

# In Focus: Capturing Female Rock Photojournalists Trailblazing Attitudes on Gender and Stereotypes (1970-1980s)

*Em Foco: Capturando Atitudes Pioneiras de Fotojornalistas de Rock sobre Gênero e Estereótipos (décadas de 1970-1980)*

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**Abstract:** Women music photojournalists in the 80s escaped gender discrimination in the workforce because their work took place outside the newsroom. This finding merits an in-depth examination of women's photojournalist perspective during this time. This paper provides a unique perspective by analyzing the gender perceptions of the participants' professional experiences in photojournalism. The testimonies of five self-identified women, born between 1953 and 1963, who worked as music photographers between the 1970s and 1980s form the basis of this analysis. Their experiences offer valuable insight into the gender dynamics of the time. An analysis of the sample testimonies reveals that the public spaces where male and female photographers worked (e.g., concert halls, bars) had no significant impact on gender discrimination since editors worked with an economy of means compared to the work environments where men and women are forced to interact and socialize such as newsrooms. The findings of this study shed light on the gender dynamics in the music photography industry during the 1970s-1980s. They contribute to ethnographic research of subcultures and increase public interest in gender studies, particularly about education, professional performance, and perceptions of gender roles. The study underscores the need for further research and discussion on this topic.

**Keywords:** gender. media. representation. stereotypes. rock photography.

**Resumo:** As fotojornalistas musicais dos anos 80 escaparam da discriminação de gênero na força de trabalho porque seu trabalho acontecia fora da redação. Essa descoberta merece um exame aprofundado da perspectiva das fotojornalistas

*femininas durante esse período. Este artigo fornece uma perspectiva única ao analisar as percepções de gênero das experiências profissionais das participantes no fotojornalismo. Os depoimentos de cinco mulheres autoidentificadas, nascidas entre 1953 e 1963, que trabalharam como fotógrafas musicais entre as décadas de 1970 e 1980 formam a base desta análise. Suas experiências oferecem uma visão valiosa sobre a dinâmica de gênero da época. Uma análise dos depoimentos da amostra revela que os espaços públicos onde fotógrafos homens e mulheres trabalhavam (por exemplo, salas de concerto, bares) não tiveram impacto significativo na discriminação de gênero, uma vez que os editores trabalhavam com uma economia de meios em comparação aos ambientes de trabalho onde homens e mulheres são forçados a interagir e socializar, como as redações. As descobertas deste estudo lançam luz sobre a dinâmica de gênero na indústria da fotografia musical durante as décadas de 1970-1980. Elas contribuem para a pesquisa etnográfica de subculturas e aumentam o interesse público em estudos de gênero, particularmente sobre educação, desempenho profissional e percepções de papéis de gênero. O estudo ressalta a necessidade de mais pesquisas e discussões sobre este tópico.*

**Palavras-chave:** gênero. mídia. representação. estereótipos. fotografia de rock.

## Introduction

A recent analysis of women's representation in music magazines' newsrooms in 1980 in the U.S., U.K., and Spain reveals that the music press exercised the role of gatekeepers in repressing the visibility of the legacy of female rock musicians by transmitting discriminatory stereotypes (Bronsons, 2021). Bronsons' research analyzed women's representation in the music journalism workforce, finding that in the case of *New Musical Express* (NME), in November 1980, the staff was made up of 5 women and 45 men, while in *Rolling Stone* magazine, there were 98 men and 57 women. Additionally, the gender make-up of the newsroom did not reflect the inequalities of the assignments. Protocol consensus in publishing corporations gave men relevant assignments in music journalism, while female journalists were relegated to minor news. Further, the women who made up these music publications included photographers, and the research found a gap in the academic literature that captured the perceptions of female rock photojournalists during the 1970s-1980s in those countries and their views on gender representation in their careers.

This paper aims to bridge this gap by qualitatively analyzing music photojournalists' knowledge, perceptions, and attitudes in those years. The primary goal is to understand whether external assumptions of gender roles impacted the career choice of five photojournalists during the 1970s-1980s. Through five interviews, this paper finds that because women photojournalists were not operating within the newsroom and instead performed their jobs outside of the confines of the media offices, they were not as constrained by the gatekeeper's imposed sexual prejudices and gender roles compared to the female colleagues operating in the newsrooms. However, the interviews also reveal that misogyny still was at play, given that men were still assigned high-profile assignments.

## Literature Review

To talk about gender is to talk about power relations and ideals of masculinity and femininity that have been configured as allegedly heterosexual, constructed, and shaped through written language and its social meanings (Palacios, 2013). Gender can also be analyzed as a culturally constructed identity developed through social practices, texts, and discourses, or like philosopher Judith Butler (2002) assesses, from a series of performances with an emphasis on representation. The body is not a passive medium that is not only accessible through discourses, practices, norms, and corporeality; it can materialize its sex by social, historical, and cultural construction.

