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Are all things equal in the back row?: Issues of bias and the female percussionist

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Are All Things Equal in the Back Row?: Issues of Bias and the Female Percussionist

Pamela Rae Riggles

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the degree of

Master of Music

Music Education

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to female percussionists and their teachers.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank her parents and friends for their support during her masters studies and her very middle and high school band directors for providing the source of inspiration for her own studies.

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Are All Things Equal in the Back Row?: Issues of Bias and the Female Percussionist

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In observing bands or orchestras at all levels of performance proficiency, very often it becomes apparent to the onlooker that certain sections of instruments tend to be made up of a greater number of either male or female performers. For instance, the percussion and trumpet sections of ensembles often tend to be predominately male (Steinberg, 2001). This begs the question as to what implications there may be for those who have chosen an instrument that is not considered a “typical” instrument for their gender to play? What challenges might these musicians face, and what biases, if any, might they have to overcome in their pursuit of performing on their chosen instrument?

Females who play instruments deemed to be “masculine” by societal expectations (and males playing “feminine” instruments) have been known to face discrimination (Sinsabaugh, 2005). Female percussionists may also encounter challenges related to their gender as part of their musical journey, in addition to the inherent challenges of learning to play all of the many instruments that are considered part of the percussion section of a band or orchestra. In addition, there are many other non-musical factors that may also prove challenging to individuals wanting to learn to play percussion, such as dealing with bulky instruments and the issue of time-intensive set up.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of male and female percussionists specific to their own musical journeys, with an emphasis on highlighting biases perceived by both genders toward either sex, but more specifically toward females. A survey was created and made available to percussion students at three major universities within the state of Virginia. The survey asked questions about the respondents' (n=20) experiences and preferences as percussionists.

The responses of the 17 male participants tended to be in agreement that percussionists were simply percussionists. In other words, the male percussionists were not aware of the existence of a male/female divide among the percussion sections with which they had been involved, while the three female respondents stated that they had each felt discriminated against at some point during their musical journey. It was also found that of the males surveyed, the majority of them tended to play drum-type percussion instruments more often than the other percussion instruments. In contrast, the female percussionists most often played the keyboard instruments. The results of this study suggest that perhaps some form of gender bias may exist within percussion sections that places female percussionists at a disadvantage to their male counterparts, and certainly provide a reason to further investigate this important topic in future research.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background and Significance

Throughout history women have enjoyed the experience of playing musical instruments, but they have often been hindered by the restrictions placed on them by society in terms of which instruments were considered socially acceptable for them to play. This trend still continues to a certain extent in modern times and has resulted in some instruments being perceived as more masculine or feminine than others. More recently, a number of research studies have examined whether male or female genders are typically associated with playing a given instrument (Abeles & Porter, 1979; Delzel & Leppla, 1992; Fortney, Boyle & DeCarbo, 2003; Griswold & Chrobak, 1981). Other studies (Steinberg, 2001; Macleod, 1993; Kirkdorffer, 2002; Hersey, 2006) have explored the perceptions of musicians who play what in the past might have commonly been perceived as being the “wrong” choice of instrument for their gender, such as a male flutist or female percussionist. Numerous studies have also explored the perceptions and experiences of female musicians (only), who play instruments that are generally perceived to be more suited to being played by males, for example brass instruments (Sinsabaugh, 2005). Such studies have also served to document the historical plight of female musicians in general. Of the aforementioned studies, there has been scant research about the perceptions of female percussionists regarding their choice of instrument and experiences playing it.

If asked, most professional female percussionists would likely agree that they work in a predominately male profession. An informal assessment undertaken by the researcher examining the online website personnel information for percussionists in the

Boston and New York Philharmonic Orchestras, and for the Philadelphia, Cleveland and Chicago Symphony Orchestras' illustrated the scarcity of female percussionists in these ensembles. More than half of these orchestras' personnel were male (61%), while 39% of them were female. In contrast, the combined orchestras' percussion sections comprised a far greater percentage of male (85%) to female (15%) membership. Interestingly, the Philadelphia Orchestra's website made a point of highlighting the fact that Angela Nelson (a member of their percussion section) was the first female percussionist ever hired by the orchestra in 1999. The fact that this was mentioned on the website, in addition to the year of her employment, highlights the scarcity and rarity of female percussionists at elite levels of performance, and more than likely is reflective of gender trends that may exist at all levels of proficiency in the world of percussionists.

