras.”³⁶⁴ Her story overlaps the jazz world illustrated in Guillory’s article: black male musicians on the road “guesstimate the scores of sexual conquests, swap stories about particularly finessed victories and notably famous vixens.”³⁶⁵ I am not suggesting here that “scoring with women” is done exclusively by African American male musicians. However, the image of African American musicians circulated in American culture through autobiographies of Miles Davis and Charles Mingus as well as movies such as *Bird* (1988), *Mo’ Better Blues* (1990), and *Ray* (2004) resonates very well with the black male jazz musician as a hyper-masculine womanizer. In contrast to Reichman and Strassmayer, Cassity performs with many young African American males though she also complained about

³⁶² White (2008).

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ Guillory (1998), 193

difficulties in developing mentorship and friendship with such male musicians. In Cassity's case, having her partner, who is a quarter black, in her band might be helping to avoid a heterosexual tension with other male musicians.

While Dreyer, White, and Sudhalter all mentioned that their being women worked favorable in getting work, some answered that "being a woman" is a bigger issue than being white. Reichman stated, "Because there are so many white boy players these days, it's not a black person's music anymore."³⁶⁶ Therefore, she does not have problems with being a white jazz musician. Cassity also said, "Because there are not that many female horn players, we stand out. Most guys on the scene know female horn players by name. We don't know all the guys at all. So if I run into some guy friends, they always mention another female horn player. People are still getting used to the idea of us being a part of the jazz tradition in a serious sense."³⁶⁷ Cassity's statement suggests that female horn players are still a minority and that male musicians tend to group them together into one category of "exceptional" women. These two women in their twenties are conscious of being in a minority as a woman. Although both of them have "double consciousness" regarding being a white female jazz musician as I discussed above, they do not feel that being white is as serious as being a woman because there are numerous white jazz musicians.

Some white women, on the other hand, feel that being a white or a woman does not matter or never felt an issue of being who they are. "I played with many many black musicians, I've played in venues where I was the only white person in a whole place including the audience and the band,"³⁶⁸ Sue Terry said. This statement suggests that she had no problems with playing

³⁶⁶ Reichman (2008).

³⁶⁷ Cassity (2008).

³⁶⁸ Terry (2008).

with African American musicians. Then she shared a story about when she toured Port au Prince, Haiti with a compa band. “People were surprised that I could play it. But they were happy, they loved that someone from another culture was playing their music and respected it like that.”³⁶⁹ It seemed to me that jazz and Haitian compa are surrounded by different discourses. I wondered if the straight-ahead jazz community has open-minded attitudes as she experienced in Port au Prince. Terry disagrees with me saying, “Audiences are Haitian, French speaking people, that’s a rather closed community, while jazz is played all over the world in every country, everybody.”³⁷⁰ Terry’s opinion is valuable and certainly has a point. I do not doubt that she did not encounter any difficulties in performing with black musicians and for black audiences. Yet, I cannot help wondering if she were a white man, the reaction may have been different. As I will discuss later, jazz—especially straight-ahead jazz—involves complex issue of ownership precisely because it is played everywhere in the world.

Claire Daly stated, “I’ve thought about the fact that the origins of what I love are so different from what I look like. But music speaks to the soul. It doesn’t speak to my heritage. The music grabbed me fully for the first time I heard it. Sometimes there are difficulties because you’re female or Irish or... sometimes that’s gonna work for you or against you.”³⁷¹ She mentioned her experiences in which she was unfairly treated or made invisible and felt deep anger. However, she tries not to personalize these incidents but to work with people who appreciate her instead. One of the examples, she said, was African American drummer Warren Smith (1934-). “Warren’s band is such a great band, and I toured with these great musicians, absolutely no vibe. ... I always know if somebody’s got a problem with me, because I’m female,

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ Daly (2009).

or Irish or whatever, it's not about me, it's about them."³⁷² Virginia Mayhew's attitude is similar to Daly's. "Two strikes [being a white woman] (laugh). But you have to just go and do it. Surround yourself with people that don't have those kinds of issues [regarding gender and race]."³⁷³ These three women in their early fifties have been active in the New York jazz scene since the 1980s, and their shared experiences for over twenty years may have given them the similar attitude. They are aware that there may be some issues because of their gender or race, but they are determined not to let the issues affect them. These women believe that if there are issues, they come from others, not from them. I consider their attitude—situating themselves where as if there were no norms— a type of performing gender and race in jazz.

5.3 "IT'S SOMETHING IN THE BLOOD": BLACK CULTURAL IDENTITY AND JAZZ

When I discussed how race and gender intersect in their experiences as a jazz saxophonist with my interviewees, I often shared my experience in Japan. When I worked as a jazz saxophonist there in the early 1990s, I felt a strong bonding and camaraderie with my fellow male jazz musicians. We equally felt a sort of "authenticity complex"³⁷⁴ because we were culturally and geographically far away from the US where jazz was born. Especially, the distance felt much bigger at the time without the Internet technology. As a result, the cultural/racial difference was so huge that gender difference between male musicians and me did not seem to be a serious issue. As soon as I finished my thought, Tia Fuller said, "I'd like to comment on that."

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ Mayhew (2009).

³⁷⁴ See Atkins (2001)

I don't wanna say it's gender specific, but the fact that jazz music has come out of African American classic music, African drums, I know African Americans we feel that...because culturally we've been connected to it, because it's been the foundation of what's happened culturally and socially during the slavery, a lot of the spiritual hymns came from that, which was the root of a lot of jazz music of today, so, because culturally, that's where we were coming from, as a people, we feel extremely connected, sometimes, possessive of it, because it's our music, because it came out of the African American experience. Now, of course, Western society and other cultures have integrated, have helped to enhance it, like the Latin culture, Asian culture, the Western culture, but being an African American, this is the music that we have, and that is come from our roots. ... Of course, it's all inclusive like a melting pot, but I think culturally everybody brings their own thing to it, which is a beautiful thing, and I can say that at times, when I've heard different people, if I close my eyes, and I listen to them, and if it's like a white guy, white girl, and I'm like, "Hmmm, I'm wondering if they're white" (laugh). Just because it's certain thing. Once again, it's cultural, it's something that's in the blood. If you're able to listen and study the music long enough, you might be able to rid of that thing, but it's so deeply ingrained. I think it's one of the beautiful things about jazz is that you could bring whatever roots you have to it, and still be as killing as the next. But I do know that African American culture, my culture, we feel extremely connected to it because it's rooted out of our struggle as black people.³⁷⁵

I quoted her statement as it was because it reveals her view on blackness in jazz so eloquently. In addition, the context she expressed her idea was rather interesting to me since I never expected her to respond to my anecdote by sharing her ideas about race only. Her somewhat emotional response to my experience demonstrates her strong identification with being African American as a people rather than a woman, as she clarified that it is not gender specific. Her idea strongly suggests an essential notion of cultural identity. While she repeated that the difference is "cultural," she also stated that it is "in the blood," which implies biological determinism. This cultural identity determined by a person's race that she seems to believe in is related to Stuart Hall's first position of defining cultural identity—a fixed, unchanging, cultural essence.³⁷⁶ She implies that musicians from different culture "naturally" sound differently and that the ability to understand jazz and persistent study of the music might be able to remove this

³⁷⁵ Fuller (2008).

³⁷⁶ Hall (1989).

cultural signifier from non-African Americans' musical sound. Fuller's insistence that she can hear different ethnicity in non-African American musicians' performance is relevant to Deborah Wong's discussion of Asian American jazz musicians. Wong's interview subject, an African American historian, could detect "the absence of African American musicking body"³⁷⁷ in the music performed by Asian American experimental jazz group. Though they fundamentally claim the same thing –African Americans and non-African Americans sound differently—, they employ different logics. While Fuller can identify a cultural signifier in non-African American musicians' sound, the African American historian can sense the lack of African American signifier. Therefore, Fuller never talks about inadequacy of non-African Americans' performances. She simply insists that they sound differently. She appreciates different cultural elements in jazz rather than dismissing it as inauthentic. Yet, she feels that African American people have a special connection to music because of their "black experience."

Though she emphasized her strong identification with African American as a race, it does not mean that she feels no difference between men and women in playing jazz. In fact, her band has long been all female, and she emphasized a "special connection" among women with whom she performs, which she brought up when we discussed advantages of being a female jazz musician. She mentioned,

What is the most important of what I've experienced, because my quartet is all female, there's a certain connection that playing with other women that are also accomplished. Like you can call it an innate connection, an internal connection we have with each other. It's the same thing as Beyonce's band, we are connected in a very special way. It's in a way that I'm not really able to express, but I know what it is because I can feel it. I don't know if it's an ability to give a birth. There is something that is extremely special that I really think it's an advantage of being a woman because we are able to feel in different places, not to say that men can't but I think we are very in tune with our bodies because

³⁷⁷ Wong (2004), 174.

we menstruate every month, our sexual organs are internal, and theirs are external, so it's gonna be different.³⁷⁸

In this statement, too, Fuller demonstrates her view based on biological determinism. She considers that being a biologically woman is an advantage in music performance because women are more in tune with their bodies than men are. Considering her two statements and the contexts she brought up these issues suggests how she views her gender and race in playing jazz: while she feels advantageous of being a woman in playing music, she considers her being African American more important because it gives an extreme connection to jazz music. Regarding her all-female band, she explained, “People in my band are my closest friends. For the sake of keeping an all female band, I’m not gonna sacrifice the musicianship.”³⁷⁹ Her quartet has had the same bassist and drummer since she started to work in the New York area: Mirium Sullivan and Kimberly Thompson, both African American. The piano chair has been filled by several different women. I have seen her band with Rachel Eckroth, Chihiro Yamanaka, and Miki Hayama—non-black women. Since around 2006, however, her sister Shamie Royston has been in the band. Her latest recording includes several guest musicians, who are also all African Americans. When drummer Thompson is not available, Royston’s husband Rudy Royston, African American, frequently substitutes. I am not suggesting that Fuller hires only black musicians. As Fuller mentioned, three women in her band are her closest friends, and Fuller has played with her brother-in-law with her family band for over 10 years. Yet, considering her statements, her choice of co-performers might be related to her opinion about African Americans’ “extreme connection” to the music. Though slightly outdated, one empirical study done by Gay and Tate in 1998 is relevant here. Based on the survey conducted in 1984 and 1996,

³⁷⁸ Fuller (2008).

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

they found that African American women's consciousness of race and gender are strongly connected despite the popular belief of gender's irrelevance for black women and that those who have group consciousness are more liberal than those who lack it. In addition, they suggest that African American women's identification with their race affected their political attitudes more significantly than their identification with their gender did except in instances where the interests of blacks directly conflict with the interests of women.³⁸⁰ This suggests that Fuller's attitude is consistent with African American women's political attitudes in general.

Subsequently, I asked Fuller about her ideas on the music industry regarding race. From the discussion with other musicians and my own observation of the New York jazz scene and representation of musicians in the major jazz magazines and radio stations, I see two tendencies: promoting white musicians because of the white controlled industry; and promoting African American musicians to preserve "the essence" of jazz. In Fuller's opinion, she sees the former more. "As far as the industry, record companies, people that are putting jazz out there, they are pushing more the Caucasian, the Western influenced [jazz]. It's a sensitive subject."³⁸¹ She continued mentioning that the black community saw a problem with the International Association for Jazz Education (IAJE) before it went bankrupt in 2008 in that the schools and educators involved and performers presented at their annual conferences were predominantly white. "That was a large issue, just maintaining the essence of the culture, black culture of the music and not getting twisted."³⁸² Here, Fuller is more outspoken about what African American musicians culturally possess and how it is significant in maintaining the essence of black culture in jazz.

³⁸⁰ Claudine Gay and Katherine Tate, "Doubly Bound: The Impact of Gender and Race on the Politics of Black Women," *Political Psychology* 19/1, 169-171.

³⁸¹ Fuller (2008).

³⁸² Ibid.

This sentiment of preserving “the essence of black culture/music” is still prevalent among African American musicians and perhaps among some non-African American musicians. One instance epitomizes the depth and complexity of racial issue in jazz. In August 2010, African American guitarist Russell Malone (b.1963), who has been vital in the New York jazz scene for the past twenty years, posted his thought on Facebook: “Jazz music has been integrated for quite some time now. And that’s not necessarily a bad thing. However, there is a fine line between integration and dilution.”³⁸³ This post caused a huge controversy and was followed by 175 comments for next five days. In fact, his original post does not directly mention that dilution is associated with white musicians. Responding to this, Swedish saxophonist Amanda Sedgwick wrote, “I agree with you Russell. Jazz is black music and everybody, whatever race we might be born, needs to respect this fact if we are to play this music properly. I’m not trying to pretend I’m black, but the whole tradition, history, and experience I must try and understand even if I’m not of it.” Here, Sedgwick clearly connects dilution with non-African Americans and implies the association of “proper” way of playing jazz with black culture. This post was followed by white American saxophonist Tony Marino saying, “JAZZ IS AMERICAN MUSIC! We all make contribution!” For the rest of the thread was roughly divided by two camps: the one considers jazz black music mainly supported by African Americans, and the other claims jazz as globalized/integrated music predominantly supported by non-African Americans. One black woman wrote, “So why do people get it twisted when white people play jazz? Just because I, an African American woman, play a polka doesn’t change the character or definition of the music.” Of course, this does not mean that these two views are divided by blacks and non-blacks. My point here is that how severe the racial tension is in the seemingly “integrated” jazz community.

³⁸³ Russell Malone, <http://www.facebook.com/#!/profile.php?id=1558471097>, accessed 23 August 2010.

There is strong sentiment of ownership of jazz among African Americans, and it seems to override gender issues.

The notion of the essence of jazz and African American signifier can be dismissed by Postcolonialist views. For example, Ronald Radano challenges the essentialist notion of “black” music as “soulful, rhythmically expressive of multiple levels of feeling and desire: pain, freedom, rebellion, and sexual ecstasy” and dismisses its simplistic connection to Africa.³⁸⁴ In addition, Monique Guillory proposes the notion of “black performativity.” According to her, “black performativity” is a difference in black performance that “many people believe they can perceive” but “few would be able to define it.”³⁸⁵ Guillory quotes Walter Benn Michaels’s idea that “notions of identity rooted in culture and practice can ultimately be no less essentialist than racial, biological distinctions.”³⁸⁶ In addition, she asserts that black performativity “rests in a far more complex understanding of the transactional dynamics of performance—interdependence of the audience and the artist creating the performance”³⁸⁷ and that the quality of black performativity emerges “from the entire matrix of discourse and ideology that envelops the performance.”³⁸⁸ Further, she suggests that the body of the performer—the black male body—rather than musical performance itself, is the center of the discourse: “the visual spectacle of the artist” evokes the mythical quality of black performativity.

On the other hand, George Lewis differentiates African-American improvised music from European/European American improvised music because of their different musical logics that are culturally and socially constructed. In other words, he recognizes difference in these two

³⁸⁴ Ronald Radano, *Lying up a Nation: Race and Black Music* (Chicago: The university of Chicago Press, 2003), 5.

³⁸⁵ Guillory (1998), 195

³⁸⁶ Guillory (1998), 196.

³⁸⁷ Guillory (1998), 195

³⁸⁸ Guillory (1998), 197.

musical performance traditions. However, he emphasizes the importance of historical aspect. Although the musical logic is culturally specific, it is a result of historical accumulation instead of biological determination. Therefore, being African-American or European/European American does not guarantee the person's mastery of its designating musical logic and a person with any ethnic background can play African-American or European/European American music without losing "its character."³⁸⁹ Though relying on different reasoning, both Guillory and Lewis avoid the essentialist idea of black cultural identity. Further, when taking Stuart Hall's second notion of cultural identity into account, it is impossible to maintain the essence of black culture because it is always created and recreated.

Although Fuller's notion of cultural identity is strongly connected to her being African American, not all African Americans possess this idea. In contrast to Fuller, another young African American saxophonist Lakecia Benjamin has somewhat carefree but cautious attitude. Before starting the interview, Benjamin blurted out, "I don't know... I don't think it matters what gender or race you are."³⁹⁰ In fact, she was hesitant to be interviewed perhaps because she was not comfortable to talk about gender and racial issues in the context of jazz performance. When I asked her if there are any difficulties in being an African American female jazz musician, she seemed to be bothered and stated, "That's only in your brain,"³⁹¹ suggesting that negativity derives from oneself not from the society or situation. She insisted that she never thought of her race or gender in the context of playing music. Further, knowing that I am a jazz saxophonist, she added, "If somebody tells you, you can't play jazz because you're Japanese and

³⁸⁹ Lewis, (2002), 93.

³⁹⁰ Lakecia Benjamin, personal communication with author, 10/24/2009.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

woman? [Do not worry about it.] If you play good and you're a nice person, you will be fine."³⁹² Of course, this statement does not automatically guarantee that Benjamin never believes in cultural identity of African Americans. However, this shows her attitudes toward gender and race—she does not think about them or she does not want to talk about them in the context of jazz performance as she mentioned, "It's a touchy subject."³⁹³ While Fuller expresses her ideas based on her knowledge about the norms regarding gender and race and strongly identifies herself with African Americans as well as with women, Benjamin negates and stays aloof from the norms. I suggest that their different attitudes demonstrate different ways of performing gender and race, which in turn construct their gender and racial identity.

5.4 WHY ARE THERE SO FEW AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE JAZZ SAXOPHONISTS?

When I discussed three female saxophonists who were active from the 1940s to the 1960s in Chapter 2, they were all African Americans. I did not choose them because of their race but because of their successful career in each decade. Among all-girl big bands during World War II were both black bands and white bands. One black band, the International Sweethearts of Rhythm, also included Latinas, Asian American women, and Native American women, and occasionally, a small number of white women passing as black. However, when I searched for female jazz saxophonists actively working in the New York area, they are predominantly white and foreign women. In addition, among fifty-seven alumnae of Sisters in Jazz Collegiate

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ Ibid.

Competition from 1998 to 2008, only four are African American, two are Hispanic American, and three are Asian from overseas (two Japanese and one Chinese-Australian). The scarcity of Asian/Asian American and Hispanic American musicians (both men and women) is not too surprising because they have been a minority in the American jazz scene, except for Hispanic males in the Latin jazz scene. Considering the presence of African American women jazz instrumentalists in the earlier period, such as Vi Burnside, Willene Barton, and Vi Redd, why are there fewer African American women while there are more women in general in the current jazz scene?