Simone de Beauvoir's revolutionary debate also focused on the body at the center of feminism. Inequalities and women's subordination are paradigms not only of the Second Wave of feminism but also of today's body, which is still

subject to taboos and stereotypes that serve as an excuse to legitimize the most apparent social discrimination.

Sociologist and analyst Pierre Bourdieu inquiries about society, a global social space, a scenario of production and reproduction of practices and discourses in which our behavior and capacity to act are subjected to acquire or inhere visions. Understanding how gender has worked historically or in other cultures brings us closer to better learning how it is today and helps us improve and change the system in favor of our needs (Cusick, 1999).

By attending to the issues of gender and sexuality, researcher and analyst Marion Leonard (2015) asserts that “scholars have highlighted that music production, analysis, institutions histories, aesthetics, and practices cannot be divorced from the social worlds in which they have been produced.” (Leonard, 2015, p.182).

Additionally, feminist epistemologies aid in identifying how certain dominant conceptions and practices place women and other subordinate groups at a disadvantage in acquiring and justifying knowledge. In that sense, various practitioners of feminist epistemology and philosophy of science argue that dominant knowledge practices disadvantage women in five assumptions: excluding them from inquiry, denying them epistemic authority, or denigrating their “feminine” cognitive styles and modes of knowledge. Further, dominant knowledge practices produce theories of women that represent them as inferior, deviant, or significant only in how they serve male interests. Finally, by creating theories of social phenomena that render women’s activities and interests, or gendered power relations, invisible, producing knowledge (science and technology) that is not useful for people in subordinate positions or that reinforces gender and other social hierarchies (Anderson, 2020) Additionally, these dominant knowledge practices create theories of social phenomena that render women’s activities and interests, or gendered power relations, invisible and produce knowledge that is not useful for people in subordinate positions or that reinforces gender and other social hierarchies (Anderson, 2020).

Among the epistemologies to take into consideration to rework music discourses from a feminist perspective, we refer to technologies of gender and gender politics experts Judith Butler, Anne Fausto-Sterling, Gayle Rubin, Teresa de Lauretis, feminist musicologist Caroline Abbate, Susan McClary, ethnomusicologist Ellen Koskoff, historian Joan W. Scott, sociologist Mavis Bayton, creator of the first ethnographic study of women’s popular music-making or sociologist of culture and gender Gaye Tuchman. Leveraging this theoretical framework with a gender perspective, literature references photography from a feminist perspective. Campo Castro (2017) notes:

The creative space of female photographers, in general terms, has been conditioned by power relations: in some way, what men have considered to be looked at has been admitted, but above all, how to look at it. Therefore,

little by little and systematically, female photographers have generated strategies to go from being an object of the image to being the subjects that create it, that is, to re-educate perspectives by assuming political and cultural resistance to the hegemonic gaze (Campo Castro, 2017, p. 12).

Novelist and essayist Susan Sontag<sup>1</sup> She investigated the urge to photograph. As a filmmaker, she regards the experience of the world based on looking at it through lenses, what gaps grow or get diluted between image and event, between photography, art, and truth, opening a chapter in the theoretical investigation of the art of the camera. She questioned the ethical perspective of images for the first time, but as a woman, she also became an essential axis in the world of photography critics.

Additionally, within the research process, the epistemic value of emotions in the research process (Garcia & Ruiz, 2021) must be considered in order to illustrate how, in some instances, fieldwork is not only circumscribed to potential threats, both situational and environmental but, also emotional especially when dealing with trauma, resistance. This theoretical frame within feminist epistemologies breaks the distinction between subject and object in interviews, generating a more empathic experience among women (Oakley, 1981).

This structure has previously been instituted in the herstory.<sup>2</sup> In art and music portrayed in the inspiring collection 'Beyond 70' (Russo, 2023)<sup>3</sup> or the compilation 'Women of the Underground: Music' (Von Burden, 2010)<sup>4</sup> and the 50 interviews featured on "Rude Girls: Women in 2 Tone and One Step Beyond" (2023)<sup>5</sup>.

This study adds to a growing body of research on the subject.<sup>6</sup> By documenting women's photojournalist stories to provide perspective on the challenges women continue to face in the music industry. For example, the study on gender in contemporary music and within the artistic scene in the conditions imposed by

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1 Susan Sontag published *On Photography*; a compilation of texts written from 1971 to 1977 for the legendary magazine *The New York Review of Books*.

2 Herstory term was coined in 1968 by American poet, writer, activist, journalist, and lecturer Robin Morgan. She has played a pivotal role in the radical feminist wing of the American Women's Movement since the early 1960s and also emerged as a prominent figure in the global feminist movement. Robin Morgan describes history approached from a feminist standpoint, highlighting the contributions and perspectives of women. It emerged as a modification of the word "history," serving as a critique of traditional historiography predominantly focused on men, hence often referred to as "his story."