Hersey (2006) notes that "Historians have often promoted the assumption that a study of men's experience is valid as an example for both sexes" (p. 2). This "one size fits all" approach to research is no longer appropriate – especially when it relates to the study of gender issues. In the realm of musicians, it has often been the case that certain musical instruments are associated with a specific gender (Abeles & Porter, 1979; Delzel & Leplla, 1992; Fortney, Boyle & DeCarbo, 2003; and Griswold & Chrobak, 1981).

One example of this trend can often be observed in the field of percussion. In the past, percussion instruments have had a tendency to be played by greater numbers of men than women, and while more recently it appears that more women are also now playing percussion instruments, an investigation of this trend poses a number of questions. Firstly, are male percussionists' experiences learning and performing on their instruments the same as their female counterparts'? Secondly, do men and women percussionists

perceive that they have the same opportunities, challenges, successes and reactions to their varied experiences in the field of music? This study seeks to examine the challenges and biases perceived by female percussion students at the university level.

Purpose

Throughout music history, considerable attention has been given by society as to the gender “appropriateness” of certain instruments. The same can be said to be somewhat true in today’s society. According to Sinsabaugh (2005), “Society in general is more willing to accept a guy drummer than a girl drummer” (p.18). Previous research, the researcher’s informal orchestral roster survey, and own personal experiences as a female percussionist would seem to suggest that a gender bias does exist in the field of percussion playing. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine, describe, and compare the perceptions of female and male percussionists as they relate specifically to their own musical journeys, with an emphasis on highlighting biases perceived by both genders toward either sex, but more specifically toward females.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Until recently, few researchers have sought to examine the world of the female musician. Obviously, this void of information does not mean that females have not contributed to the musical experience, but that few researchers have invested the time necessary to study these contributions (Steinberg, 2001). Of the available research literature, there is scant information specific to the experience, values and perceptions of female percussionists in the world of music. However, significant research exists that examines issues specific to the gender stereotyping of instruments and therefore, the musicians who play them, in addition to numerous historical studies of female musicians.

Biases are taught. From centuries past society has imparted the message that a woman's role is to care for the family, and that women's personalities are quieter and less aggressive than those of men. These learned stereotypes can affect many areas in life, including musical decisions, especially those pertaining to choice of instrument. According to Hersey (2006), "Many believe that gender stereotypes translate into the choice of instruments in the music classroom" (p. 73). Hersey goes on to write that when students are choosing instruments, it is important for educators to "counteract the constant application of male and female characteristics to instruments, especially when we have a long and fascinating history of women performers on every instrument" (p. 74).

In the late 1970's Abeles and Porter conducted a series of four studies (1978). These studies have become the backbone for research on the gender-stereotyping of instruments and instrumentalists. The first study (1978) analyzed the extent to which adults between the ages of 19 to 52 (N=149) tended to stereotype instruments according

to sex. The second study (1978) sought to determine whether a given instrument was perceived by 58 college students, both music majors (N=32) and non-music majors (N=26) as being more “masculine” or “feminine.” The subjects in this study participated in a paired-comparison of instruments. Specifically, they were asked to rank the instruments against each other with the intent of helping them to decide which was the most masculine of the instruments. The instruments in question were the flute, violin, clarinet, trumpet, trombone, and drum. As a group, the subjects ranked the flute as the most feminine of the instruments, followed by the violin, the clarinet, the ‘cello, the saxophone, the trumpet, and the trombone. Subjects ranked the drums as being the most masculine of the instruments.

Abeles and Porter (1978) continued this line of research with a third study using a similar method, but this time using kindergarten through fifth grade elementary school students (N=598) as their study participants. The purpose of the study was to determine if and how perceived preferences and actual preferences of males and females changed as they aged. In a fourth study, Abeles and Porter (1978) found that kindergarten students did not have strong gender associations with instruments. Abeles and Porter (1979) close one of their articles with a story of an isolated, alienated and discriminated against female drummer, stating that “music ought to provide the kind of freedom that not only this little girl, but all adults and children are seeking, regardless of their sex”(p. 49).

Delzell and Leppla (1992) re-evaluated the Abeles and Porter (1978) study by asking college music majors (N=32) and non-music majors (N=26) to compare pairs of instruments and identify those which they deemed to be more masculine. The results found that the continuum of perceptions regarding the masculine to feminine qualities of

instruments had not significantly changed. Participants in this study ranked the following instruments as being more feminine or more masculine instrument choices as follows: flute, clarinet, violin, cello, saxophone, trumpet, trombone and drums. However, in contrast to the findings of the earlier study, the participants in Delzell and Leppla's study perceived the clarinet as being a more feminine instrument than it was in the Abeles and Porter (1978) study.