I asked Fuller, Benjamin, and alto saxophonist Matana Roberts, all African American, for their opinion about the scarcity of African American female jazz instrumentalists. Fuller said,

This is another sensitive subject. This is how I feel and a lot of my friends and my mentors agree. I think being a black woman, it's almost a double negative in the industry, even though it hasn't been my experience, because I'm trying to be optimistic. I think if I were white, and doing what I do, similar to what Miles Davis said in his book, if he was white he would have been a lot further along. There's a truth in it. In this Western based society, being a black woman, it's a little bit more challenging, whereas if I were a white woman with blond hair blue eyes, it might be a little easier to be accepted. Why? I honestly don't know.³⁹⁴

Although Fuller feels advantageous of being a woman and a significant connection to jazz as an African American, she thinks that these two factors work negatively in the music industry, which has been controlled predominantly by white men. This suggests that Fuller also looks at herself through the lens of mainstream, white-controlled society, which creates a kind of double consciousness within her.

Whereas white American and foreign female jazz musicians I interviewed often used the word "two strikes" about being a woman and non-black in playing jazz, Fuller thinks of her

³⁹⁴ Fuller (2008).

being an African American woman as “double negative” in the music industry. While the former is concerned purely with music’s authenticity, the latter is solely about the business side of jazz. Therefore, it can be said that jazz music itself and its business are surrounded by slightly different discourses. Fuller’s idea of “double negative” reminds me of Kimberly Crenshaw’s discussion of intersectionality, in which she claims that African American women tend to be invisible in the intersection of feminist and anti-racist interests. Crenshaw suggests that feminism is concerned mainly with the interest of white women and that anti-racism is concerned with black men.³⁹⁵ Further, African American women’s “double burden” and a “special kind of oppression” are frequently discussed in critical race and gender scholarship.³⁹⁶ Although African American women may experience a single burden or even double positive (in Fuller’s account) within the discourse of jazz as African American music, a longstanding notion of double burden in the context of the white-driven music industry might discourage black women to choose a jazz musician as a career, as Fuller stated.

Roberts wrote in her email,

There are fewer African American female jazz musicians mainly because jazz is no longer a music that thrives within the creativity spectrum of black American society as it used to decades ago. Also due to the bizarre socio economic strata, as a direct result of racist ideology that has filled the American industrial prison complex with black American men, negatively affecting the African American family model, African American women were able to excel in other areas outside of entertainment and high art at a faster rate than African American men. The chasm created there explains in some ways the lack of black female musicians to me. But again this is looking completely outside of the sexism realm as well.”³⁹⁷

³⁹⁵ Kimberly Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color,” *Stanford Law Review* 43/6, 1241-1299.

³⁹⁶ See St. Jean Yanic and Joe R. Feagin, *Double Burden: Black Women and Everyday Racism* (Armok: M.E. Sharpe, 1998).

³⁹⁷ Matana Roberts, email communication with author, 7/24/2008.

As the first part of Roberts's statement suggests, jazz is not the most popular or commercially successful type of black music as it used to be, especially during the swing era and up to the 1950s. Her concern resonates with pianist and educator Billy Taylor's statement, "Those of us who belong to the ethnic group which created jazz should be concerned about the fact that jazz is being studied, analyzed, documented, defined, and supported in white schools and communities, while being virtually ignored in black schools."³⁹⁸ This explains why African Americans in general have fewer opportunities to receive jazz education. But it does not explain why there are a number of African American male jazz instrumentalists while there are fewer female ones. Many of these young African American male jazz musicians perhaps grew up listening to hip hop and R&B, but they also became interested in playing jazz.

Roberts's idea that African American women are more successful than African American men in the areas except for entertainment and high art is worth examining. This can be related to what Eric Porter suggests. He claims, "Since working as a jazz musician, as Linda Dahl argues, 'came to represent both symbolic and concrete proof' of African American manhood, black women received heavy pressure not to compete for these jobs."³⁹⁹ According to this logic, African American women did not choose jazz musician as a profession because they did not want to compete with their male counterparts in the field they can demonstrate their manhood. Aside from being true or not, the idea that African American males are successful in sports and entertainment seems to be prevalent. Legal scholar Alex M. Johnson states, "The most frequent images Americans see of blacks... are as an athlete or other kind of entertainer. It becomes a

³⁹⁸ William "Billy" Taylor, "Jazz: America's Classical Music," *The Black Perspective in Music* 14/1 (1986), 25.

³⁹⁹ Eric Porter (2002), 28.

cultural thing that you just internalize and accept.”⁴⁰⁰ Johnson also mentions, “Poor blacks view sports as a vehicle to escape poverty; poor whites don’t. It’s kind of troubling to me that young black men see the only way out is a profession that is only one in a million. We need to really focus on that success and the cost of that success and what it’s really doing to black males and to a lesser extent black females.”⁴⁰¹ These statements suggest that perhaps because of the image of the successful black athletes and entertainers created in the media, underprivileged blacks (more males than females) aspire to become athletes and possibly entertainers.

Benjamin had not realized that there are so few African American jazz instrumentalists in the current jazz scene until I mentioned it. Then she gave me her insights that it is financially difficult to start out as a jazz musician and that African American women tend to choose financial stability over their passion for music. Though she did not have much information to support this idea besides her own experience as a musician and what she sees in her friends, her idea is in fact useful in considering African American women’s career choice. Many of my interviewees mentioned the financial difficulty of being a jazz musician. During the 1940s, on the other hand, being a musician on the road was more attractive than being an office worker, as Sherrie Tucker suggests.⁴⁰² Especially for black women who did not have as many career choices as white women, working as a musician was a more lucrative option. In addition, as seen in the example of Prairie View College in Tucker’s work, joining the jazz band was the only way to receive college education for a small number of African American women at the time. Therefore, their family was supportive of the choice of becoming a jazz instrumentalist. Performing jazz after 1960 is not as lucrative as during the 1940s because jazz is not

⁴⁰⁰ Quoted in M. Wood, “African-Americans Find Success, Obstacles in Sports and Entertainment Industries.” http://www.law.virginia.edu/html/news/2001_02/winning.htm, accessed 10 February 2010.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.

⁴⁰² Tucker (2000).

commercially driven anymore. In addition, Sue Terry stated that a jazz musician as a profession does not attract too many people in general because it is “very difficult to learn the skills that are required to be a jazz musician.”⁴⁰³ In the article mentioned above, Linda Williams also points out the highly specialized and advanced skills required to become jazz musicians and the financial issues in getting them. “Opportunities to major in jazz performance studies at the college level abound; unfortunately, many young aspiring musicians who might otherwise be interested in pursuing this path can not afford to participate in the music-related (and extracurricular) activities that would prepare them for studies at the undergraduate level.”⁴⁰⁴ While Vi Burnside, Willene Barton, and Vi Redd learned how to play jazz mainly through their performance experiences at churches and clubs instead of in school, all the female saxophonists I interviewed, with the exception of Carol Sudhalter, had a training in college jazz programs. Although African American women have shown a higher percentage of high school completion, college enrollment, and college graduation rates than their male counterparts, they are a minority in college jazz programs perhaps because they choose majors that lead to more secure careers.

5.5 CONCLUSION—ESSENCE OF BLACKNESS VS. DIFFERENCE

As we have seen, there are a variety of views and experiences in the ways female saxophonists talked about gender and race. Although no one explicitly mentioned that blackness is the essence of authentic jazz, some women value the African American origin of jazz and experiencing jazz from its “original” creators and practitioners. I showed a notable difference

⁴⁰³ Terry (2008).

⁴⁰⁴ Williams (2007). 130.

among white female saxophonists—three women in their twenties and three women in their late forties, early fifties, and the sixties had different experiences. The younger women demonstrated the attitude that is split between their confidence as white women and the expectation from some musicians and fans. These women feel that being women is a larger issue than being white partly because there is a general consensus that jazz education has been institutionalized and that jazz has become globalized and lost the connection to the African American origin. The older women told me that their being female actually worked in favor of them perhaps because African American musicians did not get threatened by white female musicians and because white male musicians felt competitive with white females. These two groups of women's experiences suggest that the different views of blackness (essential cultural identity prevalent up to the 1980s vs. globalized and diverse that has become prevalent since the late 1990s) make the difference between these two groups. Other older white women in their fifties showed their performance of gender and race as if they do not notice any norms of gender or race.

Among three African American female saxophonists I contacted, Tia Fuller was most eloquent and clear in expressing her views on gender and race. When I told my experience in Japan where race was a more serious issue than gender, Fuller extensively talked about her ideas on race. She emphasized that African Americans as a race are strongly connected to jazz and that non-blacks would sound differently because they “naturally” add their own cultural signifier to their musical sound. While Fuller is also conscious of being a woman in the jazz scene, when she faces issues of gender and race in jazz together, she reacts to racial issues more passionately. On the other hand, Lakecia Benjamin asserts that she is never conscious of being a woman or African American in playing jazz. These two women display contrasting performance of gender and race in the context of jazz performance: one very conscious of norms of gender and race, the

other very careless or aloof. Yet, it does not mean that Benjamin never cares about gender or race. For instance, she mentioned, “Men and women talk about different things, we are different people. Men, I know from my experience, they like to feel comfortable. He doesn’t want to be on a tour with someone you feel you can’t say certain things or inhibited.”⁴⁰⁵ Not only Benjamin but also musicians I have communicated with tend to talk about gender in somewhat essentialist ways in the context of life in general. However, they are hesitant to talk about gender regarding music. They seem to want to believe that music is one of few realms where gender is never an issue. Race, on the other hand, can be discussed relatively uncritically in terms of music as terms such as “black music” and “African American music” are frequently used while it becomes controversial when race is associated with things in general.

Most women I interviewed feel that being women is anomalous in the jazz scene and there are both disadvantages and advantages, which will be discussed in the final chapter. Being white can be advantageous because the music industry in general is controlled by whites, which promotes white musicians. Some people consider that being African American is beneficial because of their connection to the origin of jazz. Some described being white women as “two strikes,” while Tia Fuller mentioned that being African American women is “double negative.” Of course, their statements may change according to the context and a number of different factors. Yet, their sentiments of having “double consciousness” or looking at themselves through the lens of others are sincere.

As Tia Fuller candidly discussed, there is a common belief that jazz originates from the African American past and that African Americans have a special connection with the music. This view considers jazz a noun and is based on Stuart Hall’s first notion of cultural identity that

⁴⁰⁵ Benjamin (2009).

is essential, fixed and unchanging. On the other hand, a number of non-black musicians mentioned that jazz no longer has the indispensable connection to the African American past as the genre has become increasingly globalized, and as a result, is colorblind. In this view, jazz is always evolving, defined and redefined by participants with various cultural backgrounds. In addition, this view also supports the idea of African Americans' cultural identity is also not "something which already exists, transcending place, time, history, and culture"⁴⁰⁶ but it constantly undergoes transformation. In his discussion of Afro-Caribbean cinema, Stuart Hall suggests, these two views are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Cultural identity "belongs to the future as much as to the past."⁴⁰⁷ This is also applicable to jazz as African-American music. Jazz is always connected to the African American past, but it also belongs to the future that incorporates diverse cultural influences. These two views are also relevant to "universalist and ethnically assertive points of view" Ingrid Monson discusses.⁴⁰⁸ She suggests that these two views "often coexist in the same person and are best conceived as discourses upon which musicians draw in particular interactive contexts."⁴⁰⁹ I have also noticed that musicians express different views depending on the context. For instance, Russell Malone, who lamented the "dilution" of jazz because of the "integration," often works with non-African American musicians and is encouraging to musicians such as Korean American Grace Kelly. As Monson writes, African American musicians tend to choose an ethnically assertive position when the role of African American culture in jazz is underplayed. This complex racial discourse in jazz has shaped views of female jazz instrumentalists. Although they are all women and share ideas and

⁴⁰⁶ Hall (1989), 70.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁸ Ingrid Monson, *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 202.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

experiences, they also have diverse views in part because jazz has developed a complex racial discourse.

6.0 FEMININE BODY, MASCULINE SOUND: VISUAL AND AURAL PRESENTATIONS OF FEMALE SAXOPHONISTS

Previous chapters have discussed how various elements of jazz saxophone performance can be gendered and how musical performances become part of gender norms in relation to sexuality and race. As stated in the Introduction, norms regarding jazz performances are closely associated with visual images. Especially, as shown in the work of K. Heather Pinson, black and white photographs of male jazz musicians taken by Herman Leonard during the late 1940 and the early 1950s epitomize images of the jazz musician as a well-dressed black male because of their persistent popularity and extensive circulation. Therefore, the sound of mainstream jazz saxophone performances strongly evokes the body of African American men. In addition, this connection between the sound and the particular type of the bodies is also supported by the “performative listening.” Nina Eidsheim asserts that when a person’s vocal timbre is recognized as belonging to a certain race or ethnicity, its association is not inherent but rather “articulated,” using Stuart Hall’s concept of articulation.⁴¹⁰ According to her, “the relationship between vocal timbre, the body and race is a performed articulation connecting independent parts, rather than an expression of an essential relationship.”⁴¹¹ Moreover, the performed articulations are the result of the listening practices that are “unconsciously framed by colonial and post-colonial attitudes

⁴¹⁰ Nina Eidsheim, “Synthesizing Race: Towards an Analysis of the Performativity of Vocal Timbre,” *Trans: Transcultural Music Review* 13 (2009), <http://www.sibetrans.com/trans/trans13/art06.htm>, accessed 26 August 2010.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*

toward race and ethnicity.”⁴¹² I suggest that the listening practices—what she calls “performative listening”—are applicable to gender. The norms of gender, race, and sexuality frame the performative listening, which connects a musical sound with a certain type of body.

My everyday experience supports this contention. People have assumed numerous times that I am a violinist despite the saxophone case I carry, which clearly shows the shape of the instrument. Perhaps, my feminine Asian body—a slim torso with dark, long, straight hair—evokes the sounds of a classical violin instead of a jazz saxophone. The sound of a jazz saxophone performance is not associated with women’s bodies in general and young and pretty ones in particular. Tenor saxophonist Ada Rovatti mentioned, “I have to admit if I see a cute good looking girl with the saxophone, I’m like, hmmm, let’s see how she sounds. I get curious because a lot of times good looking women are misused.”⁴¹³ Her statement suggests the association of good-looking women with poor musicianship. Certainly, the musical sound itself has no gender, sexuality, or race. However, the musical sound evokes images of performers’ bodies because of historical and cultural associations. In the case of jazz, the body is often black, heterosexual, and male. Since this particular image of the body is associated with jazz music, when the sound of a good jazz performance comes out of an unexpected body, there is a disjunction between what an audience hears and sees.

In recent years, jazz has been increasingly consumed through videotaped performances as shown in numerous video clips, which range from performances of legendary musicians’ to those of amateurs’ on Internet websites like YouTube. When people perceive music performances, they listen to music as well as see the performers. And visual images affect the way we listen to the music. This chapter explores how female saxophonists present themselves visually and

⁴¹² Ibid.

⁴¹³ Ada Rovatti, personal communication with author, 8/6/2008.

aurally and “perform” specific versions of femininity and masculinity in order to negotiate the discourse of jazz saxophone performance. Through examining their video-taped performances and their images on CD covers and in photographs on their websites, I will show that recent changes in their visual presentations challenge the discourse of jazz, with the potential of expanding the visual image of the jazz saxophonist.

I suggest that the disjuncture between visual and aural presentations female jazz saxophonists present is similar to that of a person in drag. According to Judith Butler, drag reminds us that gender norms are so naturalized that we usually take them for granted. In drag, however, we immediately notice the dissonance created by “the expressive mode of gender” and the person’s “true” gender identity that we assume.⁴¹⁴ The sound of an accomplished female jazz saxophonist, because of its association with a black male body, is the expressive mode of masculinity, which is discordant with her female body. Some women wear pants to mitigate the dissonance, and others wear dresses to emphasize the gap.

6.1 HOW DO THEY WANT TO LOOK?

6.1.1 Pants and Shirts vs. Skirts and Dresses

“How do you want to present yourself in public performances” was perhaps the question female saxophonists I interviewed were most eager to answer. While some of them were unwilling to answer “gender-related” questions regarding music, most women were conscious of and interested in how they dressed/presented themselves on stage and did not mind sharing their

⁴¹⁴ Butler (1990), 174-5.

ideas. For example, tenor saxophonist Janelle Reichman said, “That’s a very conscious thing on my part. Something that I definitely notice when I hear all musicians play, but particularly when I see women play, I’m interested to see how they are presenting themselves.”⁴¹⁵ She suggests that she pays more attention to what women wear than men do. She went on saying, “What you wear is a big part of it when you are a performer because it’s also a visual thing.”⁴¹⁶ Female jazz saxophonists expressed two basic views on how they dress for public performance.

The first view is most strongly presented by alto saxophonist Sharel Cassity. In her late twenties, she feels strongly that she has to look professional. “I wear suits, or business clothes because I feel like it fits in with the genre of jazz.”⁴¹⁷ For the past few years, she has had short and dark hair although she had lighter brown long hair when I first met her around 2004 at a New York jazz club. Her effort of wearing suits can be presenting “cultural capital” mentioned in Chapter 5. Davies-Netzley suggests that successful corporate women “[alter] appearance to fit the proper business attire to conform to situations with other elites,” which she considers the presentation of cultural capital.⁴¹⁸ Cassity displays cultural capital that fits in the norm of the jazz instrumentalists.

Cassity continued, “There’s such a trend to go towards Candy Dulfer, Mindy Abair wearing bikinis, and I wanna be far from that. So I’m kinda too far on the other side.”⁴¹⁹ Cassity suggests that these two popular female “smooth jazz” saxophonists have created the image of sexy women, with which she does not want to be associated. “The most important thing for me is to have respect from musicians and for people to know what they get every time they call me.

⁴¹⁵ Reichman (2008)

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

⁴¹⁷ Cassity (2008)

⁴¹⁸ Davies-Netzley (1998), 349.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

They know that I'll show up and look professional. It's like part of a job."⁴²⁰ Her notion of "part of a job" is the opposite of the ideal of "glamour as labor" that Sherrie Tucker discusses in the context of all-girl bands of the 1940s. Female musicians in these all-girl bands frequently had to dress up in gowns, wear makeup, leave off their eyeglasses, and lose weight. As Tucker describes, they were challenged with the "sexualization and feminization of the job" and "performing a particular brand of femininity."⁴²¹ In this respect, Cassity's effort might be considered as desexualization and defeminization or masculinization of the job and performing a less glamorous version of femininity or even masculinity. She wants visually to fit in the norm of jazz instrumentalists.

While Cassity wants to be taken seriously among musicians, others emphasized the audience's reaction more. Tenor saxophonist Virginia Mayhew said, "I wanna be attractive, but I don't want people to like how I play because of how I look. And I want to be judged as a serious musician."⁴²² Similarly, Reichman stated, "I always try to look professional and classy. I never will go play in a little dress. Of course you wanna look good, but you want the attention to be on what you are playing and not be too much of a distraction."⁴²³ These women are conscious that an overly feminine look can distract audiences from their music. Alto saxophonist Sue Terry has a slightly different idea. "I don't wear skirts when I perform. I know women who wear skirts when they perform, because they wear skirts, but I'm not a skirt wearer. I own two skirts."⁴²⁴ It seems that Terry is suggesting that her choice of pants has nothing to do with jazz saxophone performance. Terry's attitude is notable because she constantly presents her views that negate

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ Tucker (2000), 59, 62.