3 *Beyond 79* is a collection of 21 interviews with creative women aged 70 and over. It infers that life in the "third act" is often a period of vitality, growth, courage, new possibilities, and even awakening.

4 *Women of the Underground Music* gathers 20 interviews with cultural innovators such as Moe Tucker or Laurie Anderson, Ana da Silva, and Lydia Lunch.

5 Heather Augustyn deciphers in 50 interviews the questions of sexism and misogyny with women involved with ska in the U.K. during the 70s and 80s.

6 "Stereotyped, sexualized and shut out: The plight of women in music." The annual report from the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative. <https://annenberg.usc.edu/news/research-and-impact/stereotyped-sexualized-and-shut-out-plight-women-music>

the COVID-19 pandemic (Bronsons & Guerra, 2022) revealed that the fields of the arts and culture, often viewed as women's worlds, were sectors permeated by cumulative disadvantages in the opportunities and careers women could access, including gender stereotypes, difficulties in reconciling work and family life, objectification, and sexual harassment.

## Methodology

This paper investigates female photojournalists' knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions from the 1970s to the 1980s. Radical feminism politics fundamentally assert the subordination of women in society as second-class citizens and actively question the legitimizing elements of this situation. Within the realm of writers and journalists, exclusion was deeply entrenched. Notably, executives and editors of music magazines played a pivotal role in challenging these norms by actively promoting the inclusion and participation of more women photographers. This initiative disrupted organizational dynamics rooted in sexual prejudices and, in most instances, yielded economic incentives.

The semi-structured interview was the most optimal data collection instrument for testing the research question. Wimmer and Dominick (2006) maintain that qualitative research can have some disadvantages, especially when it involves a small sample, because it forces data to be generalized beyond the study sample.

The inclusion criteria for this study were set for female subjects who identified as women born between 1953 and 1963 and who studied and practiced as rock photojournalists. The purpose was to identify a homogeneous group of informants with very marked standard features despite their geographical origin and generational concurrence but similar media and commercial prestige in their careers. Recruitment for the study sought 15 candidates, taking into consideration diverse populations and intersectional profiles, who had worked during that timeframe in those countries as the object of the research.

Interviews comprised ten questions that included references to the career of choice, cultural and political themes of the decade, and perceptions of their role from a gender perspective. In particular, the categories established to gather qualitative information are related to:

- 1) the context of where the interviewees were trained professionally.
- 2) identity and stylistic personal options.
- 3) obstacles in the business culture of the music industries: environments of influence, glass ceiling, conciliation issues, and gender inequalities

Interviews were conducted via email, and results were drawn following stylistic literality criteria, allowing us to explore their environments' contextual and structural particularities.

In the final selection of the sampling of the five participating women, the researcher established and controlled the non-probabilistic way. The reliability

of the data may also be in question due to the loss of objectivity when dealing with small groups. In this case, this study understands that without the intention of drawing generalizable conclusions, the contributions of the artists will be significant in understanding the difficulties they had to face due to being women.

## Results

This study unveils perceptions of gender discrimination, stereotypes, and sexism related to the professional careers of music photographers in three different countries. When analyzing the gender dimension of the cultural construction of communities and their borders, we visualize how society imposes culturally appropriate behavior on women while they fight back with their agency and empowerment when susceptible to suffering gender bias.

The research expands on a previous study<sup>7</sup> about women working in the Spanish music industry in the same period (1970-1980s). In the conclusions, not only objectification but sexual harassment was among the scourges these 12 professionals in the music industry faced based on their gender, also reifying and reductionist expressions about their physical appearance, a datum that delegitimized them. In addition, verbal sexual insinuations were received from a patriarchy of “useless and unpresentable men” who, given the refusal to please them, would, in turn, describe them as “tomboys.” Also deceitful was the pressure to measure up and demonstrate more than them, questioning their creative capacities, fostering feelings of inferiority, denying them professional connections or training, and even impeding conciliation towards those who decided to embrace motherhood. In neutralizing the essentialist stereotypes referred to their bodies, these women imposed their firmness and self-control with their agency, a paradigmatic resistance allowing them to recentralize their power. Their statement, “We are the AVE locomotives”,<sup>8</sup> reaffirms their high sense of individuality.

The historical and economic context of the study sample ranges from the 70s to the 80s.