While there have been minor changes in research results measuring how masculine or feminine an instrument has been perceived by subjects through a variety of different studies (Abeles & Porter, 1979; Delzel & Leplla, 1992; Fortney, Boyle & DeCarbo, 2003; Griswold & Chroback, 1981), there have been two points that all agreed upon. The participants in all of these studies concurred that the flute was the most "feminine" of the instruments. Subjects perceived the drums as being the most "masculine" of the instruments.

Fortney, Boyle and DeCarbo (1993) found similar results to those of the aforementioned researchers (Abeles & Porter, 1979; Delzel & Leplla, 1992; Griswold & Chroback, 1981) in their examination of instrument/gender associations among seventh through ninth grade students (N=990) in schools within the state of Florida. Their study was not based on the hypothetical question of which gender "should" play a particular instrument, but rather on who was actually playing these instruments. The researchers found that 90% of the flutists they surveyed were female, and that equal numbers of the trumpeters and percussionists they surveyed were male. The results of this study strongly support the findings of the Abeles and Porter (1978), and Delzell and Leppla (1992)

studies in which participants perceived flute as being a more “feminine” instrument, and percussion instruments as being more “masculine.”

In contrast, Fortney et. al’s (1993) finding that the trumpeters and percussionists surveyed were 90% male seems inconsistent with trumpet being ranked as less masculine an instrument than either drums or trombone in the studies by Abeles and Porter (1978), and Delzell and Leppla (1992). Specifically, the results of the Abeles and Porter (1978) study could be interpreted as suggesting that the research participants they surveyed perceived the trumpet as being more of a “gender-neutral” instrument, as they ranked it in the middle of a female to male continuum. In Delzell and Leppla's (1992) study, results suggested that participants viewed the trumpet as being only slightly masculine since it was one position removed from the middle of a continuum of instruments ranked from most masculine to most feminine.

Griswold and Chroback (1981) created a survey to determine how masculine or feminine musicians were perceived to be according to their choice of musical discipline. The research subjects, who were male and female undergraduate music- and non-music majors (N=89), were asked to rank the following according to whether or not they would generally expect a male or a female to be more associated with the musical discipline. The musical disciplines in question were those of: harpist, flutist, piccoloist, glockenspielist, ‘cellist, choral conductor, clarinetist, pianist, french hornist, oboist, cymbals player, instrumental conductor, saxophonist, bass drummer, trumpeter, string bassist, and tuba player. Subjects’ responses suggested that they perceived the harp as being the most likely to be played by females, followed by the flute, the piccolo and the glockenspiel. This higher ranking of the glockenspiel is interesting, as other studies have

rated drums (very often used interchangeably by other researchers for the term percussion) as being masculine.

In their study, Griswold and Chrobak (1981) examined musicians' attitudes toward the bass drum and glockenspiel specific to gender, where others (Abeles & Porter, 1979; Delzel & Leppla, 1992; and Fortney, Boyle & DeCarbo, 2003) asked for input specific to the percussion family (and gender) as a whole. They also found one instrument in the percussion family – the glockenspiel – that subjects tended to identify as being “feminine.” Subjects' preferences identified the bass drum as being the fourth most masculine instrument out of the twelve total options listed. These were: guitar, cymbal, instrumental conductor, choral conductor, harp, piccolo, glockenspiel, saxophone, bass drum, trumpet, string bass, tuba). Another variation of the results from the Abeles and Porter (1978), and Delzell and Leppla (1992) studies is that the results of the Griswold and Chrobak (1981) study found that their study participants tended to perceive the trumpet as being a more masculine instrument than the (bass) drum.

In Sinsabaugh's (2005) exploration of gender stereotypes in instrument selection, one of his participant's Chandra, an eleventh grade trumpet player, expressed her perception that a lot of boys are drummers because it is “the only masculine type of instrument” and that the males were much better at playing percussion than females. (p. 68) For the purposes of this research, Sinsabaugh conducted a case study using children who played instruments to evaluate their opinions of other instrumentalists. The children were selected based on their gender and instrument, with the goal of determining if as musicians they themselves share similar gender biases as those shared by society.