⁴²² Mayhew (2009).

⁴²³ Reichman (2008).

⁴²⁴ Terry (2008).

norms of any kind. These women, though their motivations may be different, tend to wear slacks instead of skirts or dresses and not to wear too much makeup or jewelry. Although they are certainly not trying to pass for men, they follow the norms of men's clothing on stage rather than those of women's that are typically seen on glamorous jazz singers and that were de rigueur of some all-girl bands of the 1940s. Since the jazz discourse has maintained the traditional dichotomy of men/women and instrumentalists/singers relatively intact, the normative clothing style of jazz instrumentalists is that of men's. Therefore, it can be said that these female jazz saxophonists choose what to wear within the norm of jazz instrumentalists. In turn, they can be visually outside of their gender norms of women.

On the other hand, alto saxophonist Laura Dreyer expressed a different idea. Dreyer asserted, "I like clothes. I like to look cute and fashion forward. So I'm just gonna dress like myself. If somebody else has a problem with it, too bad."⁴²⁵ Unlike the women mentioned above, Dreyer does not worry about how other musicians or audiences would react to how she dresses. Their differences seem to correspond with their ages. In fact, Dreyer, now in her late forties, also mentioned,

When I was in my twenties, I had really short hair and never wore dresses or skirts. But there was a certain point of my life, I was just like, "why am I doing this?" I like cute clothes, I like to have my hair long, and if somebody has a problem with that, then I shouldn't be working with them. I wanna be who I am.⁴²⁶

Similarly, Ada Rovatti mentioned, "I like fashion. I'm from Italy. I'm not gonna deny my femininity just to prove that I can play. I'm not gonna dress like a boy or funky just because I look more believable as a saxophone player, that's bullshit. I'm a woman, I like a nice dress."⁴²⁷

⁴²⁵ Dreyer, (2008).

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

⁴²⁷ Rovatti (2008).

Rovatti is aware that her feminine dress is not typically considered to be an “authentic” jazz saxophonist look. Interestingly, alto saxophonist Grace Kelly displayed a similar attitude. At the age of seventeen, she stated, “We don’t have to dress in hats and baggy pants because that’s not who I am. I really like dressing up, I like fashion, so I wanna present like that.”⁴²⁸ Kelly often wears short, tight, bare-back dresses at her public performances. However, being Asian and small, she looks very young, which possibly masks overt feminine sexuality. In contrast to the women above, these three women’s clothing style is within the norms of women’s, which is outside the norms of “jazz instrumentalists.”

Alto saxophonist Tia Fuller’s changing attitudes in the past ten years also support the close relationship between women’s age and how they dress. She states, “I’ve always liked wearing skirts and dresses. But one day, a close friend of mine told me, ‘Tia, you have to be careful. What you wear affects how people perceive you.’”⁴²⁹ She realized that her feminine look could distract the audience from listening to her music. “All throughout undergrad, when I was trying to establish myself, even in grad school, I was wearing slacks, and button down shirts. In my mind, I want people not to see me as a woman, which is crazy because I am a woman regardless, but I wanted them to hear my music first.”⁴³⁰ While she was in her twenties, Fuller avoided dressing too femininely. She suggests, however, that her attitudes have been changing.

Actually, Beyonce’s band helped me with this because with them, part of the role is to be sexy. So of course we wear a skirt, stiletto heels, low cut tops. That doesn’t bother me at all. Now I can honestly say that just recently I’ve gotten a way more comfortable with how I dress. If I can play, I can, if I can’t, I can’t. I’m gonna just dress my personality and not be as concerned about that.⁴³¹

⁴²⁸ Kelly (2009).

⁴²⁹ Fuller (2008).

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ Ibid.

I responded, “I think that has also something to do with your confidence as a musician.” Fuller answered, “Definitely. That plays a large part. I was in my early twenties, and now I’m in my early thirties, so that’s a decade of me going through this whole process of being more secure with who I am as a person.”⁴³² This statement demonstrates her growing confidence as she matures, and also suggests the close tie between how women look and how they sound. Fuller is now confident enough with her musicianship to wear what she wants to wear regardless of how people perceive her. She adds that she still wears more conservative clothes such as pantsuits depending on whom she is playing with, where she performs at, who the bandleader is, etc. “So it’s still a balancing act.”⁴³³ From these statements, it is clear that besides age, how they dress also relates to the genre itself, their confidence level, performance venues, and their co-performers. In Fuller’s case, her clothing choice shifts between inside and outside the norms of jazz instrumentalists, depending on several factors.

Austrian alto saxophonist Karolina Strassmayer also mentioned her changes in the past ten years. She articulated,

I wanna present myself as a strong woman, [who] has a voice of her own, who’s not afraid to speak out musically as well as about issues in life in the world, who has something to say musically, and [who is] strong but feminine at the same time. That’s been a struggle for me over the years, too. When I first started, I was wearing leather jackets, super short hair, very tomboyish for a long time. I didn’t want to be noticed as a woman. And it’s last ten years, slowly, it’s been a process. And maybe now, I’m 38 and I’m beginning to feel comfortable looking feminine, feeling feminine, and yet still having that power, still being strong.⁴³⁴

Like Fuller, she did not want to be perceived as a woman because she did not her gender to overshadow audiences’ perception of her musicianship. Strassmayer’s statement suggests her

⁴³² Ibid.

⁴³³ Ibid.

⁴³⁴ Strassmayer (2009).

dilemma, especially when she was younger, of being strong and feminine at the same time. The difficulty in being strong and feminine simultaneously stems from her awareness of gender norms: strength and femininity are not compatible in normative views of gender. Yet, perhaps because of her confidence in being strong musically and personally, she feels more comfortable with presenting herself femininely. In other words, she situates herself outside the norms of women musically and inside visually.

Alto saxophonist Erica von Kleist's attitudes changed as well. When I interviewed her in August 2008, her view was closer to the first position. "If it's in a concert hall, I wear a suit, any other gigs, I wear nice slacks, nice shirts. I'd never wear a skin tight dress."⁴³⁵ When I saw her for a follow-up interview a year later, she shared her thoughts on marketing her band, which demonstrated her new concern for her status as a woman in the male dominated jazz scene. "When I think about how to draw people's attention, I have to sort of realize that yes, I'm a girl. There are certain aspects of marketing that pertains to work. There's a lot of sex when it comes to the saxophone. That's something I'm not comfortable [with]. I'm comfortable in my skin, but with this clothing [pointing to her modest blouse]."⁴³⁶ She pointed out that there are some female saxophonists who expose their skin for marketing purposes. "That's not me and that will lose respect in the jazz community like that [snapping fingers]."⁴³⁷ She researched the marketing strategies by looking at visual images saturating the online world. In particular, she searched for an image that is attractive but appropriate for a serious jazz musician. Consequently, the image she aims to project is that of classic American actresses who are "classy and super pretty." She said,

⁴³⁵ von Kleist (2008).

⁴³⁶ von Kleist (2009).

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

So this is something I've been doing in relation to gender. When I'm on the bandstand I don't think about the fact that I'm a woman, a minority. All I think about is the fact that I have a job to do as a musician. Off the bandstand, however, I realize that my gender sets me apart in this field, and on occasion helps me market myself as a unique artist. I'm not afraid to act feminine, since I am a female, but I never use my femininity in place of hard work, ability, and talent.⁴³⁸

Throughout my 2008 interview, von Kleist claimed that she is not conscious of being a woman in performing jazz. Yet, only in terms of marketing, she decided to take advantage of being a woman. In this case, von Kleist strategically stays in and out of the norms of jazz instrumentalist clothing to promote herself as an attractive and *serious* jazz instrumentalist.

6.1.2 Women's Age Matters

Women's age often affects how they perceive and present themselves. As my interviewees pointed out, their twenties was a period when they, and perhaps all women, were more conscious of how they looked. Mayhew, in her early fifties, who wants the audiences to appreciate her playing instead of her looks, said, "Probably I'm too old to get away with it even if I wanted to."⁴³⁹ In the same way, Ada Rovatti, in her thirties, mentioned, "If I want to look good and glamorous, I'm already too old to do that. I already passed the point of worrying if I look good."⁴⁴⁰ It seems as though these women believe that they are not attractive as women after a certain age. A conversation with saxophonist/singer Lily White, in her late forties, developed rather interestingly:

YS: How you dress seems to be more important for women. People seem to care more about how women dress when they perform.

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

⁴³⁹ Mayhew (2009).

⁴⁴⁰ Rovatti (2008).

LW: Yeah, well, especially getting older, I'm wondering what am I gonna do in the future, like how long am I able to do commercial gigs? I have to retreat into my writing or something.

YS: What do you mean by commercial gigs?

LW: Well, how long am I able to be hired as a side person, you know.

YS: Hmm. What do you mean?

LW: Like, when I'm sixty, are they gonna hire a sixty-year old woman to be a side man?

YS: Why not? Well, for men, it's not an issue?

LW: I think it is for them, too. That's why you see so many male musicians, they were doing drugs in the 1950s, but now they're all in the gym and try to stay thin. It's a youth oriented culture.⁴⁴¹

When I mentioned that people pay more attention to how women dress, White started to talk about the issue of aging. This concern with youthfulness and the fear of aging are not new. Sherrie Tucker suggests that some all-girl bands in the 1940s emphasized "youthfulness" as their sales point. The suicide of the pianist Lee Ann Savage of the Virgil Whyte band might have had something to do with Savage's idea that "women over thirty should not play jazz."⁴⁴²

Although White claimed that both men and women worry about aging, it seems that in American society a youthful visual image is more desirable for women than for men. E. Ann Kaplan discusses aging as trauma, especially for white women because of their middle class status and Western cultures. In addition, Kaplan suggests that women's special positioning as "to be gazed at" makes aging especially traumatic.⁴⁴³ Similarly, Frida Kerner Furman states, "The aging female body comes into deep conflict with cultural representations of feminine beauty, which in U.S. society—and increasingly across the world—today demands youth, slenderness, agility."⁴⁴⁴ In writing about older Jewish women, Furman asserts that women's "youthful" body is "construed and experienced within the context of multiple power relations:

⁴⁴¹ White (2008).

⁴⁴² Tucker (2000), 62.

⁴⁴³ E. Ann Kaplan, "Trauma and Aging: Marlene Dietrich, Melanie Klein, and Marguerite Duras." In *Figuring Age: Women, Bodies, Generations*. Kathleen Woodward, ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 171-174.

⁴⁴⁴ Frida Kerner Furman, *Facing the Mirror* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), 5.

male and female, young and old, gentile and Jewish.”⁴⁴⁵ Further, she argues, “the body of the older Jewish woman is culturally constructed...from the perspective of the male gaze, the youthful gaze, the dominant-culture’s gaze.”⁴⁴⁶ In the context of female jazz instrumentalists, a woman’s body is definitely constructed through the gaze of (heterosexual) male and dominant culture. Though American culture in general is, as White mentioned, youth oriented, jazz is not as youth driven as other black popular music genres such as hip hop and R&B. In addition, some kind of maturity is appreciated in jazz: sounding mature is seen as a compliment, “You sound like an *old* black man.”⁴⁴⁷ While child prodigies achieve the popularity in jazz in the same way as in any other music genres, old, legendary musicians are respected and appreciated the most as the true bearers of the genre. Noted jazz historian Ted Gioia, in an article harshly criticizing Grace Kelly’s playing as premature, states, “I believe it was the late [jazz critic] Whitney Balliett who declared that jazz as a music abhors cuteness; perhaps because of that, the career durability of such youngsters has generally not been good.”⁴⁴⁸ Whether the child prodigy jazz musicians’ career is short-lived is not an issue to explore here. But it might be the case that the increasing participation of female jazz instrumentalists has driven the genre to become more visual and youth oriented because of women’s strong association with youth and visual aspects.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁷ This is the comment my informants (white females in their twenties) received from audience members.

⁴⁴⁸ Ted Gioia, “Who is Grace Kelly?” <http://www.jazz.com/jazz-blog/2009/5/6/who-is-grace-kelly>
[accessed 8 August 2009]

⁴⁴⁹ Pianist Orrin Evans posted on his Facebook page that male jazz musicians should be more concerned about what they wear at their public performances and that female players actually are doing much better in that respect. Many others agreed with him.

6.1.3 Images of Female Jazz Saxophonists on the CD covers and Websites

Female musicians' ideas expressed in the previous sections are reflected to different degrees on their images circulated through the CD covers and pictures on websites. Among numerous visual materials available mainly online, this section will focus on three alto saxophonists, Sharel Cassity, Erica von Kleist, and Tia Fuller. I selected them because they have successfully established their career in the New York jazz scene in the past several years⁴⁵⁰ and because they all made major changes in the presentation of their images that coincided with the renewal of their official websites in 2009.⁴⁵¹ While these three women possess different views on self-presentation, they all adopted more visually oriented and more traditionally feminine images. I suggest that recent changes in their presentation suggest a new direction in the visual presentation of jazz musicians rather than a mere coincidence.

In her interview, Sharel Cassity emphasized herself in a way that fits the genre of jazz. In other words, she wants to stay within the norms of the jazz instrumentalist. This view is illustrated on the cover of her first album, *Just For You* (2008).

⁴⁵⁰ These three musicians are not only visually innovative but also musically outstanding. Cassity, since earning her master's degree from the Julliard School, has played with Diva as well as the Dizzy Gillespie Alumni Big Band, Jimmy Heath Big Band, and Roy Hargrove Big Band. von Kleist, also an alumna of Julliard, has performed with Arturo O'Farrell's Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra and Wynton Marsalis's Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra. She was also awarded the prestigious Martin E. Segal Award from Lincoln Center in 2009. Fuller graduated from Spellman College with a BA in music and University of Colorado Boulder with an MA in music education. Besides working with R& B star Beyonce, she has performed with Jimmy Heath, Gerald Wilson, and Don Byron. Her band has headlined major jazz festivals in the US and overseas.

⁴⁵¹ Sharel Cassity: <http://sharelcassity.com/>, Erica von Kleist: <http://ericavonkleist.com/>, Tia Fuller: <http://tiafuller.com/>



Figure 1 Sharel Cassity, *Just For You*

On the cover, Cassity is holding her saxophone with only her upper body appearing. She has very short hair and her right ear displays a modest earring. She smiles gently showing her front teeth, and wears a shiny black shirt probably with a black camisole top underneath, so that skin exposure is at a minimum. A similar image is shown in a photo posted on the website of the New York jazz club, Smalls. This black and white photo shows the upper body of Cassity blowing the saxophone hard. Her eyes are closed and her neck and cheeks are slightly swollen. She wears a dark colored shirt unbuttoned and a light color V-neck T-shirt underneath. In a similar way, a snapshot of her quintet on her website shows her with the same very short hair in a black suit and ivory shirt.

In contrast, pictures from 2009 and 2010 present a different image. The cover photo of her second CD, *Relentless* (2009) released by a major label, is not drastically different from the first one.

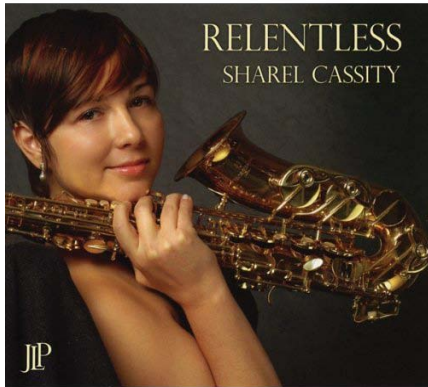


Figure 2 Sharel Cassity, *Relentless*

The picture shows her only from the chest up. She has slightly longer hair with reddish highlights in front. Her right hand holds the saxophone and rests it on her shoulder. From this picture, it is not clear what she is wearing because the saxophone and a chair-like object cover her body. Her face does not show much emotion. Inside the cover, there are three pictures: a headshot from an oblique angle; an upper body shot from a slightly oblique angle, holding the saxophone with her left hand; and an upper body shot holding the saxophone with both arms. The headshot shows that she is wearing a black halter top, but it only shows a shoulder. The first body shot finally shows that the halter top has a deep V shape cut in the chest. Because the photo is taken from a slightly oblique angle, her cleavage is not completely showing. The second body shot is seen only when the CD is taken out of the case. In this picture, she is smiling with her upper teeth showing, and her cleavage is emphasized. This last picture is a huge step away from the image Cassity had maintained for the past few years, an image she used to get herself established. The cover art for Cassity's major debut album, especially the last picture, suggests the presence of the male gaze, which may be related to the fact that the cover design was done by John Lee—heterosexual male jazz bassist/ producer.

In addition to her CD cover, her promotional photos on her website present two types of images. Many of the photos present her old image: youthful, tomboyish, cute, and a serious jazz musician.



Figure 3 Sharel Cassity

In one of her four promotional photos, however, she wears a red, shiny, short, tight tube dress, which emphasizes her feminine figure. Moreover, in her most recent picture for the R.S. Virtuoso saxophone that she endorses, she poses seductively wearing a short, red, velvet-like tube-top dress. Some snap shots taken at her performances also show her new image, wearing skirts and makeup.



Figure 4 Sharel Cassity

As mentioned above, Erica von Kleist's changing attitude is also shown in her CD cover pictures and promo shots. The cover photo of her first CD *Project E* (2006) is rather modest.



Figure 5 Erica von Kleist, *Project E*

In the picture, her upper body positioned in front of a wooden fence in a black $\frac{3}{4}$ sleeve shirt holds a saxophone. Her body is faced at a slightly oblique angle and her eyes look towards diagonally forward. She has shoulder length dark brown hair and wears natural make-up. Subsequently, she released four single CDs between October 2009 and March 2010, and their album covers are drastically different than her first album. For example, the first single released in October, titled *E's Boogaloo*, has eye catching and highly sophisticated cover art, in which von Kleist sits on a silver high chair wearing a halter neck dress. She holds the saxophone in her right hand and rests it on her right knee. Her light blue halter neck dress with large white polka dots exposes her arms and crossed legs but in a rather clever way. The dress accentuates her large chest and small waist yet slickly hides her cleavage because of an oblique angle. Against a light salmon pink background that compliments her pale skin color, her bright red pointed-toe pumps, bracelet, large hoop earrings, and lipstick give a subtle sexiness as well as nice color contrast.



Figure 6 Erica von Kleist, *E's Boogaloo*

Her hairstyle and makeup reminds me of Marilyn Monroe. In fact, one of the newly taken photos for the new website seems to model a famous Marilyn Monroe picture in the angle of the face, half-opened eyes, arch-shaped eyebrows, and slightly opened mouth. The image presented in these pictures is sexy and feminine yet classy.