In 1973, the United States suffered a negative economic period derived from the oil crisis; the black gold embargo led to fiscal inflation, massive unemployment, and loss of value in the real estate market, and American society experienced the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 to the aftermath of civil rights movement. Ironically, these destabilizing factors were decisive in creating a New York avant-

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7 Bronsoms, A (2022): “Radio GA-GA, herstory de la indústria musical en España entre 1975-1985”. VIII Congreso Internacional de la AE-IC ‘Comunicación y Ciudad Conectada’. Jun 29, 2022. The study interviewed 12 female professionals working in the music industry in the 70s and 80s in Spain to determine which assigned gender stereotypes and inequalities the gatekeepers enforced.

8 AVE states for Alta Velocidad Española, a high-speed rail service operated by the Spanish State railway company Renfe.

garde. San Francisco (California) was the center of counterculture and political protest, with beatniks and flower power prophets becoming the world capital of psychedelia and hippies. Los Angeles, on the other hand, assumed leadership in the visual arts, television, film, and music industries. Punk musician Alice Bag in California subscribes to the context of “creating new professional roles for women: photographers, managers, roadies, writers, club concert programmers, designers, journalists, producers, directors, and record industry executives.”

The 1970s had witnessed one of the most intense crises in the Western world, a crisis that strongly affected the British metal industry. In 1973, Great Britain became part of the European Economic Community (EEC), and in the 1975 referendum, it voted overwhelmingly to remain. With the entry into the common market, the unions feared that the entry of cheap products from the continent would flood Britain with a consequent increase in unemployment figures. This political and social context of fractured, divided Labor radicalized its militant bases and made it easier for Margaret Thatcher to be elevated as the country’s prime minister in 1979. Photographer Erica Echenberg attests: “It was a period when the culture was very androgynous, a very black and white time in England and very different from the one that became in the 80s as well as the role of figures to mirror.”

In Spain in the 1970s, in the business culture of the media, conditions prevailed regarding access to the public sphere, excluding women from executive roles. The consolidation of the feminist movement between 1975 and 1976 led to an intense debate on feminism, politics, education, work, and sexuality, and there was a massive incorporation of women into the labor market. At the end of the Franco regime and amid the Transition, the journalistic profession had more freedom of expression. In any case, their vocabulary and ways of seeing reality were reproducing stereotypes and trivialized content about women. It was a period during the 70s when the slogan sex, drugs, and rock and roll erupted, extolling the excesses within an alternative lifestyle; it did so by appealing to collective freedom where participants denoted that they “felt free; everything was a party.” (Bronsoms, 2022).

In the 80s, the renewal and modernization of the music industry were coupled with new means of communication and new windows for the representation of identities, a context of transformation where gender issues remained immutable and primarily ignored and is due to that unfairness that it acquired meaning to study with real case narratives the inception and contribute to its dissemination.

In the present research, centered on a gender analysis of five female photojournalists in music, the demographic had an average age of 17-27 years old, and the level of education in media or photography was the highest with



professional access differences.<sup>9</sup> The departing questions about their professional context, identity, and obstacles help construct the theoretical framework for studying concepts like agency, visibility, inclusion, lack of conciliation, gatekeeper discrimination, empowerment, and referents.

The notion of “agency,” both in gender studies and anthropology, is essential to understanding an agent (a person or entity) ‘s relationships in society, emphasizing individual action and capacity. Des Jardins (2011) associates her story with agency, using that lens to assist us in focusing on the history and meta-narratives of women appearing collectively as empowered agents rather than individual characters.

O’Brien (2018) reaffirms this feminist vision of agency to subvert the established order and produce change, as blatantly manifested in the identity and power of punk’s creative and supportive women. Erica Echenberg witnessed the punk phenomenon 1976, documenting the visual imprint of London clubs such as the Roxy or the Marquee<sup>10</sup>. Her depiction of the punk D.I.Y ethos was that of reinforcement of her individualism and empowerment in a music industry where gatekeepers<sup>11</sup> were responsible for gender discrimination (Reddington, 2012), (Hooper, 2019), (Lieb, 2013).

In the recruitment for the study, several emails were sent seeking 15 candidates, including intersectional profiles of those who had worked during that timeframe in those countries that were significant for the research object. Five interviews were summarized, and the following demographic results were obtained: three from Spain, one from the U.S., and one from the U.K.

Visi Caño (Bilbao, 1963) and Erica Echenberg (Montreal, Canada, 1953) were trained in England, while Theresa Kereakes (Los Angeles, 1956) instruction was in California and Europe, succeeding in seeing a lot of nascent punk bands while a student: “I had never aspired to be a professional photographer but wanted to make movies, and eventually did, as a producer and also as a director of photography.”

Two participants, Marivi Ibarrola (Nájera, 1956) and Michele Curel (NY, 1957), studied Journalism in Madrid and Barcelona, respectively. Ibarrola’s professional process was self-taught and without resources, seeking support in university circles and groups of photography hobbyists for technical loans and learning. In Curel’s case, her knowledge of English in the Spanish society of the early 80s offered her an opportunity to be an interpreter in interviews with rock musicians and take photos of the people interviewed. Her networking capacity and agency

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9 The participants have provided explicit and informed consent for the utilization of their verbatim statements within the scope of this research endeavor.