Similarly, in a study by Zervoudakes and Tanur (1994) that explored gender and personality differences as they relate to playing brass and percussion instruments, results suggested that subjects perceived the players of these instruments as “extroverted, loud and masculine”(p. 60). Zervoudakes and Tanur (1994) used programs from band and orchestra performances from 1960-1989 to determine the number of males and females performing on each instrument. In order to complete this research, the researchers requested programs from 200 elementary schools, 200 high schools and 200 colleges and universities across all 50 states. The researchers tried to accurately determine whether or not the players were male or female based on their first name. They found that the clarinet, flute, oboe, viola and violin were mostly played by females; that the cello and piano were played by both males and females; and that the baritone horn, bass, bassoon, French horn, percussion, saxophone, trombone, trumpet and tuba were played by males.

McWilliams (2003) found similar results to the previous two studies in her examination of depictions of musicians in the magazine, *The Instrumentalist*. She analyzed the articles and pictures found throughout the magazine to see which gender they were showing playing each instrument. She found that:

“...a perusal of almost any wind band at any level provides ample evidence of gender stereotyping of instruments. Females tend to be concentrated in the woodwind section of the bands (possibly with the exception of the saxophone) and males are usually concentrated in the areas of brass and percussion (horn may be the exception here)”(p. 68).

Interestingly, a few studies have disagreed with the findings of Abeles and Porter (1978), Delzell and Leppla (1992), and McWilliams (2003). Tarnowski (1993) asked college elementary music fundamentals students (n=135), and kindergarten-2nd grade students (n=111) to determine whether a boy or girl would play a given instrument. Participants were given a picture of each instrument (piano, saxophone, snare drum, violin, viola, french horn, cello, clarinet, trumpet, oboe, trombone, bass drum, string bass, flute, tuba) with a picture of a boy and a girl and instructed to circle which person in the picture (boy or girl) was most likely to play that instrument. In addition, the college students were asked which instruments they would want a hypothetical son or daughter to play. Results suggested that while the study participants tended to perceive the snare drum as being a gender-neutral instrument, they also tended to perceive the bass drum and flute as being gender-specific “male” and “female” instruments.

Delzell and Leppla (1992) asked college music majors (N=58) and non-music majors (N=222) to examine pairs of instruments (e.g. flute and saxophone) and report which instrument they considered to be the more masculine of the two. In a second study by the same researchers (1992), fourth grade (N=526) students were asked to discuss which instruments they would prefer to play (once again focusing on pairs of instruments). Data were separated by gender and analyzed. Results suggested that the girls' top three instrument choices were the flute (30.4%), followed by drums (21.7%), and the saxophone (21.3%). The drums (51.7%) were the favorite instrument of the boys, followed by the saxophone (31.5%) and the trumpet (6%). The researchers also compared the fourth grade students' perceptions about which gender would most likely play a specific instrument. The subjects' perceptions reflected what the students actually

wanted to play themselves whether they were female or male. When asked what instrument the females would prefer to play, the drums were ranked lowest.

In Abeles and Porter's (1978) third study, students younger than fourth grade were found to be less concerned about the gender stereotyping of instruments, while older students (fourth grade or older) were heavily influenced by these stereotypes. The results of this study also seem to suggest that students who go against gender stereotypes in choosing an instrument may do so out of a desire to be different, or as a result of encouragement from their elementary school music teachers and their family members. In addition, the researchers found that these students were more likely to have the ability to withstand any negative comments that might come from their peers as a result of their instrument choice not matching the stereotypical prototype for their gender (p. 30).

The results of the aforementioned studies (Abeles and Porter, 1978; Delzell and Leppla, 1992; Fortney, Boyle and DeCarbo, 2003; and Griswold and Chroback, 1981; Steinberg, 2001; Macleod, 1993; Kirkdorffer, 2002; Hersey, 2006) tend to highlight the fact that issues of gender-stereotyping as they pertain to instrument choice must be addressed in music classes “with specific intervention strategies developed to encourage all students to develop as musicians on their instruments of choice” (Steinberg, 2001, p. 42) as these stereotypes can restrict the behaviors of, and opportunities for students - especially when they are based on something as irrelevant as the “association of maleness with playing the drums”(Abeles and Porter, 1979, p. 65).

Steinberg (2001) documented participation in two middle and high school jazz festivals based upon instrument and gender. Out of 556 performers, the majority (70%) were male, and every instrument (with the exception of piano) was predominately played

by male musicians. Steinberg suggested that when each student decides upon an instrument, whether they realize it or not, they are identifying themselves with the preconceived stereotypes that go along with that instrument, and subsequently, that they should be steered from making decisions solely based on what is expected of them and be guided to choose to play an instrument on which they will succeed.