Figure 7 (left) Erica von Kleist, (right) Marilyn Monroe

Tia Fuller has been presenting more feminine images especially after she started to work with Beyonce's all-female band in 2006. Her new website features a new set of photos that presents her new hairstyle and her celebrity look. On the cover picture of her first CD, *Pillar of*

Strength (2005), her upper body wearing an olive green spaghetti strap camisole is holding the saxophone.



Figure 8 Tia Fuller, (left) *Pillar of Strength*, (right) *Healing Space*

She puts her brownish micro braided medium length hair up so that her shoulders and areas above her chest are exposed, though her saxophone and its shadow cover her right side. Her slightly muscular figure hints at cleavage showing from the camisole. She wears light makeup and a silver necklace and looks downward. This photo presents her as a beautiful, young black woman. Her second album, *Healing Space* (2007) from a major label, portrays a similar image as the first one. On the cover, Fuller in a mocha colored halter neck wrap dress sits on a white couch leaning on a pillow and her feet atop the couch. Her saxophone is also leaning on the back of the couch around her feet. Her lower body is covered with her dress and brown leather boots. The way her skin is exposed is similar to the previous CD cover, and we can glimpse her subtle cleavage in the low cut neckline of her wrap dress. She wears silver and brown leather bracelets, a silver necklace, and long thin hanging earrings. Her fingernails are nicely French manicured. Her eyes look off to the right at an oblique angle, and she wears a minimum of makeup. She has the same hairstyle as the first photo except her hair color is darker. This picture also presents the image of a beautiful, stylish, well-maintained, feminine black woman who is not overly sexy.

The third CD, *Decisive Steps* (2010), features the cover photo of Fuller's new look.



Figure 9 Tia Fuller, *Decisive Steps*

She has very short, shiny, dark straight hair with a sleek haircut. Her makeup is not too heavy but shows a definitely sophisticated and celebrity-like look. The lighting creates nuances that accentuate her high cheekbone and sharp face line. She wears a black and white, short, tight dress with long and wide sleeves. She sits on a small table like object, slightly leaning forward. Her body shows a beautiful curve from the waist to hip. Slim legs come out from the dress and knees are slightly parted. Yet, we cannot see the inside of the dress because of the shadow. Her left hand, with a huge ring on the index finger, is on her left leg, and her right hand grabs the neck of the saxophone. Only the neck and the upper part of the saxophone are in the picture. The main difference between this photo and previous two are: her eyes are looking into the camera, her mouth is slightly open, her legs are shown, and the saxophone is only partially seen in the corner of the picture. This picture portrays her as a sexy, glamorous, chic, but not promiscuous black woman. These three women's newly created visual images differ drastically from other female and male jazz instrumentalists.

Most other female saxophonists have a less glamorous and modest look on their CD covers and promotional pictures—similar to the images presented in CD covers of Cassity and

von Kleist's debut albums. One of a few exceptions is Laura Dreyer. As she let me know in her interview, she is not afraid of showing her feminine sexuality. She also articulates that her music is Brazilian jazz. She thinks that Brazilian music is sensual and that a sexy outfit fits in the genre, while straight-ahead jazz demands more seriousness. In the cover photo of her CD *Mysterious Encounter* (2002), she has a semi-long blond wavy hair and wears a tight, red, shiny short dress, holding the saxophone in her right hand. From a slightly diagonal angle, she looks at the camera flirtatiously. This photo demonstrates her mature sexiness, but not overly sexual or promiscuous.



Figure 10 (left) Laura Dreyer, *Mysterious Encounter*, (right) Dreyer promo shot from 1982

While Dreyer's current promotional pictures are consistent with her CD cover, her old promotional photos from the 1980s present her rather differently. In one of these black and white pictures from 1982, Dreyer has a short hair and wears dark color long sleeve shirts and pants holding the saxophone. She has minimum skin exposure. This transition of her self-presentation clearly reflects her changing attitudes described in her statements above.

As we have seen, these female saxophonists visually present femininity along a continuum. Some women visually perform gender within the norms of the jazz instrumentalist

(outside the norms of women), some outside those norms (inside the norms of women), and others in and outside the norms.

6.2 SOUND AND IMAGE IN ACTION: VIDEO CLIPS

The previous sections demonstrated that female saxophonists tactically “perform” in and outside the norms of the jazz instrumentalist in terms of how they visually present themselves. In this context, since “the jazz instrumentalist” is normatively heterosexual male (and stereotypically black and old), these women perform certain gender norms of clothes and demeanor. In this section, I will examine performances of three female jazz saxophonists, Sue Terry, Tia Fuller, and Grace Kelly, and analyze how they present themselves visually and aurally. I selected these three women (white American in her early 50s, African American in her early 30s, and Asian American in her late teens) to show different types of self-presentation and their “performance” of gender. Terry represents one end of the continuum, Fuller the other end, and Kelly is the extreme case.

6.2.1 Sue Terry

Sue Terry has been active in the New York jazz scene since she moved there from her hometown Hartford, CT in the 1980s. In her interview, she expressed the view that gender and race do not matter in the jazz community: “Jazz musicians are very accepting of anybody who plays well. If you can play, you’re sort of accepted as a player.” She has worked with musicians

such as Billy Taylor, Clark Terry, Charli Persip, Clifford Jordan, Melba Liston, Walter Bishop, Jr., and Jaki Byard.

In the first video, taped at the 2006 COTA Jazz Festival, Terry's quintet plays the song, "Home Cooking," a modified blues in a boogaloo-like rhythm.⁴⁵² Performing on the outdoor stage on a sunny day in early September, the musicians in the band (Terry and four males) are in casual outfits. Terry's shoulder length dark hair looks frizzy and gives an impression of being not so stylish. She wears eyeglasses, modest earrings, a loosely-fit sleeveless lavender colored T-shirt, and black pants. The bassist and guitarist wear light color half-sleeve shirts and pants, the drummer wears a shirt and shorts, the percussionist wears a sleeveless T-shirt and shorts. Visually, her outfit and rough looks make her blend into the band as "one of the guys" instead of making her stand out. This expression of "one of the guys" frequently appeared in the conversations with musicians in terms of both visual presentation and personality.⁴⁵³

In this short segment prepared for a local TV news show, Terry plays a theme and five choruses of solo improvisation. While improvising, her eyes are mostly closed or looking down. She moves her head and body with the music and frowns as she reaches high notes and makes a throaty growling sound, all of which make her look engaged in the music. Musically, she has a solid sound and secure technique. Throughout the five-chorus solo, she keeps the almost the same level of energy. At the end of the fourth chorus, she introduces a small rhythmic and harmonic tension playing three-beat patterns over 4/4 as well as chromatically ascending notes.

⁴⁵² <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Ib3U4fzTLw>

⁴⁵³ Gary Alan Fine suggests that becoming "one of the boys" is one of the strategies for women to be accepted in male-dominated fields. "One of the Boys: Women in Male Dominated Settings." In *Changing Men: New Directions in Research on Men and Masculinity* Michael Kimmel, ed. (London: Sage Publications, 1987)

When she reaches the fifth chorus, both the rhythmic and harmonic tensions are released and the solo reaches a small climax.

The second video was taped at the St. Petersburg College Jazz Festival in January 2009. This one-minute segment of the video captures Terry's solo on an unknown medium tempo song.⁴⁵⁴ In this indoor setting, Terry wears long black jacket and black pants, which is similar to the outfit in her promotional picture. Unlike in the first video, her hair is shiny and neatly parted in center, but she still wears eyeglasses. As mentioned above, eyeglasses were banned in some all-girl bands from the 1940s as well as in a contemporary all-female band as I will discuss in the next chapter perhaps because of their association with intellect and non-glamorousness. The video only shows the bassist and the pianist, who are both older white men wearing suits. In this video, she also mixes into the band well. The video starts at the last 24 bars of her solo. Already in the high register, she hits a high Ab three times and comes down to the lower register. Then she plays triplets of blue notes, to which the drummer responds and creates a small climax. She moves her upper body up and down along with her playing. In the next 8 bars, she reaches to high Bb and bends her upper body backward, which creates a climax musically and visually. The energy level goes down in the next 8 bars, and she finishes her solo.

This video is different from the first one in that Terry is in more formal attire and moves her body more dramatically. While she may have done so for any number of reasons, her interview statement regarding the audience reaction may be relevant.

The more I see of people's performances and audiences and so forth, the less I'm inclined to attribute [audiences'] reactions solely to gender. It has a lot to do with how someone presents themselves [sic] in general rather than man or woman. I think that has more to do with a person's presentation on stage, maybe a person's dress on stage, a person's attitude on stage, than it does whether they are a man or a woman. I think people

⁴⁵⁴ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9eS_AyFmTws

appreciate the energy. They like to see someone who moves around a lot, they like to see someone who looks like they're really into it, they like to look at nice looking people, who doesn't? I do. There are a lot of factors there when you talk about performing because the visual element is very strong to an audience.⁴⁵⁵

Her performance in the second video might be a part of her conscious effort at stage presentation. Yet, she still remains within the norms of the jazz instrumentalist in terms of how she dresses although she asserted that her choice of pants has nothing to do with jazz saxophone performance. Musically, in both videos, she demonstrates her musicianship as a jazz professional even though her improvisational style might not be the most current. Since she is within the norms of men musically and visually, the gap between how she sounds and how she looks is not too large in either video.

6.2.2 Tia Fuller

As mentioned earlier, Tia Fuller has been touring with Beyonce since fall 2006. The first video was taped at the 2007 Detroit Jazz Festival. Fuller performs her original composition "Break Through" with her all female quartet.⁴⁵⁶ In this video, she wears a bright reddish sleeveless short dress (3 inches above the knees) with black leggings. Her long, wavy hair is clipped with a pair of sunglasses on top. Her outfit and hairstyle represent a trendy feminine look. Her dark-skinned arms show her well-trained muscles, which makes her look athletic. She looks very confident and projects the strong aura of a stage performer. Her body movements almost coincide with the phrasing of her music, which produces an exciting feeling. Her left foot is slightly forward, and

⁴⁵⁵ Sue Terry (2008).

⁴⁵⁶ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pVvI2tnwg3g>

her knees frequently bend, and her body is constantly moving with the music. The song “Breakthrough” is a typical “burn-out” tune that has a complicated theme with a heavy groove. The improvisation is based on a 16-bar form (8 bars of D minor, 4 bars of G minor, and 4 bars of D minor), which sounds similar to a minor blues. Fuller’s solo starts with a long note of the highest A (F# for alto), which sounds highly assertive, and the melody gradually moves down to the middle register. It is immediately noticeable that Fuller’s solo is based more on the modal approach that was first cultivated by Miles Davis and John Coltrane in the late 1950s. Because of this approach, her style sounds more contemporary than Terry’s. In addition, her improvisation demonstrates motivic development rather than depending on a series of formulas (licks), which requires more spontaneity, flexibility, and creativity. This approach also relates to the song itself. The chord changes for “Breakthrough” call for a modal approach. Since the changes (alternating D minor and G minor) do not have a strong forward motion by themselves, the soloist has to create a motion and dynamics. Starting with the seventh chorus when Fuller reiterates Db and C from the previous bar, pianist Shamie Royston provides chords that deviate from F minor and open up the harmonic background. Fuller responds to it with a virtuosic fast run of intricate phrases. Then, toward the end of the chorus, she runs up to C and D (A and B for alto, above the normal range), and drummer Kim Thompson responds to this by busy fills. This leads to the next chorus (9th chorus) where Fuller uses “outside” phrases, a series of ascending triads, which are often heard in the music of John Coltrane and Kenny Garrett. Subsequently, from the end of the 9th chorus, Fuller builds up rhythmic tension by repeating a non-metric phrase consists of D and F. The tension is released in the first beat of the 9th bar in the chorus 10 where the chord changes to Bb minor 7th, Thompson smashes the cymbal, and Fuller hits the high A at the same time. This type of climax is hard to achieve over the fast moving chord progressions. The process

through which the tension is built up sounds exciting, risky, and adventurous, a sound that is typically associated with masculinity. While building up the tension, her body moves along with her playing and her face frowns when she reaches the high register and plays intricate phrases. But she is relatively relaxed and her face displays little contortion.

The second video clip is from a live news program that featured Fuller when she performed at the 2009 Detroit Jazz Festival. After being interviewed by the host, she plays Charlie Parker's "Billie's Bounce" in a medium tempo with a male pianist.⁴⁵⁷ On this video, she has the new hairstyle, makeup, and outfit mentioned above. Her very short sleek haircut, chic makeup, large silver hoop earrings, and a bright red short pant suit give her a fashionable, hip, and glamorous look. In contrast to large exposure of the legs, her upper body is completely covered up as her stand collar tight-fit jacket is buttoned up, which creates a sexy yet classy impression. Perhaps because of the limited airtime, she took a two-chorus solo, followed by one-chorus piano solo, and the video fades out while they are trading four bars. Within the theme and two choruses of improvisation, Fuller demonstrates her resonant and rich sound, solid technique, familiarity with bebop as well as slightly modern languages, and a laid-back swing feeling. Her eyes look downward as in the previous video, and her body moves quite naturally along with the music.

In both videos, Fuller presented a feminine look and the level of technical mastery that has been associated with men. The first video especially demonstrates her ability to take riskier approaches such as creating climaxes by rhythmic and melodic (harmonic) tensions. The second video presents her as a young, fit, stylish, and sexy black woman. Therefore, it can be said that visual and aural presentations do not match one another very well. In other words, while she

⁴⁵⁷ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VaKIF7bDKU4>

aurally stays within the norm of the jazz instrumentalist, she steps outside the norm visually. However, the degree of deviation from the norms is not too large, compared to her visual presentation when she works with Beyonce. For example, one of a video clip of a live Beyonce concert features Fuller playing an instrumental ballad with a keyboardist.⁴⁵⁸ Her hair is long, shiny and nicely curled, and her face has noticeably more makeup. She wears micro mini black leather tight skirt and bare-back top that barely hides her breasts. In the second video, answering to the news show host asking her how she manages to play different styles of music, Fuller stated, “I look at it as wearing different hats. I have the Beyonce, pop R&B hat that I put on, and I have the jazz hat.” Wearing these different “hats,” Fuller definitely performs different types of femininities that fit into different music genres and audiences. Her presentation, which allows men’s objectification of her body when working with Beyonce, might be the one typically associated with hypersexual black women. Though her jazz persona is more conservative than her R&B persona, one comment left on YouTube suggests the possibility of the male gaze: “This chocolate fox can play.” In this way, it can be said that Fuller is expanding the visual images that are appropriate for the female jazz instrumentalist.

6.2.3 Grace Kelly

Grace Kelly may be the artist who presents the largest gap between her musical sound and visual presentation. She was born in 1992 in Wellesley, MA, and began taking piano lessons at age six. Before starting to play the saxophone at age ten, her favorite activities were singing,

⁴⁵⁸ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WDjozympg8> See at 3:37.

writing songs, dancing, and acting. Her talent as a jazz saxophonist flourished rather quickly: she played her first gig only six weeks after her first lesson, and recorded her first CD when she was twelve. She has performed with numerous jazz greats and has been studying at Berklee College of Music on full scholarship since September 2008.

In the first video, taped at Freiofer's Saratoga Jazz Festival in June 2009, Kelly plays her original composition "101" with her quintet consisting of Kelly and trumpet, piano, bass, and drums (all males).⁴⁵⁹ Kelly and the rest of the band present a contrasting look: the pianist, the bassist, and the drummer are all in black shirts and pants, and the trumpeter wears light blue shirts and black pants; Kelly, dark hair in an up style with an orange hair band, wearing an orange, sleeveless, bare-back short tight-fit dress. The song has a theme consisting of several sections (each section has different tonal center) and the meter changes from 7/4 to 4/4 then to 7/4, and the final section is 6/4+7/4. While playing the theme, Kelly's body is constantly moving. After the theme, the pianist fills a short segment, to which Kelly calls out to show her excitement. The trumpeter takes the first solo over Bbm7 with a funk beat. The video captures the trumpeter, and Kelly is out of the sight. Toward the end of the solo when she came back into the view, she is closing her eyes, bobbing her head, dancing, calling out, and getting into the groove. Occasionally, her face is smiling, and then frowning, which show her appreciation of her co-performer's solo. Taking over the solo, she is absorbed into improvising immediately. Her solo is based on Gbm7 with a funk beat first. She moves her body with the music, bending her knees and twisting her lower body. The funk beat occasionally breaks down because of Kelly's free rhythmic approach. Since the chord is static, her improvisation depends on the interaction among musicians instead of on stock phrases or licks. How she develops her solo is completely

⁴⁵⁹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uDQS3N3ewKY>

up to her. Her eyes are closed, and her face is rather expressive: she constantly arches and bends her eyebrows. She exposes herself in the very moment of creation to the audience. She looks as if she is possessed. Such her facial expressions are comparable to those of male jazz musicians such as John Coltrane, Cannonball Adderley, and Lee Konitz. In fact, Kelly's facial gestures closely resemble Konitz's in the way they puff their cheeks and close their eyes tightly with occasional frowning. This is most likely because of the "most intensive connection"⁴⁶⁰ she had with Konitz, with whom she has studied for the past three years. In this performance, Kelly's small Asian body with girly outfit does not fit the mature improvisational style coming out of her saxophone or her facial gestures and body movements.

The second video is taken at Dizzy's Club Coca Cola in June 2009 when she performed there with the same group. In this clip, she sings a standard song, "It Might As Well Be Spring" in a bossa nova rhythm.⁴⁶¹ Kelly wears a light blue short tight dress and the same color hair band as usual. Here, I focus on comparing Kelly's body movement and facial expressions with those shown in the first video. While the band plays the introduction with a bossa nova groove, Kelly moves her body along with the music in the way female jazz singers typically would. She has a nice (female) singing voice though her pitch is slightly flat at times. Her face is as expressive as when she plays the saxophone, but she presents the look of a jazz singer: her face is smiling, but frowns when reaching high notes. At times her eyes are open, looking in a direction as if she were singing to someone. And her left hand moves gracefully along with the music. In other words, she moves her body according to the mannerisms of a jazz singer. It seems as though Kelly has two different personae: one for the saxophonist, and one for the singer. In other words,

⁴⁶⁰ Gracekellymusic.com

⁴⁶¹ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5au1x_zOVb8

she “performs” different versions of femininity—a more feminine one and a less feminine or a slightly masculine one both visually and musically. Her mastery of the instrument and creativity in improvising demonstrates stereotypical masculinity. In fact, Greg Osby, who knows Kelly through private instruction at Berklee College of Music, extols Kelly’s already original voice on the saxophone, a talent that some male jazz musicians in their 40s are yet to achieve.⁴⁶² Her saxophone skills aurally present maturity and masculinity that does not fit her visual presentation even when she also tries to perform visually masculine facial gestures and body movements. In contrast, when she sings, she is within the norm of the female jazz singer both visually and aurally. Kelly’s saxophone performance, along with Fuller’s, challenges the discourses of jazz and expands the norms of gender. While they are both female jazz saxophonists, their performances may be perceived quite differently, however. Fuller, in her early thirties and African American, might look more plausible as a jazz musician. On the other hand, Kelly, being seventeen –looks younger than her actual age—and Asian, presents a gap between how she looks and sounds that is rather large and sometimes shocks her audience.