10 A review of this work can be seen in her book: “And God Created Punk” (1996). Her work of more than 3,000 images has been published in emblematic magazines such as Melody Maker, NME, Record Mirror, Vogue Magazine, and Times.

11 Lieb (2013) refers to these gatekeepers as cultural intermediaries, among whom there would be journalists, music critics and those responsible for the Billboard lists, programmers and entrepreneurs of radio stations, television networks, film entrepreneurs, and producers...

were resourceful in providing her with photo passes for many concerts: “If it was because I was a woman, I do not know.”

In the narratives of the sample analyzed, recurrent themes refer to the influences and obstacles faced by these professionals in the music industry: individuality, invisibility, stylistic choices, career empowerment, glass ceiling, and conciliation.

Visi Caño’s resourcefulness entails this sense of individuality and empowerment: “Because I was short in stature, I had to buy a hard metal case to store my equipment and, at the same time, be able to use it as a stepping stool for the high stages in big venues.” In her view: “This job has chosen me, and I took it as that, a job, I realize now that it was a privilege”<sup>12</sup>. “As a freelancer, I was fortunate not to have to deal with corporate issues; I am a self-ruled individual, an anarchist at heart”.

That same empowerment defines Kereake’s attitude: “When people told us no, we figured out a workaround, which led the way to house concerts and indie record labels.”

The idea of music has been covered from different perspectives: as a cultural construction and a product of human behavior, as well as a space for manifesting gender relations and questioning the status quo. “There is little doubt that music, in each of its myriad forms, plays a key part in the formation and articulation of identity” (Bennet, 2015, p. 143); the musical experience, hence, is an essential symbol of individuality for our social relationships and in understanding collective identities (Frith, 2015).

When summarizing the stylistic choices of the sample, they refer to music, unlike other media, as what can organize our perceptions of bodies and emotions and is the basis for opening feminist criticism. Curel admits she was naturally attracted to the rock scene because: “music had always been in my life just as photography.” Marivi Ibarrola confesses: “Music transports me, and I can enjoy many genres. I do not like to define myself either, but I defend rock, and I identify with that universal language”. The music selection of each interviewee ranges from different styles, as Kereakes concedes: “Some became punk rockers/punk supporters and belonged to the “outsider” subculture- were anti “corporate rock,” against being marketed to as a demographic. Our musical tastes ran the gamut of what we liked for aesthetic and ironic reasons. In the same breath, we loved the Sex Pistols and Kraftwerk. We had a fascination with Paris and Berlin between the wars, and we cleaved to the fashion (like in the Cabaret movie) and music ranging from show tunes to experimental to pop and what we now know as punk.”

In the entire DIY movement, solidarity with other women was essential. British photographer Echenberg, a witness to the visual imprint of the punk phenomenon in 1976, attests to how he was able to access and document London clubs such

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12 “R&R Ektachrome,” is the name of her upcoming book narrating her experiences shooting concerts.

as the Roxy or the Marquee.<sup>13</sup> A scene that seems inclusive: “In those days, we did not think about femininity, and punk, at least for me, did not seem sexist.”

Women’s invisibility in their work, due to the permanent domination of androcentrism, is a form of appropriation of power, not only of expression but also of production and distribution of scenarios imposing the vision of the woman’s body as an object of visual pleasure in which man’s fantasies unfold. E.E: “All the dinosaur gangs were men; the women’s gangs were in the minority back then, for example, Suzy Quatro. Then punk came, and you could be a woman and pick up a guitar or a bass, singer, artist, photographer, or someone, and wear flashy clothes. You did not have to be glamorous, and the change was significant at this time, and it gave space to women. I did not feel different because I was a woman.”

As previously stated, in Spain’s research about the music industry (Bronsoms, 2022), rock business cultures were extensively dominated by men, women were mainly in the PR side of the business in record companies or concert producers, more in behind-the-scenes work positions.

Ibarrola actively engaged as music photographer in the 1970s and 1980s, summarizes her frustration: “I found myself in a world of men, although there were more female examples than in other disciplines. Among them Dulce or Paz Tejedor two of the most popular female managers in Madrid in the 80s. However, call attention that all the section heads, publishers, magazines and newspapers were men and many colleagues help me with the texts like Iñaki Zarata, Juamma Blelber, Diego Manrique, Juanma Ibeas (Rockero de Base), Saénz de Tejada... There also female journalist like Sagrario Luna, Merche Yoyoba, Patricia Godes, Elena Lopez Aguirre”.