Female choice of “socially acceptable” instruments has been limited in the past. According to Macleod (1993), in the late 1800s it was the thinking of the day that a woman appear to have “feminine delicacy” (p. 11) while performing. While playing their instrument, and in keeping with the norms of the time it was thought that women should not be obscured by an awkward instrument. In a study of female orchestral oboists, Kirkdorffer (2002) found that women in the mid to late 20th century tended to not be viewed as attractive by men when playing a large instrument, and that in the past they may have been deemed too “weak” to properly play a large instrument (Kirkdorffer, p. 25). Hersey (2006) also noted that in past times females were thought to be biologically too weak to properly play brass instruments (Hersey, p. 11). A reference to the necessary physical fitness needed to play percussion instruments was also addressed by a male percussionist in Sinsabaugh's (2005) study when he made the comment that “girls were not physically fit to play his instrument” (p. 63).

While such references to femininity and physical fitness seem more in keeping with Victorian times rather than the twenty first century, the issue begs the question of whether or not it is necessary for a woman to appear delicate while forcefully striking a large drum, or decorative while hidden behind a large set of timpani or a drumset? In the nineteenth century, women who played “masculine” instruments met resistance as

performers and were denied membership to orchestras because it was considered “unladylike” to play such instruments. It was also commonly thought that women were not strong enough to play the more “masculine” instruments, and that they could not handle the schedule of touring on the road (Hinely, 1984, p. 33).

According to Hersey’s (2006) study, while upper-class females were expected to be musicians in the 1800’s, females portrayed as percussionists in *Godey’s Ladies Book* were considered to be of the lower class (Hersey, p. 19-20). Well-bred females were encouraged to learn to play an instrument in nineteenth century America, but not to excel as musicians. The purpose of their instrumental studies was to serve only as a means to attract a husband (McWilliams, 2003, p.14-15). In summarizing their own studies, Abeles and Porter (1978) made mention of a nineteenth century book that encouraged women to play the violin, flute, oboe, harp, clarinet, bassoon or the kettle drum because it was the thinking of the period that on those instruments women would have a chance to finally upstage male players of the same instruments (p. 49).

Thankfully, since the nineteenth century a shift has occurred in the perceived purpose of women playing instruments. This shift in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has seen an increase in the number of women making a living for themselves as professionals on a variety of instruments. Despite this, gender biased ideas have still haunted the path of women musicians through this transitional period. Hinely (1984) notes that the “greatest compliment that a woman could receive for her performance in the mid-20th century, was that she played ‘like a man’ ” (Hinely, 1984, p. 34), or when she was called “the female Louis Armstrong,” or “Gene Krupa with a skirt,” somehow

inferring that her music was now “authentic” (Tucker, 2010) and not simply a woman’s rendition of a man’s art.

Despite the aforementioned historical changes in the perceptions of women and their choice of instrument in years past, even today female musicians may face discrimination based on their gender, and consequently changes have been made to certain aspects relating to the music profession to avoid this issue. For example, today many auditions are “blind” auditions so that adjudicators cannot discriminate or be accused of discriminating between players on the basis of race or gender. Research has also documented the issue of gender discrimination in marching bands. In the 1970’s there were still all-male collegiate marching bands. (Abeles and Porter, 1979 p. 49). In the late 1800's females who played “non-traditional” instruments were seen as novelty acts, performing in family or circus bands, minstrel shows and vaudeville acts. (Steinberg, p.17). The novelty of these groups often led to these musicians’ abilities being perceived as less than skillful players. (Tucker, 2010). Despite this, if a spot could not be filled by a female player in an all-female band, a man would be substituted in their place dressed as a woman (Hinely, 1984, p. 33).

In Sinsabaugh’s (2005) study, a young 21st century female trombonist stated that while she had never been treated badly as a result of playing the trombone, other children would look at her trombone as she boarded her bus. Another young female trombonist, reported that she felt that she had been given special opportunities because she was a female, and that she believed that she would have missed these opportunities had she been a male. In the same study, a female trumpet player discussed the issue of male flutists being teased for their choice of instrument, and reflected on the fact that she often

felt like she was the target of teasing looks for playing an instrument as “masculine” as the trumpet. Another subject, a female percussionist, reported feeling that she had never been treated differently to her male percussion counterparts, but also stated that she was the only female percussionist on scholarship in her youth orchestra. The same subject reported that she had no desire to tell boys that she was a percussion player (Sinsabaugh, 2005, p. 69). Interestingly, Steinberg (2001) discusses Bruenger's 1993 study with reference to the suggestion that the female brass musicians in the study felt that they had not been discriminated against because of gender until they were in collegiate or professional ensembles. This seems to support the findings of Abeles and Porter (1978) which suggested that younger children are less concerned with gender stereotypes than older children are.