6.3 FEMALE SAXOPHONISTS IN SMOOTH JAZZ

“There’s nothing more sexy than a beautiful blond playing a sax!”⁴⁶³

This chapter so far has presented different types of femininities “performed” by female saxophonists in the field of straight-ahead jazz. As Sharel Cassity and Erica von Kleist mentioned in the interview, smooth jazz saxophonists present images with which they do not

⁴⁶² Greg Osby (2009).

⁴⁶³ This comment was left for “Lily Was Here” by Dave Stewart & Candy Dulfer on YouTube. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XhSx8uKdD5o>

want to be associated. This section will focus on alto saxophonist Mindi Abair and tenor saxophonist Jessy J to explore what kind of image these women have created and circulated among the general public.⁴⁶⁴ Unlike her Dutch counterpart Candy Dulfer who was born in the same year (1969) and made her major label debut in 1990, Abair's major debut was rather late in 2003 when the prestigious label Verve signed her. After graduating from Berklee College of Music and up to the point that she signed with Verve, Abair strived to become a successful musician in the Los Angeles area. Before moving into the smooth jazz scene, she toured with such pop artists as the Backstreet Boys and Mandy Moore.

When her major debut album *It Just Happens That Way* (2003) came out she was 34 years old. Yet her visual image never gives the impression of an average 34-year-old white American woman. Even at age 41, a recent video on YouTube showing her photo shoot and interview demonstrates her amazingly youthful, fit, and glamorous look.⁴⁶⁵ Perhaps, she “naturally” looks young. But it is very likely that her youthful image is also demanded from a marketing perspective. The promotional video for the song “Do You Miss Me?” from the album *Life Less Ordinary* (2006) clearly shows how she is packaged to “perform” a certain version of femininity.⁴⁶⁶ The video starts from the scene in which a black stretch limousine pulls over at a chic boutique hotel, and Abair emerges from the car carrying the saxophone case. Now the screen shows Abair performing with the band. She has a long blond hair and is made up perfectly: smoky-eyes, false eyelashes, and glossy lips give her a glamorous look. She wears a short, low cut spaghetti-strap dress with black leggings. The introductory part of the song is

⁴⁶⁴ Although Cassity mentioned Candy Dulfer who has been internationally active in the smooth jazz scene, I excluded her from this study because I focus on musicians whose base is in the US.

⁴⁶⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZmSrOzXjsN8>

⁴⁶⁶ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XU3vhO-Q5zs>

played by the saxophone and drums only, which seems to be improvisational. When she plays the saxophone her eyes are closed for the most part in the same way as other female saxophonists discussed above. Abair's face, however, does not show the signs of distress seen on other saxophonists' face. Perhaps, she actually played the instrument in this video shoot, but the sound is clearly overdubbed. Although her face occasionally shows slight frowning, it implies a sensual moment instead of a moment of serious creation. Soon the scene at the hotel lounge emerges: Abair is having a cocktail, flipping back her hair sensuously and staring into the distance with a look of melancholy. After a few seconds of the shot from her recording session in black and white, it comes back to the performance scene. Abair sings the lyrics, "Do you miss me? 'Cause I miss you." Since the lyrics are used as a chorus effect, she sings as if she is whispering, looking into the camera with flirting eyes. Her facial expressions while singing are almost the same as when she plays the saxophone. In the middle, a white male guitarist's face is focused and his eyes are ogling Abair, which implies the male gaze. Frequently, Abair stands in between the guitarist and a black male bassist, playing and dancing with them flirtatiously. Since the video scenes of the recording studio in black and white and those of Abair in the hotel room are inserted frequently, the image of her actual playing is deemphasized. Besides, throughout the video, her body movements and facial gestures are not the result of playing the saxophone but for the purpose of displaying an image constructed by the male gaze. She represents a young, sexy, blond, glamorous, slim, and desirable white woman. The song in a funky rock rhythm consists of two sections of simple chord changes with a recurring bass line. She repeats the simple melodies, sometimes with slight variations. She briefly improvises in the third chorus in the idioms of pop songs. She demonstrates a mastery of the instrument and nice sound for this type of music, though the music does not involve the type of spontaneous creativity seen in

straight-ahead jazz performances. Therefore, her visual and aural presentations do not create a huge gap that a glamorous feminine looking straight-ahead jazz saxophonist would present.

Jessy J, an alumna of the University of Southern California's jazz studies, released her debut CD *Tequila Moon* in 2008. According to her biography on her official website, she joined the cast of an off-Broadway show in 2004 and toured with the Temptations in 2006. In fact, she was inspired by Mindy Abair when she went to see her show. The only information that suggests her age is that she participated in the Latin Jazz Project for professional musicians under 30 years old in 2006. The promotional video for the title track "Tequila Moon" demonstrates Jessy J's youthful, slim yet curvy body—her beautiful Latina (Chicana) femininity.⁴⁶⁷ While Abair's PV showed her with the other musicians in her band, this video features Jessy J in a bright red low-cut dress without other band members. The very first shot of the video is her dancing with people. The next shot is her playing the saxophone though there is no saxophone sound in the music, and several young men flocking to and ogling her. This short segment establishes the disconnect between the visual and aural elements of the video. For the most part, she holds the saxophone as if she is playing, yet, it is obvious that she is not. In addition, footage of her dancing salsa-like with a man are frequently inserted. Her body movement with the saxophone is solely for dancing and might be even choreographed: her body is not moved by playing the saxophone, as clearly shown when she holds up her saxophone very high as if she is playing into the sky. There is no facial contortion while she blows the horn. Frequently, some male dancers are staring at her, which implies the male gaze. The music is soft and smooth in a Latin-rock rhythm. While the music demonstrates her solid musicianship, there are few elements of spontaneous creation jazz musicians would strive for. In Jessy J's case, the disconnect between

⁴⁶⁷ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tav4Ti7dSps>

her look and her music is minimal. In other words, both Abair and Jessy J “perform” certain types of femininity both musically and visually that are outside the norms of the jazz instrumentalist.

In the interview with Alvin Jones, the host of the radio show Planet Jazz, Abair proudly states that her friend’s daughter believed the saxophone to be a “girl instrument” because the girl grew up watching Abair playing it.⁴⁶⁸ In addition, Jessy J’s biography refers to Abair as an inspiration. Surely, because of her commercial success and visibility, we see that Abair is a role model for young female saxophonists, but as some of my female interviewees in the straight-ahead jazz scene claim, the glamorous and feminized image of the female saxophonist is something “serious” jazz musicians want to avoid. Images like those presented in Abair’s and Jesse J’s video allow the viewer to objectify the performer. For example, the comments left on Abair’s video discussed above include: “Mindi...would you marry me?” “I’d want her to play my sax if you know what I mean hehe,” and “She is a piece of ass...Damn!” These comments suggest that Abair’s sexualized feminine images seem to evoke sexual desire in some viewers. In contrast, the videos of the straight ahead jazz musicians discussed above tend to reject the “male gaze.”

Perhaps, many listeners do not differentiate smooth jazz from straight-ahead jazz. There is, however, a fine line between these two genres, and each genre is surrounded by different discourses. Smooth jazz, as opposed to straight-ahead jazz, may be considered to be a “feminized” version of jazz as Sherrie Tucker suggests.⁴⁶⁹ In general, smooth jazz does not

⁴⁶⁸ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UkzAoNdet64> See at 1:31.

⁴⁶⁹ Sherrie Tucker, “Bordering on Community: Improvising Women Improvising Women-in-Jazz.” In *The Other Side of Nowhere: Jazz, Improvisation, And Communities in Dialogue*, eds. Daniel Fischlin and Ajay Heble (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), 260.

demonstrate the melodic, harmonic, or rhythmic complexity or spontaneous creativity of extended improvisation that signify masculinity. Therefore, these female performers' feminine look and sound fit in the genre better than in straight-ahead jazz.

6.4 AUDIENCE RECEPTION: EMPIRICAL APPROACH

I have discussed so far that female saxophonists visually and aurally perform different versions of masculinity and femininity. My analysis of video clips depends on my interpretation of gender signifiers. My interpretation is structured by my knowledge of music and discourses surrounding music, and experiences in growing up in Japan and living in the US since the late 1990s. While I trust my reading of gender signifiers, I also acknowledge the possibility of different readings. This section presents a small-scale experiment in which I attempted to examine how musical performance can signify masculinity and femininity to audiences in the case of female saxophonists. During my interviews with 20 people consisting of 10 women and 10 men, half of them watched YouTube clips of the three saxophonists, and the rest only heard the sound of these videos. In each group, about half of them were non-musicians. The three YouTube clips demonstrate the three women's different views on how they dress. Both Dreyer and Fuller have long hair and wear short dresses with leggings, while Cassity has very short hair and wears a white tank top shirt and black pants.

With one exception, those who watched the videos noticed that Cassity dresses differently from other two. For example, audience member A described her look as “Not

distractive and inoffensive.” In addition, audience member *B* suggested that she blends into the band so well that she does not stand out as a performer or a bandleader, compared with the other two. Dreyer’s short dress was perceived as a “pretty dress,” “average dress,” “not so stylish.” On the other hand, audiences considered Fuller “hip,” “fashionable,” and “pretty.” All 10 audience members who watched the videos did not feel that Dreyer and Fuller’s feminine look would distract them from listening to their music. Instead, most audience members felt that these performers should dress better. Despite the performers’ concern, it seems that a certain level of fashionable and flashy cloths and hairstyles are expected for professional stage performers.

Now, how did audience members perceive these saxophonists’ music? I first asked questions that are not obviously related to gender, such as “How does this saxophonist sound?” and “Can you describe the sound of this saxophonist?” I was particularly interested in how those who heard the sound only refer to each saxophonist. Audience member *G* referred to all three saxophonists as “he” without little hesitation. Audience member *F* first used “he,” but later corrected “he or she.” Five audience members used “they,” and three used “this saxophonist” or “this person” throughout the conversation to avoid specifying the performer’s gender.

Audience members’ comments on each performance seem to largely depend on their musical background and familiarity with jazz. In describing Dreyer’s music, audience members who are less familiar with jazz used general terms such as “Sounds good,” “Easy going nice music.” Those who are somewhat familiar with jazz said, “no dynamics or expressions.” Jazz musicians all mentioned that phrases she used in her solo are rooted in bebop tradition. Three saxophonists particularly pointed out that her delivery does not have any nuances or inflections. Audience member *C*, who is a veteran saxophonist as well as an educator, called Dreyer “A patternist” because her solo is constructed solely by the bebop phrase patterns that she perhaps

had previously memorized. Interestingly, all non-musicians preferred Fuller's performance to Dreyer's, commenting, "There are more varieties in this song," "fast, lively, and energetic" "less predictable and exciting." Instead of mentioning their preference, jazz musicians all pointed out how Fuller is stylistically different from Dreyer, commenting, "More straight ahead, hard type of jazz," "More modal ideas," "Neo-bop style." Audience member *D* further said that Fuller's sound has "a lot of nuances and good dynamic range." Moreover, audience member *C* pointed out that Fuller uses many pentatonic scales, imitating John Coltrane's approach. On the other hand, Cassity's performance was received in two different ways. Some audience members perceived her as timid and less adventurous because she paused several times during her solo. Especially, those who watched the video noticed that she stopped playing and shook her head. Similarly, even without watching the video, audience *G* mentioned that Cassity might have been intimidated by the aggressive drummer and thus backed off a little. Cassity's solo, as a result, is rather spacious. Both audience members *D* and *E* positively appreciated her spacious solo, saying, "This person is not afraid of silence," and "I like this more patient approach" respectively.

How are these characteristics of each performer associated with masculinity and femininity? In fact, except for audience member *E*, none of the audiences initially used the word masculine or feminine to describe these performances. Toward the end of the interview, I asked those who watched the video, "If you did not watch the videos and only heard the sound of them, would you have imagined women playing?" and those who listen to the sound only, "Can you guess who these saxophonists are? Can you tell whether they are a man or a woman?" Audience member *A* stated that she would have assumed Dreyer to be a man because of her technical and "square" playing, Fuller to be a man because of her harder and rough sound, and

Cassity to be a woman because of not being offensive or adventurous. In fact, except for audience members *C* and *E*, they all would have imagined or assumed Fuller to be a man and Cassity to be a woman because of their various characteristics mentioned above. Audience member *C*, on the other hand, asserted, “They [referring to Dreyer and Fuller] sound like women players.” According to him, their bright sound quality and especially Dreyer’s bebop oriented vocabulary and her “square” playing made him think that they sounded like women. Here, Dreyer’s “square” playing was taken both as masculine and feminine signifier. Similarly, while audience member *C* considered Cassity’s darker sound as masculine, audience member *D* considered it feminine because “it is similar to how I sound.” Audience member *E* identified Dreyer as Dave Coz, Fuller as Fuller, and Cassity as Steve Wilson. He said, “I would guess, the first and the last one were a man just because I associate their styles with somebody specific.”

As illustrated, audience members perceived musical sound quite differently depending on their musical background and knowledge. Here, the elements such as sound quality, nuances, and phrase types that audience members mentioned can be considered to be what Ingrid Monson calls “indexes,” through which musicians and audiences communicate. As mentioned in the Introduction, there are different types and levels of indexes. In the case of saxophone performances discussed above, nuances and inflections that only three saxophonists recognized and phrase types only jazz musicians identified can be considered to be “intermusical” indexes that only those who have the aural knowledge can recognize. In addition, audiences’ different interpretations of the same musical elements mentioned above can be understood through Stuart Hall’s notion of encoding/decoding. While Hall’s idea is based on his discussion on the circulation of television message, the process of encoding and decoding is useful here. According to Hall, not only the actual production of a television program but also

consumption/reception of the television message is a moment of the production process in its larger sense. In addition, he suggests that produced message and received message are not necessarily identical because the viewer decodes the message in reference to his/her “frameworks of knowledge.”⁴⁷⁰ In my analysis of gendered signifiers in jazz performance, gendered meaning is historically and culturally encoded in various sonic elements, which are decoded by the individual audience depending on his/her experiences and knowledge about jazz and its complex discourse. In regards to Cassity’s darker sound, audience member *D*, a female student jazz saxophonist, perceived it as feminine because of resemblance to her own sound, while audience member *C*, an experienced jazz saxophonist, considers it masculine because of his 40 year experience of listening to jazz performance and teaching the saxophone.

Although there are some limitations, this experiment demonstrates that musical sound can signify masculinity and femininity to some audiences regardless of the performers’ intention and her biological sex. As shown above, the audience’s notion of masculinity and femininity are constructed culturally and historically and earned through his/her life experiences. Finding out that those saxophonists were women, audience member *F* said, “Wow, impressive. It’s really cool because I don’t see many girl saxophonists that are good.” On the contrary, a young man I encountered during my fieldwork in New York City had a totally different reaction. I met him at the Garage Restaurant where Virginia Mayhew quartet performed in August 2009. “Are you enjoying the music?” “Yes, very much.” “Did you come here to see her [Mayhew]?” “No, I didn’t know who was playing tonight. But I like her, she’s good.” “What do you think about her being a woman and playing sax very well?” “What do you mean?” He was puzzled and did not understand what I was asking. After I explained that there are not so many female jazz

⁴⁷⁰ Stuart Hall, “Encoding/Decoding.” In *Culture, Media, Language*. Stuart Hall et al. eds. (New York: Routledge, 1980), 128-138.

instrumentalists, he said, “I never thought of that.” I found out that he was from Colombia though he had lived in New York City for the past two years. As these two examples suggest, the audience members’s cultural background and experiences greatly affect the way they perceive musical performances. In other words, their performative listening is framed by different gender norms that are culturally and historically constructed.

6.5 CONCLUSION

I have discussed that there is a connection between musical sound and the performer’s body because of the established visual images of the jazz musician and the audience’s practices of performative listening. Certain types of music are expected to come out from certain types of bodies. Certain types of bodies evoke certain types of musical sound. The sound of good straight ahead jazz instrumental performance is often expected to be played by (black heterosexual) men. First, I examined how female saxophonists I interviewed want to visually present themselves in public performances. They possess different views, and their differences tend to correspond with their age. Next, I surveyed how female jazz saxophonists visually present themselves on their CD covers and photos circulated online. Most female jazz saxophonists’ visual images have been relatively conservative and modest because they wish to be taken seriously as a musician first not as a novelty. However, as my empirical project demonstrated, their modest appearance can be taken as not distinctive enough as a performance artist. Female saxophonists’ concern about their feminine appearance as distraction might be their overreaction. The project also empirically showed the perceived connections between the musical sound and certain types of bodies.

As I have shown, several young female performers have recently started to present more feminine and glamorous images. In the analysis of the videos, I showed that these musically accomplished and strong women who project glamorous feminine images challenge and expand the images that are suitable for the female jazz instrumentalist. As mentioned earlier, the disjuncture between how some female saxophonists look and sound is similar to that of a person in drag. They are similar in that their expressions of gender signify the opposite of their “real” gender. Yet, they are also different because performances of female jazz saxophonists do not involve any theatricality. Because of this non-theatricality, their performances are threatening more to men than a person in drag. Philip Auslander discusses another similar disjuncture seen in performances of rock singer and songwriter Suzi Quatro. Quatro’s “body and voice, socially encoded as feminine, convey songs and gestures culturally encoded as masculine,” neither of which “absorbs or negates the other. Rather, “they form an unstable compound—the female cock-rocker.”⁴⁷¹ Auslander analyzes Quatro’s complex signification of masculinity and femininity using Judith Butler’s idea of figure-ground relationships in lesbian butch-femme identities. According to him, Quatro’s “masculine appearance and aggressive demeanor constitute the masculine figure that sometimes appears against the ground of her female body” and her voice “can become the feminine figure against the ground of her masculine appearance” at other times.⁴⁷² I find this analysis convincing because Quatro herself “has acknowledged the butchness of her performance persona.”⁴⁷³ This type of analysis is not applicable to female jazz saxophonists because their performances do not project the theatrically produced butchness. Auslander’s notion of musical or performance persona—“the version of self that a musician

⁴⁷¹ Philip Auslander, *Performing Glam Rock: Gender and Theatricality in Popular Music* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 213.

⁴⁷² Auslander (2006²), 214.

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

performs qua musician”⁴⁷⁴— is revealing. I suggest that jazz musicians’ performance personae do not involve theatricality because they strive to be true to themselves, which I will discuss in the Conclusion.