Ibarrola highlights also that the representation of women artists in musical groups was scarce, still, there was a little active group of them: “Desechables, Monaguillos, Ana Curra, Alaska, Lou Olangua (from Ok Korral), Alicia Navarro, Vulpes, Aurora Beltran, Malos Tratos, Carmen Madorilas de Los Bólidos, Las Chinas, Mercedes Ferrer”.

In California, feminist vindications transcended on campuses with the fight for social transformation and against the division of labor as a critical idea of feminism.

Women in the sample all share experiences of exclusion in fields and spaces that paradoxically exhumed modernity, such as media in the music industry, a culture that remains a boy’s club where women in positions such as CEO are outnumbered and the good old boys still pretty much writing the rules as indicates Kereakes: “Of course, women in the earliest days of the 20th Century fought hard for the right to vote- but still, it is 2023, and we remain far from equal. Gender inequality is so ingrained- just as racism and other intolerances- that

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13 A review of this work can be seen in her book: “And God created punk” (1996). Her work of more than 3,000 images has been published in emblematic magazines such as Melody Maker, NME, Record Mirror, Vogue Magazine and Times.

those who are biased do not even realize they are. This affects our opportunities and our earning power”.

Echenberg corroborates gender bias: “However, yeah, male photographers had the best jobs. Being a woman in that world, you had to move, not stop, fight... just like today. Moreover, I remember another photographer, Penny Smith, who had better luck, but she was adamant, very pushy, and maybe I was not hard enough”.

The interviewees testify to the importance of belonging to a tribe, all in the underground range, and how significant were for them referential roles in music photography like Stephanie Chernikowski, Roberta Bayley, Kate Simon, Lynn Goldsmith: “They all worked hard, Roberta and Kate had the halo effect of their rocker boyfriends. Still, they all did excellent work built upon the foundation of Annie Liebowitz, who DEFINED 1970s rock’n’roll photography. Also, regarding gender vis-a-vis assignment, we all took note of Linda Eastman-McCartney’s playbook. Just show up; shoot good photos. The foundation of superb female photographers in popular culture goes back to at least the 1930s!”.

Profit in the music industry economies was one of the obstacles for some of them, like Visi Caño, who immigrated to the U.S. from Spain and slowly had to start abandoning this type of photography. Specializing in portrait photography signals the relevance of Leibovitz, Arnold Newman, and Irving Penn.

One of the obstacles that Visi Caño faced while working at a camera store in 1990, well before the Me-Too Movement, was sexual harassment: “I quit and took the manager to court; he never showed up, so I won the case, not only for me but for the young girl in the film department who was too young and afraid to do it on her own. I had other sexual advances in other jobs that cost me my position. As a freelancer, I could not do much but tell them off and quit.”

In a world where women’s access to political and economic power -in most cases- is severely limited, their status and roles are defined within political, financial, and cultural systems that tend to exclude them from participation (Gallagher, 1981).

It is paradigmatic that in a period of incipient feminism, in the late 70s in the US, photographic editor of Rolling Stone, Annie Leibovitz, eager to break the glass ceiling, is forced to embrace the prevailing codes to be accepted into the exclusive club of “winners,” thus learning that her gender offers her little chance of success. Leibovitz used a code of masculine gaze that shows how she has internalized certain conventions expected of her as a professional and responded to a demand from her editors to give coherence to content that aims to attract the male target audience.

The role of women instrumentalizing other women as mere sexual objects is as significant as their condescension toward the male figures with whom they collaborated, either as bosses or mentors. In defining the role of professionals in the construction of discourses through images, Ledo (1998) states that there is a power relationship since photography is a product of symbolic content in which

its author chooses “a certain way of observing certain conventions, to codify their work and to convert it into a communication product” (Ledo, 1998, p.148).

The glass ceiling<sup>14</sup> compelled these photographers to exert their agency and resilience while continually having to demonstrate that their vision was there: “We were aware of the glass ceiling but crushed it whenever it got in the way. Also, in later years, when I experienced the symptoms of the glass ceiling, I looked for better opportunities- I am not one to let my energy fester in a fruitless situation”.

Ibarrola’s opinion substantiates Kereakes and clarifies: “There was no talk about gender, although we did talk about sexes. I was a woman with a camera, and they finally called me a photographer. I only wanted to photograph what I lived, what was close to me. I wanted to document moments that set me free in thought. Free in facts that would contribute and open the way for my contemporaries, including men. The industry and specialized media did not give me the opportunity I had expected; they did publish small parts of my work, and I did not receive large or important orders.”