Glamorous and hypersexual images have been presented by women in smooth jazz. However, as shown above, their music performances do not challenge the gender norms as much as their counterparts in straight ahead jazz. In other words, “smooth” jazz is not perceived to be as masculine as straight ahead jazz because it does not involve the type of creativity, which is why it is also considered as “feminized” version of jazz and somehow looked down upon by straight ahead jazz musicians. As a result, their visual image and musical sound do not create a huge gap, and thus, does not challenge the gender norms.

⁴⁷⁴ Auslander (2006¹), 104.

7.0 CONCLUSION: PERFORMING A FEMALE JAZZ SAXOPHONIST AND CHALLENGING THE DISCOURSE OF THE JAZZ SAXOPHONIST

This work thus far has discussed the complex norms of gender, race, sexuality, and age in relation to playing jazz saxophone and how female musicians consciously and unconsciously perform in and outside of these norms. The ways they play the saxophone, talk about gender, race, sexuality, and age in relation to jazz saxophone performance as well as the ways they visually present themselves vary according to the individual. Some are fully aware of the norms, yet others ignore or stay aloof from them. Some are challenging the jazz discourse, and others are reinforcing them. In addition, some women demonstrated contradictory attitudes depending on the context and time period. These different types of performances—performing gender, race, sexuality, and age—have constantly shaped and reshaped the norms of those identity categories. Although women’s performances of gender are varied and complex, there are also some common attitudes among them. In concluding this study, this chapter explores how they “perform” female saxophonists. Women who perform gender outside the norms are “troubling” gender as well as “deconstruct[ing] and denaturaliz[ing]”⁴⁷⁵ the norms of masculinity and femininity.

This study has adopted a performance studies approach, which explores how engaging in jazz performances and being jazz saxophonists construct performers’ identity as well as gender norms. As mentioned in Chapter 6, musical performance is a process that allows the performer to

⁴⁷⁵ Butler (2004), 42.

enact a musical persona.⁴⁷⁶ I suggest that a musical persona for a jazz musician is herself/himself. In conversations with jazz musicians, “being true to oneself” and “searching for oneself” are often referred to be the ultimate goal of the jazz improviser. For example, Sharel Cassity answered the question “How do you want to sound like?” by saying, “I want to sound sincere and true to myself.”⁴⁷⁷ Jazz improvisation is often described as searching for who you are and expressing yourself honestly. Playing jazz is a means of self-expression as well as self-discovery.⁴⁷⁸ Claire Daly said, “When you try to be something, you’re in a wrong direction,” suggesting that jazz performer should be true to yourself. Therefore, I suggest that through jazz performances, female saxophonists search for and construct their identity without involving theatricality.

In examining how these women express their ideas through talking about various issues including advantages and disadvantages of being a female saxophonist, all-female bands, and women’s jazz festivals, I will show some of their common views such as identifying themselves as “exceptional women,” and the contrasting attitudes of asserting their being women and negating their being women. Lastly, I will show some signs of change in jazz discourse shown in various areas including advertisements in jazz magazines, the endorsement of saxophones and reeds, and some musicians’ statements regarding the recent jazz scene.

⁴⁷⁶ Auslender (2006).

⁴⁷⁷ Cassity (2009).

⁴⁷⁸ Michael Humphreys et al., “Is Ethnography Jazz?” *Organization* 10/5 (2003), 7.

7.1 ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF BEING A FEMALE SAXOPHONIST

In discussing advantages and disadvantages being a jazz saxophonist, Carol Sudhalter was the only one who solely mentioned disadvantages: “I would have gone much further if I were a man. I see male musicians who played in the same time span and they’ve been offered more gigs.”⁴⁷⁹ And she did not question the reason for it because “It’s the same as the corporate world. Not a physical thing. Women, we have a different experience in life.”⁴⁸⁰ She equates her difficulties being a female jazz saxophonist with the ones experienced by other women in the different male-dominated fields. While jazz is surrounded by different discourses than the corporate world in terms of race, gender, and sexuality, Sudhalter does not recognize those differences. Instead, she acknowledges the difference between what men and women experience in life. Her ideas seem to have been confined within the gender norms perhaps because of her generation and the strict father who thought that she would “get an acceptable profession, make a lot of money, and marry somebody who makes a lot of money.”⁴⁸¹ Although she did not live her life exactly in the way her father wanted, her ideas are strongly influenced by traditional gender norms, as seen in that she did not start to play tenor saxophone until her father died. Generally, though not as strongly as Sudhalter, women in their late forties and older mentioned female instrumentalists’ difficulties in getting jobs as disadvantage. Yet they also recognize advantages: more visibility and attention, and certain opportunities such as all-female events and bands.

⁴⁷⁹ Sudhalter (2009).

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid.

On the other hand, Kristy Norter, in her thirties, does not see these disadvantages, and repeatedly mentioned that women tend to complain by saying, “I didn’t get the job because I’m a woman.”⁴⁸² She points out that these women, in most cases, did not get the job because of other reasons than being a woman. She feels that she *was* hired for some gigs and *was not* hired for other gigs because she is a woman. As a result, she thinks, “It evens out,”⁴⁸³ and her musical experience in New York since 1998 has been mostly positive. Of course, Norter’s experience must be rather different from Sudhalter’s because Norter came to New York twenty years after Sudhalter did. Yet, Norter’s attitude is notable because she considers the women who complain use their gender as an excuse for not being able to get jobs. Norter seems to be accusing these women of playing the “gender card” and differentiate herself from them.

Karolina Strassmayer expressed both her frustration and positive view in the same breath:

I think there are a lot more disadvantages than advantages. And I have become very frustrated over the years with people saying “I have had much easier time” and these people don’t know what the hell they’re talking about. Women have easier time in this business? “Oh you just put your pretty picture on your CD and you’re OK.” I’ve gotten these comments over the years many times. From male colleagues, musicians, even some people from my family believe that’s the case, but they have no idea. They really have no idea. For many years...not wanting to look at the fact that there is so much discrimination. I [was] kind of trying not look at it, just do my thing, but the older I get, the less tolerance I have for it. Just jokes, derogatory jokes about women, made right next to me by very famous musicians, famous musicians who were in the room last night, for instance. You know, and I used to laugh it off, I can’t, I don’t wanna just laugh it off anymore, because it’s bothering, and again, of course there are so many people men and women who are very respectful, I mean, I don’t wanna just say that everybody is discriminating, but I have enough experiences, at this level of my development in my career. I have noticed that having a gig in the German band has given me a lot of credibility, all of a sudden people take me more seriously. But I’ve also been made into a freak, because I’m the only woman in the band. When I first started there, there was so much interest in the media. I was all over the women’s magazines, the trash magazines, daily news or German *Cosmopolitan*, it was just a lot of interests. Of course, nobody asks me about my music. I was interviewed million times, you know. Everybody just wanted the picture, everybody wanted the story of how hard it is to be a woman among the 16, 17

⁴⁸² Norter (2008).

⁴⁸³ Ibid.

guys. And I understand there is interest in it. For a long time, I have fought the fact that I'm in a very public position, I'm in a very exposed position there, let me just play my music. Leave me alone, just want to be accepted as a musician. But I've learned that that's part of my purpose in my life, too. I have visibility. I'm out there people see me. It sends a message. So try to make it a positive message. Yeah, now we have a woman in the band. The band has been around 50 years we never had a woman in there and any of the other European radio big bands either. So I look at it like statement to the world. Things are changing. It's always with me. I don't fight it anymore. I see it as part of my message, my work in life. If I'm lucky, I can be a role model for young musicians. I've had hard time to accepting that that's part of my path. But I started enjoying it, I have a lot of female students in Germany. And so I'm trying to turn around, disadvantages to something good. That's I guess part of music. But if somebody thinks we have advantages in the jazz business as a woman, they're out of their mind.⁴⁸⁴

This statement demonstrates her intolerance over chauvinistic attitudes as well as her changing views on being a woman. While she used to be bothered about attracting attention because of being a woman, she now accepts it and tries to make her being a woman into a positive message to the world. In addition, she seems to be feeling that the discourses surrounding jazz are changing and that she is in a midst of it. As she mentioned, her presence in the band that historically had not included any female instrumentalist before her is rather monumental and will definitely have an impact. Indeed, Strassmayer's participation in the prestigious jazz band "troubled" gender norms in Germany, and it is included into the formation of gender norms. Yet, her statement also shows that women do not get enough respect in interaction with male musicians.

On the other hand, women in their thirties or younger often emphasized advantages over disadvantages. Besides the innate connection among women and women's special ability to perform music discussed in Chapter 5, Tia Fuller mentioned, "I'd actually say that, for me, there have been advantages, just being able to be a part of all female groups like a Beyonce's band. Another advantage is just being able to dispel any myth about female musicians, how they can't

⁴⁸⁴ Strassmayer (2009).

play, how they can't do this, all those negative things people try to attach to it."⁴⁸⁵ This statement also shows the change regarding the views on female jazz instrumentalists, and Fuller is embodying the change. Katja Endemann asserted, "If I play the gig, they're like 'wow.' You stand out a little bit more [than men]."⁴⁸⁶ Similarly, Sharel Cassity stated, "A lot of advantages, because you stick out. People remember you. They remember the face. And there is more of a market if you are really good. The thing is, it's hard to get your foot in the door."⁴⁸⁷ Although Cassity suggests the difficulty in breaking into the scene, she believes that it is advantageous for women to play jazz saxophone. These women suggest that their minority status based on being outside the gender norms gives them more visibility and opportunities in the jazz world.

7.2 ALL-FEMALE BANDS AND WOMEN'S JAZZ FESTIVALS

All the female saxophonists I interviewed have been involved with all-female bands and have participated in the women's jazz festivals. Their views on all-female projects are rather complex. While many of them see positive aspects in all-female projects, they all wish that we will have no need to have such groups and events in the near future. Since most of my informants have worked in the New York area, two all-female bands were frequently brought up in the conversations with them: Kit McClure Band and Diva. Kit McClure (1951-), "saxophonist, activist and leader of the longest running all women big band in history,"⁴⁸⁸ formed her jazz band in the early 1980s. In both small and large ensembles, her band has played repertoires from

⁴⁸⁵ Fuller (2008).

⁴⁸⁶ Endemann (2008).

⁴⁸⁷ Cassity (2008).

⁴⁸⁸ Quoted from her website, <http://www.redhotrecords.com/>, accessed 22 April 2010.

swing dance music and R&B. Especially in the earlier period, McClure promoted her band as a visual spectacle of glamorous female musicians. Because of this, some musicians possess negative views about the band. For example, when I went to see Laura Dreyer playing at a Jazz Mobile concert in Harlem, New York, she interrupted the MC of the concert who had begun to introduce her as a former member of the McClure band. Dreyer explained it to me,

Because it's embarrassing. OK, I did that Kit McClure band. I moved here in 1982, so I did that band for about ten years off and on, and it was just really, kind of humiliating [about] what we had to do, I mean, we had to dress up in little short skirts and dance around and do choreography to Glen Miller songs, and it was a kind of abusive situation where Kit, even though she was providing employment for us, she sort of took advantage of the fact that because we are women it might not be as easy for us to get gigs, so she would play head games with you. It was almost like anti-feminist. I remember being on the band bus once and she made a rule that you had to wear lip stick and nail polish. She made a big deal about no gray hair, no glasses, you had to wear high heels, and for me, it wasn't a musical situation. It's financial, I needed some gigs. I always felt embarrassed when people saw that that's what I was doing because I really wanted to be taken seriously as a musician so because that was so long ago, I was like 'oh god,' I've done a whole lot more since then.⁴⁸⁹

McClure's band was successful, touring Japan and Europe frequently and making a few recordings partly because of her marketing strategy—packaging female instrumentalists as young, beautiful, and sexy. In other words, the members of the band performed a certain version of femininity. To Dreyer, her experience of working with the McClure band is an embarrassment, and the band embodied the all-female band that cannot be taken seriously. A few other women expressed similar sentiment about the band. It is interesting that the band that was more about gimmicks than about music (according to the former members) succeeded financially. While these female musicians were not happy with the way the band was marketed, they participated in the band because they wanted the job. They were torn between their pride as an artist and their financial needs.

⁴⁸⁹ Dreyer (2008).

On the other hand, Lakecia Benjamin, a recent member of McClure's band has a totally different view about McClure and the band. According to her, McClure seems to have dropped the policy of makeup, nail polish, no gray hair, no glasses, and high heels. Benjamin expressed respect, admiration, and appreciation to McClure for what she has done for her and other female musicians saying, "Kit and I hit it off really well. Kit has been promoting women musicians for a long time. Every woman I encounter knows who Kit is. She's done her part and provided women with work. She sponsored my college expenses [by hiring Benjamin for well-paid jobs]. She treated me well."⁴⁹⁰ In addition, unlike most women I interviewed, she does not have any problems with "all-female" band. To her, any job is a job as she said, "I don't have too many complaints about jobs in general." Benjamin has heard of mainly older female musicians speaking ill of McClure. "I heard that she [McClure] was different back then."⁴⁹¹ Benjamin might not have gotten along well with McClure twenty years ago. Yet, Benjamin's attitude is also related to her indifference to the norms of gender or race as shown in Chapter 5.

The changes in McClure's policy or marketing strategy may have coincided with the change of focus in her work. In addition to the Kit McClure Band, she currently organizes Women in Jazz, Inc. whose mission is "to expand the public's access to and appreciation for the contributions of women to jazz. We do this by giving women musicians opportunities to record and distribute their music, give public concerts and educational clinics that provide and expand opportunities for women in jazz. We also offer hands-on experience for participants who are interested in jazz musicianship. This effort provides strong positive female role models for future generations of jazz fans and musicians."⁴⁹² According to the websites for the band and Women

⁴⁹⁰ Benjamin (2009).

⁴⁹¹ Ibid.

⁴⁹² From the website Women in Jazz. <http://womeninjazz-nyc.org/index.htm>, accessed 22 April 2010.

in Jazz, Inc., the McClure band offers “the Sweethearts Education Program” that uses the International Sweethearts of Rhythm as a medium to show women’s contributions to jazz and American culture. While this education program has obvious implication of feminist activism, the way McClure used to package the band can be taken as “anti-feminism” as Dreyer mentioned. Therefore, McClure might have had to change the visual presentation of the band. Moreover, perhaps because their main project dedicates to the International Sweethearts of Rhythm, McClure often hires African American women while the members of the earlier band were predominantly white women. It seems that she presents her band as a group of racially integrated women who contribute to history of jazz and women’s advancement in society.

Diva was founded by drummer Sherrie Maricle and manager Stanley Kay in 1992. Their repertoire is contemporary big band music. Unlike the earlier period of the McClure band, Diva was never promoted as a group of glamorous women. Their dress code is often only “black” and can be dresses, skirts, or pants. Usually, most of them wear black shirts or jackets and pants. Most of my informants have played with Diva at some point in their career. Sharel Cassity, current member of Diva, enjoys playing with the band. “It’s a great band. ...Since I’m working in Diva, the guys are like, ‘Oh you’re playing professionally, you’re making money,’ and they changed their mind. So it’s good things surround it.”⁴⁹³ Regarding the job opportunities, Diva has supported a number of foreign female musicians to get artist visas to work legally in the US. Another current member, Janelle Reichman, also expressed her positive feelings about Diva though she was first skeptical about the idea of all-female bands.

I used to be kind of a little against it [all female bands], because if I was gonna have a band, I would just wanna get the best players, the best musicians. And by limiting yourself to all women, you’re actually diminishing the quality of the band just because you’re picking from such a small pool. Now Diva, I play in that band because it’s a really

⁴⁹³ Cassity (2008).

great band. I wouldn't say it's the best big band in the world, but it's a great band and it's really fun, I have a great time playing in there. And it's a great hang. Everyone in there is a great person, so I'm happy playing in that band, I don't even worry about what people are thinking about it.⁴⁹⁴

The last part of Reichman's statement implies that some people may criticize Diva because of its all female membership. Diva's musicianship has been significantly improved in the past several years, having stronger soloists like Cassity and Reichman and a more experienced rhythm section.

Although Cassity admits the positive aspects of Diva, she added, "But my feeling is, I can't help but think I wish we didn't have to have Diva. I wish we don't have to have women's month Diet Coke Jazz Festival, the only time I get hired at Dizzy's is for the women's month."⁴⁹⁵ Erica von Kleist, former member of Diva, also enjoyed playing in the band and respected all the women in the band "as musicians, as business women, as friends, as colleagues." However, she continued, "All female thing...I'm very torn, because part of me is just like I don't wanna isolate myself. I realize that I'm a woman. I realize we're minority, but I don't wanna isolate us even further by having all female groups. For me, it's not about a musical concept. It's about a gimmick. I'm not supportive of the idea. I don't want to be in all female bands."⁴⁹⁶ While von Kleist respect the musicians in Diva, she cannot agree with the concept of all female groups, which, she considers a gimmick. Sue Terry also talked about all female bands, "I was never that into them but I've been in them. It's not my choice because I feel that the strongest music is made by mixing different types of people together, that's I've always done,

⁴⁹⁴ Reichman (2008).

⁴⁹⁵ Cassity (2008).

⁴⁹⁶ von Kleist (2008).

those are the bands I always wanted to play with.”⁴⁹⁷ Terry emphasized the importance of integration in race and gender for the band to create strong music.

Dan Ouellette’s *Downbeat* article presents five female instrumentalists’ opinions about women’s jazz festivals. One of the respondents is Tia Fuller. Her statement is: “These festivals can be a form of empowerment and a way to network with other musicians—female and male—and expand your territory in the jazz industry. They’re beneficial, not detrimental.”⁴⁹⁸ She also mentions her positive experience being a part of IAJE’s Sister in Jazz group, which gave her opportunities to play in women’s jazz festivals. She continues, “The only downside that I can see is festivals not being inclusive. They don’t want men onstage.”⁴⁹⁹ Fuller also mentioned to me that she does not want to sacrifice musicianship in order to keep the band to be all female. Regarding all female jazz concerts, Grace Kelly said, “I’m not really sure. I mean, I’m for it because that gives me more gigs, just to be perfectly blunt, but at the same time, I’m for it just because a lot of women don’t get representation that they deserve, but I think that it should only be deserved if all the musicianship was totally there. I kinda have a problem when people put together all girl bands the level lacks, because the music comes first. If the level is there, why not?”⁵⁰⁰ Kelly implies that all female projects can jeopardize the level of musicianship for the sake of having all female members. Anat Cohen, ex-member of Diva, talked about the photo shoot “A(nother) Great Day in Harlem”⁵⁰¹ that took place the day before our interview in August

⁴⁹⁷ Terry (2008).

⁴⁹⁸ Dan Ouellette, “The Question Is... Are Women’s Jazz Festivals Insulting to Women Instrumentalists?” *DownBeat* 74/7 (2007), 19.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁰ Kelly (2009).

⁵⁰¹ Filmmaker Judy Chaikin recreated Art Kane’s historic 1958 photo “A Great Day in Harlem” with all female jazz musicians. Eighteen saxophonists participated in this photo session are: Ann Paterson, Tia Fuller, Sharel Cassity, Ada Rovatti, Laura Dreyer, Virginia Mayhew, Kit McClure, Sue Terry, Roz Cron, Schaila Conzalez, Lisa Parrott, Lauren Sevia, Janelle Reichman, Carol Chaikin, Claire Dal, Jenny Hill, Anat Cohen, Leigh Pilzer.

2008. “I was very proud of being among these women.”⁵⁰² Regarding all-female projects, she stated, “I do think, the general view of society, still unfortunately, a lot of men believe women can’t swing like men, women don’t have good time like men, women don’t have this, they make generalizations, so for these people, it’s good to create the scene called women in jazz to show, OK, we make a point that women can do it. But in the bigger scheme, we are all musicians.”⁵⁰³

Karolina Strassmayer, who worked with Diva for several years before joining the WDR Big Band, made it clear that she would not participate in all-female events. While she also highly valued her experience with Diva, she stated, “Generally, at this point, I’m not sure what I think of women getting together and playing jazz. I, for instance, don’t usually accept engagements anymore when I know it’s about women. Putting women together, I don’t do it anymore. I just hate being pigeonholed like that.”⁵⁰⁴ She seems to resist being categorized as a female musician instead of a musician. She explained that she does not mean to disrespect other female musicians and that she actually enjoys playing with some female players. Yet, she is not convinced about the merit of all female projects. “I don’t think it helps women in the scene. I think, for me personally, I don’t like the feeling of it. I feel like I’m on a platter like a cake, like a piece of cake up there.”⁵⁰⁵ In addition to problems such as lacking musicianship and creating separate scenes, Strassmayer suggests that all-female projects can be a visual spectacle or a gimmick as von Kleist mentioned.

The most blunt comment was made by accomplished trumpeter Ingrid Jensen in the Ouellette article. Jensen says,

⁵⁰² Cohen (2008).

⁵⁰³ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁴ Strassmayer (2009).

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

I am tired of getting these offers. It's time that we put the theme away and get more serious about the music, stop insulting the audience and present music that is plain good and real. That's why I, as well as many others, boycott all festivals, concert series and interviews that rely on gender-based themes. I don't mean to deprive younger musicians the experiences they deserve and need, but my hope is that a musician would be hired for the way they sound instead of creating a ghetto for getting gigs.⁵⁰⁶

Her statement not only suggests that these festivals would create a separate scene but also implies that women's jazz festivals do not present "plain good and real" music. In other words, she claims that all female membership would lack the quality of music. Her attitude is similar to organist Gloria Coleman, discussed in Chapter 2. Coleman strongly resisted being associated with a women's jazz festival in New York, and suggested that musicians performed in the festival were "bad."

These musicians believe that they are exceptional women who can play better than most other female instrumentalists. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the discourse of female jazz instrumentalists as "exceptional women" has been created by critics and media. In addition, some women seem to possess the same idea. For example, Ingrid Jensen again expressed her feelings about all female projects in the recent interview with Lara Pellegrinelli for the NPR program on drummer Terri Lynne Carrington's all-female band, The Mosaic Project. Jensen said, "I have to say that when Terri emailed me, I was glad that I was free to do this. Which is very rare. If anyone knows me, they know that I avoid all women groups like the plague, because I've had enough experiences where the weakest links overpower the integrity of the music." Jensen thought this project was important and special "when [she] saw all of the names of the people involved."⁵⁰⁷ In other words, she differentiates women in this project from a larger group

⁵⁰⁶ Dan Ouellette (2007).

⁵⁰⁷ Lara Pellegrinelli, "Women in Jazz: Taking Back All-Female Ensembles." <http://www.npr.org/blogs/therecord/2010/10/29/130915265/the-mosaic-project>, accessed 30 Oct 2010.

of women in jazz. This attitude is similar to the ways women in UK technology fields try to overcome the gendered construction of women as technically incompetent. Flis Henwood suggests that these women distance themselves from other women or women in general, “presenting themselves as ‘exceptions,’ a construction that leaves the gendered dualisms untouched.”⁵⁰⁸ As Henwood suggests, the discourse of “exceptional women” reinforces the idea of most other women as incompetent.

While not being too supportive of the idea of all female projects, Sue Terry and Claire Daly respectively mentioned two jazz festivals in which they are willing to participate. These festivals are not called “women in jazz” yet have a policy of hiring women. One is The Wall Street Jazz Festival in Kingston, NY and the other is Bloom Jazz Festival in Brooklyn, NY. The Wall Street Jazz Festival launched in 2004 by club owner John Bilotti and pianist Peggy Stern. They realized that most jazz festivals do not include female bandleaders and decided to start a festival where all the bandleaders are women. Bloom Festival, organized by journalist Lara Pellegrinelli in 2009, is named after soprano saxophonist Jane Ira Bloom (1955-). These festivals are different not only because their names do not include the phrase “women in jazz” but also because the bands can include male musicians, unlike the festivals such as Lady Got Chops: Women’s Month Music & Arts Festival. For example, the artist lineup of their 8th annual festival held in New York City in March 2010 in conjunction with women’s month celebration shows that all the bands and groups consisted of women. In fact, I noticed that one bandleader had trouble in finding a bassist that had to be a female. If the bandleader can hire any bassist, she would have chosen someone based on her taste or musical reason. Because of limiting musicians to be all female, she had to choose the bassist based on availability. This is the problem several

⁵⁰⁸ Flis Henwood, “Exceptional Women?: Gender and Technology in U.K. Higher Education,” *IEEE Technology and Society Magazine* 18/7 (1999), 21-27.

informants mentioned, and they think that the level of musicianship would be jeopardized because of the limitation.

7.3 SO MANY WOMEN WERE WIMPY!

The idea of female jazz instrumentalists as exceptional permeates among women I interviewed although they do not clearly state it. The idea is often shown in the form of lower expectations for female instrumentalists. Some female saxophonists feel that the level of female jazz saxophonists has not reached that of male ones. For example, Sharel Cassity thinks that she sometimes gets more attention and compliments than she deserves because she is a woman. She feels that she is not at the level of her fellow male musicians. In other words, she suggests a double standard for evaluating female and male saxophonists. Agreeing to this idea, Erica von Kleist stated, “There is definitely a double standard. I hate to say this, but I just feel that bar is set lower for women. Out of the women who are considered really great, really good, I don’t feel like they are that good, like Chris Potter, Joe Lovano type of good.”⁵⁰⁹ This statement summarizes the way female saxophonists feel about other female saxophonists. Except for Virginia Mayhew who mentioned a few local female saxophonists and Vi Redd, none of my informants named one female saxophonist as their role model or inspiration. For example, Cassity stated, “Only females I look up to, I can count on one hand. Ingrid Jensen, Cindy Blackman...”⁵¹⁰ I interrupted saying, “Any sax player?” She said, “Oh sax player? No. I really like Virginia Mayhew, she’s really a nice player. But growing up, I never got her CDs.” “How

⁵⁰⁹ von Kleist (2008).

⁵¹⁰ Cassity (2008).

about Vi Redd?” “I’ve heard of. I think she is a big deal because she was the *only* female saxophonist or something. I have a CD that she is on....she didn’t sound so good.”⁵¹¹ The CD she mentioned is *Now’s the Time* (1977) on which Redd may not be too impressive because it was recorded immediately after she resumed her career after several years of duty as a homemaker and special education teacher. Cassity did not know much about Redd or her career. Cassity was very surprised to know that Redd has worked with Earl Hines, Max Roach, and Count Basie as well as releasing two albums as a leader in the 1960s. Cassity continued, “I don’t have any female saxophone idols. But I respect my contemporaries a lot.”⁵¹² She seems to be inspired more by younger female saxophonists than by older ones, which is understandable since more and more younger female players have been emerging on the recent jazz scene.

The youngest informant, Grace Kelly answered my question about her role models saying, “I didn’t come across that many female saxophonists. A great one, I like Anat Cohen. She’s great. But I just had a gig with Ingrid Jensen, the trumpeter, man, she kicks butt, she’s so incredible. I look up to her as a female musician. Terri Lyne Carrinton is on bunch of my records, she is another really serious musician. Those are two people come to mind.”⁵¹³ Kelly also refers to other instrumentalists instead of saxophonists. It seems that Ingrid Jensen, who had refused for a long time to be associated with all-female situations is a role model for many female jazz instrumentalists perhaps because of her association with the “real” jazz scene of male musicians instead of the “women in jazz” scene.

Regarding the emergence of musically strong younger female saxophonists, Virginia Mayhew stated, “It’s changing and has changed now, but for a long time, almost all the female

⁵¹¹ Ibid.

⁵¹² Ibid.

⁵¹³ Kelly (2009).

horn players did sound wimpy, just the way it was. Whatever the social reasons for that, it's not a physical thing, you know, cultural, or psychological thing. People used to say to me, 'Oh if I close my eyes, you could be a man,' because so many women were wimpy. I think that is changing. More and more women aren't wimpy. There are some guys that are sort of wimpy."⁵¹⁴ Laura Dreyer also thinks that female instrumentalists in the near past were not so talented. "When I started playing, there weren't very many accomplished female jazz musicians. So maybe guys heard that and they were like 'uh that's not so happening' and had this idea for so long that women are wimpy or whatever."⁵¹⁵ It is interesting to see both Mayhew and Dreyer think that their contemporaries were "wimpy." This attitude is prevalent among female jazz instrumentalists.

Because many female saxophonists were "wimpy," there are no female role models to be mentioned and there is a double standard for judging male and female saxophonists. Regarding a double standard, Anat Cohen strongly denied it by saying, "No, no, no. I don't think people would expect less from women. There is no right or wrong."⁵¹⁶ Cohen referred to the TV show *American Idol* and how the contestants perform differently depending on the choice of songs and how they fit into certain types of music. Cohen seems to believe that music cannot be judged based on one rubric. Dreyer is also against the idea of double standard and stated, "I don't want to get into that kind of thinking. I think it's very destructive and it's anti-art. Jazz is an art. I'm doing this because I'm an artist, not because I'm trying to prove some kind of social statement."⁵¹⁷ Although there are a few people like Cohen and Dreyer who think that music should not be judged by one standard, the idea of women saxophonists as "wimpy" seems to be

⁵¹⁴ Mayhew (2009).

⁵¹⁵ Dreyer (2008).

⁵¹⁶ Cohen (2008).

⁵¹⁷ Dreyer (2008).

still persistent. As a result, they do not have any female saxophonist role models and they want to be “exceptional.”

7.4 MACHISMO WITHOUT MEN: DEALING WITH OTHER FEMALE SAXOPHONISTS

While I was interviewing female jazz saxophonists, some of them suggested me a topic to explore in my project. One person said, “It would be really interesting to look into how female saxophonists get along with each other.” From her experiences, she thinks that some female players get very competitive with other females. Another informant shared a story with me that one female saxophonist always took off her jacket and showed her spaghetti strap top to attract an attention from the audience whenever another female saxophonist sitting next to her took a great solo in a big band. Aside from the story being true or not, I found it interesting that this informant observed it, remembered it, and shared it with me several years later. Her observation might be right about the saxophonist’s intention of taking off her jacket. But it is more interesting to me that the informant interpreted it the way she did.

Some women also mentioned women’s competitiveness with other female instrumentalists. Katja Endemann stated, “I’m very guilty of that. I got much better over the years, but in school there are so few [female instrumentalists], I got so competitive, like which [woman] is better, you know. I got much better. I’m in my thirties, so I don’t care much.”⁵¹⁸ Endemann’s statement suggests that age also matters here. Lily White said, “I don’t really feel

⁵¹⁸ Endemann (2008).

that [competitiveness in women], but when I see a woman player, I have this a little bit of feeling like ‘who is that? I don’t know her’ whereas if it’s a guy, ‘eh, it’s another guy.’”⁵¹⁹ Ada Rovatti’s story was shocking. While she fully appreciates a number of female instrumentalists who are “sweet, caring, and supportive,” she stated, “The hardest problem I had with musicians was actually with women.”⁵²⁰ According to her, women sometimes become aggressive instead of supportive of other women instrumentalists, and they tend to be territorial from the fear of losing the position they have—“it’s like an animal instinct,”⁵²¹ Rovatti says. She considers these women’s attitude natural social behavior. This resonates very well with “the queen bee syndrome” that is observed in many male-dominated fields. Based on the Staines et al. article in 1974,⁵²² “the queen bees” are described as “women who have achieved professional success and are anti-feminist. They are strongly individualistic and tend to deny the existence of discrimination based on sex.”⁵²³ In addition, they are not supportive even if they could help other women because “they fear that the success of other women would challenge their positions of power, positions maintained at the cost of other, lower status women.”⁵²⁴

Further, Rovatti mentioned, “I’m not a big fan of all women bands because I find a lot of machismo even if there is no man.”⁵²⁵ She encountered female instrumentalists who unwelcomed her, made fun of her, and acted bossy and judgmental. I found it interesting for her to feel machismo around women. She thinks that even if there is some conflict with men, “They

⁵¹⁹ White (2008).

⁵²⁰ Rovatti (2008).

⁵²¹ Ibid.

⁵²² Graham Staines, et al. “The Queen Bee Syndrome,” *Psychology Today* 7 (1974), 55-60.

⁵²³ Virginia E O’Leary and Judith M Mitchel, “Women Connecting with Women: Networks and Mentors.” In *Storming the Tower: Wome in the Academic World* Suzanne Stiver Lie and Virginia E O’leary eds. (New York: G P Publishing, 1990), 65.

⁵²⁴ Ibid.

⁵²⁵ Ibid.

are more playful and don't bring it on a higher level, but women do."⁵²⁶ This statement is resonant with the anecdote by trumpeter Jane Sager, who played with both women's and men's bands in the 1930s and 1940s. Sager explains the difference between working with men and working with women is that women become very emotional over personal issues that even affect the performance.⁵²⁷ However, Sager does not completely separate herself from other female musicians: she also admired some female musicians she worked with and praised their under appreciated talents.⁵²⁸ Her attitude of negotiating "women in jazz" is also seen in many contemporary female saxophonists including Rovatti.

In contrast, Anat Cohen is not bothered by women's competitive attitudes at all. She stated, "It's only healthy competition. I like when another woman kick my ass. It's inspiring. Yeah, makes you feel good. It makes you feel like, fuck, man, this is great, makes you wanna go home and practice like when you play with another man, and they kick your ass, it's healthy competition, it's really not about gender."⁵²⁹ What Cohen described as competition is perhaps different from what other women explained as competitive attitudes. It is possible that Cohen has never experienced what others mentioned or that she was not bothered even if she had experienced it. Or she did not want to talk about it. In addition, she emphasized that gender does not matter in musical situation. Sue Terry has a similar attitude. Answering my question, "Have you had any difficulties with other female instrumentalists?" she said, "No, I don't have difficulties with other musicians." By not specifying female instrumentalists, she suggests that she does not differentiate female instrumentalists from male ones. In other words, she does not

⁵²⁶ Ibid.

⁵²⁷ Sherrie Tucker, "Bordering on Community: Improvising Women, Improvising Women-in-Jazz." In *The Other Side of Nowhere: Jazz, Improvisation, and Communities in Dialogue* (Middletown Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 2004, 253.

⁵²⁸ Ibid.

⁵²⁹ Cohen (2008).

think that whether male or female would make a difference when playing music with any musicians.

7.5 YES, I AM A WOMAN VS. I NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT BEING A WOMAN

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Tia Fuller is not hesitant to be a woman in the jazz world. Yet, while she asserts her womanhood and embraces her femininity, she seems to be more associated with being black when it comes to playing jazz saxophone. When I asked, “Which identity of you—a woman, white, Austrian, heterosexual, etc.—is the strongest in the context of playing the saxophone?” Karolina Strassmayer asserted,

At this point, the one that dominates is that I’m female. That’s really the one that’s been dominant because it’s always in my face. I’m always confronted whether it’s ‘Oh you’re so little and play so loud’ or Roy Haynes saying to me like ‘Yeah, I wanna your number,’ feeling macho crap. That’s the one that’s most dominant at this phase of my life. I hope that’s going to change. It’s because I’m in a phase in my life where I began to accept that I’m beginning to step up and take a stand and say, ‘Yes, I am a woman. Yes, I do what you do and I do just as much as, and as well as you do, so eat it.’⁵³⁰

Strassmayer is fully aware of the norms of gender, which she sometimes *troubles* by playing jazz saxophone “as much as, and as well as” men do. Her stance is peculiar in that she has the strong affirmation of being a woman while some women expressed discomfort in discussing being a woman in the context of playing jazz saxophone. These women would be either indifferent of being a woman or rather wish to become “one of the guys” in order to be accepted among male musicians.

⁵³⁰ Strassmayer (2008).

Anat Cohen takes a slightly different position. “I am proud to be a woman who plays music. But when it comes to the music, I don’t think about it as gender.”⁵³¹ She separates herself being a woman from the music she plays. In other words, she does not believe that gender would affect music performance—music is gender neutral. This view is similar to the one Erica von Kleist demonstrated. She does not think about her gender “on the bandstand” (when she performs) and believes gender to be irrelevant in music performance. In other words, they believe that music performances are irrelevant to gender norms.

Lakecia Benjamin has had a rather different experience. She asserted,

I never even thought about I’m a woman. It wasn’t until I started getting gigs, [when] people are like, ‘I’ve never seen a woman play like that.’ I was like, kind of reminded, ‘Oh I guess I’m a woman.’ I didn’t really think about it, growing up, there were a lot of Hispanics in my neighborhood in the Bronx, all the Hispanic girls were doing something else and all the friends I played music [with] were men, I just naturally was always with men, so I never even thought like I’m the only girl, it never occurred to me. I would just go to hang out at the clubs all night and play. It was probably my advantage that it never registered. I wasn’t raised in the way that women don’t go out. I was able to do whatever I wanted to do. My friends were already men. I didn’t feel uncomfortable. I’m always around men. It didn’t register until I got older.⁵³²

This statement demonstrates that Benjamin is now aware of the gender norms—typically, women do not play the saxophone so well, women do not go out late at night and hang out with men at the clubs. However, she has comfortably situated herself outside of the norms because she grew up not realizing the norms and now do not feel any problems.

Certainly, as shown in Benjamin’s case, a person’s upbringing would affect how s/he perceives gender norms. Yet Benjamin’s attitude is not a very special one among female jazz instrumentalists. When I presented my work on audience reception of female jazz saxophonists at the Feminist Theory of Music conference in May 2009, the panel chair Sherrie Tucker

⁵³¹ Cohen (2008).