Maternity and conciliation were also perceived as obstacles: «Maternity changes everything for at least a decade, then you must find yourself again, rescue what you left when you decided to be a mother. Conciliation is hard without feeling the weight of guilt,” concludes Ibarrola. That feeling of being an impostor has hunted down women in motherhood: “I love photography, but I wanted to raise my two children without the pressure of a full-time job, so I switched the gears to a different type of photography that only would take my weekends, that was shooting weddings, family and children portraiture, it was not as glamorous as music, celebrities and fashion, but I enjoyed it, and I was able to make good money and be there for my kids.” Caño signals how her husband as a cinematographer, also gave up going around the world to shoot movies: “he was fortunate to find a job on T.V. at CBS and take care of the children during weekends.”

Michele Curel became a mother at 42 when the music industry photography was behind her. Still, she managed to work with the most prestigious magazines in Spain and the United States: “I became a mother a couple of months after 9/11, which changed the face of the magazine/newspaper industry forever. So, it coincided with when less work was good for my new life as a mother. As in most of the rest of my career...I was lucky”.

This pioneering scene and their feminist empowerment and resilience allowed them to overcome the obstacles of a patriarchal and androcentric music industry,

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14 A glass ceiling refers to an invisible but tangible barrier that obstructs the advancement of certain groups, particularly women and minorities, preventing them from reaching upper-level positions within an organization or profession despite their qualifications, skills, or experience. Marilyn Loden (July 12, 1946 – August 6, 2022) was an influential American author, management consultant, and champion of diversity. She is widely recognized for introducing the concept of the “glass ceiling” in a speech she delivered in 1978.

encouraging them with optimism in the face of reversal opportunities: “I am not one to let my energy fester in a fruitless situation.”

## Discussion

The underrepresentation of women in “androcentric worldview” (Gallego, 2015) environments like the newsrooms where male gender perspective prevailed, as well as the reproduction of gender stereotypes, women had to mingle as “one of the boys” -without showing that they were as erudite- although in many cases they ended up marginalizing themselves. Such a low presence of women can cause the inhibition of gender-related issues and lack of professional legitimacy on the part of the few women who finally have recognized their superiors or their equals (Gallego, 2004, p. 42).

One explanation for understanding the social theories of occupational gender segregation, which offers clarification on why women are excluded from the best jobs, is in terms of patriarchy, linking capitalism and class to male power and control (Blackburn et al., 2002).

Ironically, as always, the early 80s were not bad for a different take on feminism. Bourgeois feminism flourished and revived a long-dormant positive theoretical vision between capitalism and female empowerment. Women’s escape from oppression, it was argued, was through competing and succeeding within capitalism, rather than resisting or even questioning the system (Bhattacharya, 2017, p.1)

In the late 1980s, gender sociologist Joan Acker (1990) questioned the non-neutrality of organizations, arguing that there is a hierarchy by which tasks are stratified by complexity and responsibility, resulting in inequality. It suggests that the maintenance of this gender hierarchy is possible by tacit agreements that exclude women and are based on arguments about reproduction, emotionality, and women’s sexuality: “Women’s bodies cannot be adapted to hegemonic masculinity; to function at the top of male hierarchies requires that women render irrelevant everything that makes them women” (Acker, 1990, p.153).

Her perspective on bodies, hierarchies, and work alludes to the universal individual constructed from a male body. In this scenario, the woman, whose body is sexualized and objectified to achieve the qualities of a faithful worker, must become like a man. Sorensen (1984) alludes to the obstacles to egalitarian participation of the sexes in the public sphere, admitting that the most potent organizational positions are almost entirely occupied by men, except for the occasional biological female who acts as a social man.

Acker (1990) emphasizes how in communities like labor organizations, male bodies are never sexualized or objectified; there, the gender hierarchy is often achieved through tacit controls based on arguments such as reproduction, emotional, and sexual, legitimizing segregation structures that discriminate

against women. A rationale for that discrimination in the music industry is embodied by the gatekeepers that have built a cultural barrier to the participation of women, entailing lower cachet than men and lesser access to networks and opportunities vital in building a professional career (Hooper, 2019).

In the music industry, where these professionals have developed their careers, there were organizations where male participants held most of the power, men represented the active principal hero of culture, and women were the “other.” Occasionally, a woman would stand out for acting like a social man. Still, the traits in their depiction were that of participating subjects fighting to deconstruct and challenge stereotypes of the male gaze.<sup>15</sup>, opening to new representative and revolutionary possibilities and empowered by their references, their curricula - developed their careers in international music scenes-command of languages, and cosmopolitanism while promoting their feminism. It is plausible that their agency and autonomous gaze were commodities that helped them cross borders, making visible the modernity of those generations that starred in the effervescent Anglo-Saxon and Spanish countercultural scenes. Likewise, they have documented the urban tribes during the 1970s-80s in multitudinous musically dynamic nuclei: “Gender was not an obstacle in my work because of my attitude. I did what I wanted, and if I did not get the answer I wanted IF I asked, I devised a workaround”.

The organizational dynamics of the newsrooms avoided sexual prejudices in the authorship of images and bet in favor of an economy of means and results. Rock magazines are image-driven; the photographer’s gender is not considered when the photo editors select images. However, they admit that in assignments: “It was a club - you were “in-crowd,” or you were not. It was not gender-based, but who your friends were at the publication or record labels.”

The culture of the music industry remains a boy’s club where male photographers had the best jobs with a high glass ceiling that “we crashed whenever it got in the way,” an industry and specialized media that did not give women the opportunities that they have expected working as freelancers while conciliating, a commonality inherent in every field.

## Conclusions

The current research focuses on observing creative communities, especially those related to music and photography. Sociologically, those underground music scenes become fresh air for creative activity beyond mainstream cultural

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15 In 1975, British feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey introduced the theory of visual pleasure, which asserts that female characters in cinema are consistently depicted through the lens of appearance and as objects of desire subjected to the male gaze. This patriarchal perspective, controlled by men, transforms women into not only objects observed by the male viewer but also objects intended for his viewing pleasure, thereby triggering voyeuristic or fetishistic responses.

industries, generating interactions and opportunities favored by a highly dynamic lifestyle based on nightlife (Guerra's 2020b).

The situation of subordination of women in society as second-class citizens and the questioning of the elements that legitimize it are essential claims of radical feminism politics. While exclusion was heavily ingrained within writers and journalists, it is significant how executives and editors of the music magazines promoted the inclusion and participation of more women photographers, blowing up organizational dynamics anchored in sexual prejudices and resulting, in most cases, an economic incentive.

The gender analysis sheds light on comprehending notions of sisterhood and the experiences that shaped the protagonists' identities, their herstory, and the importance of their agency in their construction as subjects. Agency is, therefore, the concept that refers to us: "to ideas about personality, will, self-determination and the nature of consciousness" (Fowler & Zavaleta, 2013, p. 118). hooks (2015) reaffirm it: "If any female feels she needs anything beyond herself to legitimate and validate her existence, she is already giving away her power to be self-defining, her agency" (hooks, 2015, p.95).

Today, women have developed other strategies to assert their creative voice in a patriarchal society. One strategy involves resistance to stylistic norms, social institutions, creative and behavioral prescriptions, and the internalization of gender codes embedded in Western works of art. Another strategy involves secrecy: keeping one's creative fruits unseen by others, perhaps similar to a journal or some other form of personal expression. Finally, an important strategy involves women creators establishing and working on their subcultures: their dissemination channels, audiences, support structures, and support. A culmination of their achievements could be their herstory that remains to be written, and the aim is to combat gender issues and the lack of representation and visibility of professional profiles in the music industry, where patriarchy still acts as a validator.

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## Appendix

The following constitute the portrayals of female photographers:

1. Erica Echenberg (Montreal, Canada 1953). Educated at Ealing Technical College (England), she wanted to work in rock photography and, in 1974, started as

an assistant to editor Ian Dickson. She published “*And God Created Punk*” (2009).

2. Mariví Ibarrola (Nájera, Spain 1956). Her archive documents Spain’s cultural and artistic society, which started in the 1980s, and mainly portrays the emerging youth culture. Her work has been published in *Rock Especial*, *Devórame*, *Diario Vasco*, *Rock de Lux*, *Diario 16*. She published the books “*De Lavapiés a la cabeza. Fotografías de los 80*”, “*Yo disparé en los 80*” (2012). Today develops photography, press, documentation, and communication projects, and since 2006, is an associate professor at Carlos III University (Madrid).

3. Michele Curel (NY, U.S 1957). In the 1980s and 1990s, she was a reporter for the New York Times and music magazines like *Vibraciones* (Spain). As a journalist and professional freelance photographer with 30+ years of experience in portrait and architectural photography, today, her work has veered toward producing multimedia projects to raise awareness on forest and women empowerment-related issues.

4. Theresa Kereakes (Los Angeles, U.S 1958). Writer and camera operator trained at the University of California Los Angeles UCLA (1976-1979) amid the explosion of the punk rock movement created a body of work that includes some of the iconic images that lay the foundations of the collective memory of punk rock. She has directed music videos and oversaw production on VH1 from its relaunch in 1994 until 1998. She has exhibited her photographs under the banner “Punk Turns 30” since 2004.

5. Visi Caño (Bilbao, Spain 1963). She worked in New York as a photographer for Spain’s *Rolling Stone* and *Popular-1* magazines and later in Los Angeles—where she has lived for the last 30 years—and has cultivated portraiture and fashion. Her photographs have been exhibited in the distinguished catalog of Restoration Hardware and portray her travels through Europe, Mexico, Hawaii, India, China, Cuba, and Morocco.

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