⁵³² Benjamin (2009).

mentioned that it surprised her to hear female jazz musicians I interviewed said they never considered jazz to be a male dominated genre. I agreed with her saying, “Yes, it is obvious that there are a lot more male musicians in jazz.” Immediately, two women raised their hands and one of them (female jazz bassist) asserted that she fell in love with the music and never thought about it in terms of being played by men or women or her being a woman. Another woman was nodding to show her agreement. I have no intention to deny their claim that they never consider music in terms of gender. However, it is also interesting to me that they reject talking about music in the context of gender. It seems that they want music to be pure, not contaminated by extra musical elements such as race, gender, class, and sexuality. Especially, gender seems to be the most abhorred one to be associated with music. Surely, musical sound itself has no gender or race. For some people, music is one of the very few realms that are free from gender. Staying aloof from the gender norms might also be an unconscious strategy for them to navigate in the male dominated world of jazz, and therefore, their gender performance.

Gender performances vary in contexts and change in time. For example, Claire Daly told me in 2009, “I don’t think actual music itself has a gender or race, or anything else. I think it’s audio. I don’t know about all that stuff.”⁵³³ She completely dismissed music’s association with gender and race and negated music to be part of gender norms. I consider this her gender/race performance at this moment. In contrast, when interviewed by Ted Panken in 1999, Daly said, “A saxophonist friend recently paid me the ultimate compliment. He said, ‘You sound like an old guy!’ I said, ‘Man, that’s the nicest thing anybody has ever said to me.’”⁵³⁴ Her attitude—her gender performance—has drastically changed in ten years.

⁵³³ Daly (2009).

⁵³⁴ Ted Panken, “Blow that Elephantine Horn,” *Down Beat* 66/10 (1999), 50.

7.6 WE'RE EVOLVING: TOWARD THE NEW JAZZ DISCOURSE

How has the recent advancement of female jazz saxophonists impacted the sexist and heterosexist jazz discourse? Although it will perhaps take some time to see obvious changes in the discourse, there are some signs. For example, the critics poll of *DownBeat* began to include female instrumentalists although mostly in a “rising star” category of each instrument. In addition, the 2010 September issue of *DownBeat*, whose cover featured bassist Esperanza Spaulding, contained several interesting advertisement pages. The most eye-catching is the full-page ad for the Java Red Reeds from Vandoren, using Tia Fuller as an endorser. It reads, “These reeds are amazing in every way! They are extremely resonant, blow evenly, versatile and consistent in all climates. I tried the Reds and instantly fell in love! Thank you Vandoren for taking my sound to the next level!—Tia Fuller, Saxophonist with Beyonce, Mack Avenue recording artist.” Fuller’s glamorous cover photo for her latest CD *Decisive Steps*, which I discussed in Chapter 6, is enlarged in the full page. In addition, Bari, the mouthpiece maker, places a modest 1/3 page vertical ad for their hard rubber mouthpieces. It features their endorser, smooth jazz/pop saxophonist Stacey Knights from Tampa, FL, standing and holding her saxophone and gently smiling. Moreover, the ad for the Czech Ease, a portable acoustic bass with an abbreviated body, presents Esperanza Spaulding playing the bass. One 2010 issue of *Down Beat* included three female jazz instrumentalists in the ads, which hardly included women until 2010. The pictures used in these ads can work against the images of the jazz musician that Herman Leonard’s photographs have established and weaken the link between the sound of straight-ahead jazz and the bodies of well-dressed African American males.

However, traditional male-dominated ads are still present. Rico, another major saxophone reeds company, runs a totally different ad from Vandoren’s: individual pictures of six endorsers

(three black males and three white males) holding the saxophone are laid out in one page, and the copy simply says, “we play rico.” Similarly, a 2/3-page vertical ad for the Juilliard Jazz program features the photo of the student ensemble, all males, with tenor saxophonist Branford Marsalis. It also lists the names of faculty members, all well-known male musicians.

Another sign of change is that more women have been asked to endorse saxophones and reeds by major companies in recent years: Keilwerth (Lauren Sevian), Yamaha (Sue Terry and Mindi Abair), Yanagisawa (Tia Fuller), Selmer (Virginia Mayhew and Jessy J), R.S. Berkeley (Sharel Cassity and Erica von Kleist), Vandoren (Karolina Strassmayer, Tia Fuller, and Sharel Cassity), and Rico (Mindi Abair, Barbara Cifelli, and Jessy J). The majority of these women are in their thirties or younger. These women’s photos appear in major jazz magazines as Fuller’s Vandoren ad did. Cassity’s Vandoren ad was also featured in the August 2010 issue of *Down Beat*.

In addition, drummer Terri Lyne Carrington talked about the evolution she is sensing in the recent jazz scene:

One thing that bugs me is when women—whether it’s the artist or especially behind the scenes—take on the personas and the nature of their male counterparts. I think people felt like they had to be tough. I even have to fight that myself. Sometimes I do have to be tough, but you feel forced to because you want your voice heard. At some point you realize that you can have your voice heard without being so rough about it. I’m hoping and seeing more now that it isn’t like that as much. We’re evolving.⁵³⁵

Her statement summarizes female jazz instrumentalists’ gender performativity I have discussed thus far. She has recognized that women in jazz, including herself, tend to perform gender according to the norms of men. Yet, she realizes that women do not have to perform “masculinity” in order for their voice to be heard. Responding to this, Ingrid Jensen said, “I want

⁵³⁵ Pellegrinelli (2010).

to add that I think the men are evolving, too, and that makes it easier. I see a younger generation of men who don't see white, black, purple, green, girl, boy. They just say, 'Man, I love your lines. Can you play on my record?' And I'm like, 'Ah, finally!' That took awhile, but it's really happening. It gives the art a chance now just to be what it is, rather than a girl's club, boy's club, or any of those silly things."⁵³⁶ She notices that younger males tend to be free from norms of race and gender and appreciate her music as "what it is."

Another episode that signals a change in jazz discourse is presented by one of the younger informants, Abby Gross, who studies jazz saxophone at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. While talking about trumpeter Sean Jones, one of her teachers at Duquesne, and his band, she mentioned that his saxophonist Brian Hogans must be influenced by Tia Fuller, who was a former saxophonist of Jones' band. In her opinion, they sound similar and she thinks that Hogans adopted Fuller's sound and improvisational approach. I found her observation interesting since this is the first instance in my conversations with musicians that a woman is a model for another saxophonist, either male or female. She could easily think that Fuller and Hogans are influenced by the same saxophonist such as Kenny Garrett. Though Gross herself did not mention any female saxophonists as her role models, it is refreshing to hear that she thinks of Fuller as an inspiration for Hogans. Whether this is true is not an issue here.

In addition, some musicians promote female musicians because they are not satisfied with the musical elements that have been emphasized in male-dominated jazz performances. For example, Greg Osby explained why he selected Chilean tenor saxophonist Melissa Aldana and Korean American alto/soprano saxophonist Grace Kelly in showcasing the Berklee Jazz Program at the Dizzy's Club Coca Cola in 2009 as follows:

⁵³⁶ Ibid.

Most guys just play licks. Very strong, loud, and obnoxious. It has nothing to do with making music, just showing off. That's why I presented them [Aldana and Kelly]. They have the right balance of intellect and emotion. I have friends who don't want to go to jazz clubs because there are only men [on stage]. Those musicians play hard, loud, fast, taking fifty choruses. They [audiences] get bored. It would be great for women to involve with music, as a promoter, club owner, in many aspects. We can balance out, from business side, presentation side as well.⁵³⁷

Moreover, Osby observes, "Jazz is suffering, because not enough women are interested in it. I don't wanna play a tender ballad for a roomful of guys. That's my idea that we have to do something to bring women back to jazz clubs. So then music is something that reflects totality of humanity."⁵³⁸ Osby does not only hope for totality of gender but also for that of race, ethnicity and nationality in jazz. His record company, Inner Circle Music, has signed twenty musicians, which include nine women of variety of origins: Chile, Israel, Japan, Korea, Portugal and the USA. Male musicians also include several from overseas as well as two African Americans. The recordings of these musicians on Inner Circle Music present a wide variety of jazz: some are traditional and straight-ahead and others are eclectic mix of jazz and folk traditions of Korea, Portugal, Israel, etc. Osby's approach demonstrates greater degrees of the integration than Wynton Marsalis' policy at the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra and challenges the norms of gender and race in jazz. Although the former may not be as powerful or visible as the latter, it surely is "troubling" norms of gender and race, which will bring a change.

⁵³⁷ Osby (2009).

⁵³⁸ Ibid.

7.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

I have shown that music performance is a process where musicians performatively constitute their gender identity and/or the gender norms through the case study of female jazz saxophonists. This work has presented that female musicians' jazz saxophone performances frequently demonstrate elements that are associated with "masculinity" both visually and aurally. Chapter 3 showed that some female saxophonists feel obliged to display their ability to play aggressively instead of gently because people tend to assume women to be timid and incapable of playing assertively and forcefully. I demonstrated that a delicate and sensitive ballad playing by women can be considered to be their weakness while the same musical performance by men is taken positively. Although the main focus of this work has been gender performativity, gender cannot be discussed without its relation to other categories of identity in certain situations. For example, musically proficient and strong female jazz saxophonists present "performativity" of gender, race, sexuality, and age, which fits into the masculinist, Afro-centric, heterosexist, and senior-oriented jazz discourse.

Female jazz musicians' musical performances, along with other activities in life, are part of their performativity of gender and other identity categories. In this view, a person does not have a unified, continuous, and fixed identity that is often considered to be the source of what s/he does. Instead, things one does performatively constitute her/his identity, as Judith Butler claims.⁵³⁹ Female jazz saxophonists in this work consciously or unconsciously "perform" gender in and out of the norms, which result in reinforcing and altering these norms. The norms can function as stereotypes in some situations. However, while stereotypes tend to be unchangeable,

⁵³⁹ Butler (1990), 33.

the norms are always subject to change, by being repeatedly produced, naturalized, deconstructed, and denaturalized.

While attempting to apply the idea of performativity to an analysis of gender, race, sexuality, and age among female jazz saxophonists, I have also shown the persistence of ideas based on biological determinism and social/cultural constructivism are among people in jazz and the music industry. While most people do not express overtly essentialist ideas, many seem to believe that men and women are *naturally* different or are expected to act differently because their identities are molded by culture and society where they live. Social/cultural constructivist views are similar to the idea of performativity because they both consider identity categories to be historically shaped in a given culture and society. Yet, they are different because the latter claims that there is no “truth” behind identity.⁵⁴⁰ Why is this idea of performativity that does not have a doer behind her/his acts beneficial in this work? I suggest that the idea of performativity becomes important especially in considering subjects who perform music genres that have been historically associated with identity categories other than their own. For example, as I discussed in Chapter 5, some white female saxophonists such as Sharel Cassity and Janelle Reichman displayed double consciousness of their confidence as jazz musicians and insecurity when looking themselves through others’ expectations and demands. They are aware of masculinist and heterosexist discourse of jazz in which they do not fit, while they are also conscious of their advantages as “novelty” because of their unfit status in jazz. When thinking of a person’s identity as something not essential or cultural/social construction but a performative construction, we are not confined within norms of various identity categories. Therefore, this view will make any person of any gender, sexual orientation, ethnic background, and age to be visible in the jazz

⁵⁴⁰ Chris Beasley, *Gender & Sexuality: Critical Theories, Critical Thinkers* (London: Sage Publications, 2005), 24.

world. In addition, the notion of performativity may be useful in discussing other music genres that are associated with specific identity categories including the blues and hip hop.

While some women I interviewed are fully aware of the norms of gender, race, sexuality, and age in jazz, others insisted that their music has nothing to do with gender or other categories of identity because musical sound itself does not have any identities. People who advocate the latter view often cite Duke Ellington's famous quote, "There are simply two kinds of music, good music and the other kind."⁵⁴¹ These people dismiss the norms of identity categories that relate to music. If they understand their identities as being performatively constituted, they might recognize the norms that permeate in music.

In a strict sense, performance and performativity are different in that there is a doer behind performances but no doer behind performativity. Therefore, performativity does not involve theatricality. While many performers of various musical genres show different degrees of theatricality, I suggest that jazz improvisers strive for becoming themselves. Philip Auslander remarks, "When we hear a musician play, the source of the sound is a version of that person constructed for the specific purpose of playing music under particular circumstances."⁵⁴² "A version" of the jazz musician (a musical persona of the jazz musician) who is engaged in the spontaneous musical creation should present a persona as close as who s/he is, and jazz performance is the process for her/him to discover who s/he is. Therefore, improvisational jazz performances can be a process where both gender identity of the performer and gender norms are performatively constituted.

In contrast, as discussed in Chapter 6, glamorous and hyper-feminine smooth jazz saxophonists in their promotional videos demonstrate rather theatrical body movements and

⁵⁴¹ Duke Ellington, "Where is Jazz Going?," *Music Journal* (March 1962), 31, 96.

⁵⁴² Auslander (2006), 102.

facial gestures. This resonates well with what Auslander terms musical dramatization, adopting Erving Goffman's notion of "dramatization" that presents "an idealized image to the audience."⁵⁴³ According to Auslander, musical dramatization "involves the bodily expressions that are nonessential to the actual production of musical sound but serve as coded displays that provide the audience with external evidence of the musician's ostensible internal state while playing."⁵⁴⁴ Both Mindi Abair and Jessy J theatrically project an idealized and sexualized "feminine" image of female saxophonists. In other words, they present their musical personae that fit very well in heterosexist discourse of jazz. While their gender performances, though playing an untraditional instrument for women, do not greatly challenge the jazz discourse, they are also included into the process of producing and normalizing the gender norms in jazz. In addition, since their gender performances are theatrical, their own gender identity is not highlighted in the process. Though my main goal of this work is to explore gender *performativity* in music performances, I would like to explore gender *performances* in music that involve theatricality to further expand this project.

This work focused on the saxophone because there is the increasing number of female saxophonists in the field. The reason why women play the saxophone more than other instruments in jazz (except for the piano) can be related to the fact that it has been placed in the middle of a masculine-feminine continuum while trumpet, trombone, bass, guitar, and drums are placed closer to the masculine end.⁵⁴⁵ While saxophone, trumpet, trombone, bass, guitar, and drums are typically considered to be masculine, they are differently gendered and surrounded by

⁵⁴³ Auslander (2006), 111.

⁵⁴⁴ Auslander (2006), 112.

⁵⁴⁵ Abeles (2009), 130

different norms of race, sexuality, age, etc. I hope that this work contributed to elucidate a complex web of discourses regarding jazz instrumental performance.

In this dissertation, I showed that the participation of female jazz saxophonists with different racial backgrounds, sexual orientations and age groups has impacted the discourse of jazz. Their increasing presence and visibility in jazz will promote changes in the norms of gender, race, sexuality, and age in jazz. One of this work's most important contributions to the field of studies in jazz and gender is the conversations I had with female musicians. The interviews did not always go smoothly especially at the beginning stage of this project. Some women expressed antipathy and hesitation when I explained that my project is about female jazz saxophonists. In fact, one musician refused to be interviewed when she knew that I was going to ask gender related questions. These women insisted that gender never impacts their music in any ways. Their attitudes often raised questions for me about whether my research would be fruitful. In the early 2000s I interviewed a female saxophonist for my term paper. At the end of the interview, she unhappily said to me, "You don't want to know more about my music?" She seemed to be slightly offended because my questions were mainly about her experiences as a female jazz saxophonist instead of a jazz saxophonist. This experience made me reconfigure my questions. After some trials and errors and perhaps because of my background as a jazz saxophonist as well as being Asian, I could bring out valuable, insightful, and honest views on gender and race from the musicians.

As mentioned earlier, jazz musicians tend to avoid talking about gender in the context of jazz performance. Pianist George Colligan's blog, "jazztruth," has published transcriptions of the interviews he conducted with several jazz musicians. One of the musicians he interviewed is baritone saxophonist Lauren Savian, whom I also interviewed. Colligan asked questions about

her motivations to play the baritone saxophone, her practice routines, her experiences with the Mingus band, etc., and Savian's answers were never related to her being a woman. At the end, Colligan asked, "Last question: I really hate to talk about gender, but given the history of jazz, do you think that men should really be trying to play jazz? (Laughing)," and Savian answered, "I think with more time and acceptance there will be more men in the jazz field (Laughter)."⁵⁴⁶ This dialogue seems to demonstrate that both Colligan and Savian are being sarcastic about male domination in jazz and the type of interviews Savian often gets, which focuses more on her gender than her music. Similarly, in Lara Pellegrinelli's interview with eight female jazz musicians mentioned above, after discussing the participants' various experiences as women in jazz, Terri Lyne Carrington abruptly said, "I would just like to make a suggestion that we shift to talking about music and not about women. I know that's part of your thing, but none of us think about being a woman. We already said that, but I'll reiterate—none of us think about being a woman when we play or write songs or do all the other work that has to be done to organize even just a project like this [Carrington's all female band]."⁵⁴⁷ I understand their belief that music is free from gender, race or any other extra-musical elements. Especially, unlike audiences and the music industry, most musicians only care about music. However, I cannot help wondering if being aloof to gender norms and never talking about it is the best way to create better spaces for female jazz instrumentalists.

Of course, there are unproductive ways of talking about gender such as complaining and nagging. Though my intention of interviewing female saxophonists was to explore how gender impacts on women's musical performances and how their gender performances negotiate

⁵⁴⁶ George Colligan, "Last New York Gig of The Summer and The Lauren Savian Interview." <http://jazztruth.blogspot.com/search/label/Interviews?updated-max=2010-10-30T17%3A04%3A00-07%3A00&max-results=20>, accessed 18 August, 2010.

⁵⁴⁷ Pellegrinelli (2010).

masculinist jazz discourse, some women first thought that I was collecting horrifying stories of gender discrimination and sexual harassment as well as their laments on being a minority in the jazz scene. Certainly, stories my interviewees shared with me included a few complaints. Yet, more importantly, the ways all the women responded to my questions, which were not always related to gender or other categories of identity, displayed a variety of gender performances—performing gender within the norms, outside the norms, and ignoring the norms. In addition, their stories also revealed norms of gender, race, sexuality, and age in jazz that are often taken for granted and avoided to talk about. The jazz discourse has been created through accumulations of numerous writings, conversations, and memories of writers, musicians, and audiences. Some musicians have been written about more than other musicians, and some voices have been heard more than other voices, all of which has contributed to create masculinist jazz discourse. I suggest that not talking about gender, as some musicians prefer, would bury the norms and preserve them intact and unexamined, conforming to the masculinist discourse. In such situation, the norms are unchanged and female instrumentalists remain “exceptional.” Instead, the conversations I presented in this work demonstrate that talking about gender and other categories of identity, through bringing the norms to the surface, will ask us to reexamine the ways we perceive jazz instrumental performances.

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