In response to discrimination in the 1920's and 1930's, women created their own bands. These bands often suffered from poor instrumentation and low pay. (McWilliams, 2003, p. 15) In today's society, “major” orchestras have tended to have much larger budgets than previously. However, unfortunately these orchestras have sometimes been the least willing to hire female musicians (Kirkdorffer, 2002, p. 4).

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

Questionnaire Design & Distribution

An electronic questionnaire consisting of 24 questions was designed for electronic distribution via email to college percussionists from three state university marching bands from within the state of Virginia with the purpose of asking them a series of questions about their experiences as percussionists when they were in high school and college band programs. The survey contained a variety of questions, which included some that asked the participants if they had ever felt mistreated based on the instruments they played, what challenges (if any) they perceived they had faced as percussionists, and what aspects about percussion they felt came easy to them. The survey questions also asked the participants which percussion instrument they favored the most, and what parts they were typically assigned to play in concert band and/or percussion ensemble settings.

To assist in the initial contact with subjects, the band director at each of the three schools was emailed with the purpose of soliciting their assistance in distributing the questionnaires to the percussionists in their ensemble. The band directors' email addresses were gathered from their respective university websites and each was sent an email asking for their assistance in notifying their percussion students to invite them to take part in the survey by providing them the online link to Survey Monkey. Of the three schools contacted, one school band director chose not to respond. Seventeen male and three female percussionists responded. Of those twenty, six were not completely finished but all data that was provided for specific questions was used in compiling the results of this study regardless of the participants' completion of the questionnaire. The respondents

who completed any part of the questionnaire were 85% male (N=17) and 15% female (N=3).

Survey Questions

The questions included in the survey were as follows:

1. Select your gender. (Male/Female)
2. Is a percussion instrument your primary instrument? If not, please describe your experience with percussion instruments. (Yes/No, if no please explain your answer)
3. How do you feel you fit in to the percussion sections you have participated in?
4. What instruments were you encouraged to learn as a beginner? As you progressed through playing were instruments added?
5. Why did you choose to learn an instrument? Why percussion?
6. Have you ever felt pressure to switch instruments? (Yes/No) If so please describe.
7. Have you ever felt your ability to play was judged based on your gender and not your performance? (Yes/No) If so, how?
8. Have you ever been in a situation where you felt like you were given or denied any special opportunities because of the combination of your gender and instrument? (Yes/No, if yes please describe)
9. What reactions have you received when others found out what instrument you played? Did you feel they were negative or positive? Did you feel accepted or singled out? Were they different if they came from males/females, percussionists/non-percussionists or musicians/non-musicians?

10. Have other's reaction to being a [male or female] percussionist influenced the manner in which you play (more/less aggressive, choosing different parts, etc.)? (Yes/No) If so, how?
11. Have you had any physical limitations on your playing? If yes, please describe.
12. Describe your perception of a female and male percussionist.
13. What has influenced the similarities/differences in your perception of male/female percussionists?
14. Which gender do you feel most often plays the following instruments?
 - a. Accessories (triangle/tambourine/suspended cymbals/etc.)
 - b. Bass Drum
 - c. Bells/Chimes
 - d. Crash cymbals
 - e. Marimba/Xylophone
 - f. Snare Drum
 - g. Timpani
 - h. Tom-toms/timbales/hand drums
 - i. Vibraphone
15. Which gender is best suited to play the following instruments?
 - a. Accessories (triangle/tambourine/suspended cymbals/etc.)
 - b. Bass Drum
 - c. Bells/Chimes
 - d. Crash cymbals
 - e. Marimba/Xylophone

- f. Snare Drum
- g. Timpani
- h. Tom-toms/timbales/hand drums
- i. Vibraphone

16. Please rank the following instruments from your most favorite (top) to least favorite (bottom) to play.

- a. Accessories (triangle/tambourine/suspended cymbals/etc.)
- b. Bass Drum
- c. Bells/Chimes
- d. Crash cymbals
- e. Marimba/Xylophone
- f. Snare Drum
- g. Timpani
- h. Tom-toms/timbales/hand drums
- i. Vibraphone

17. Do you feel others view you as a novelty when you play:

- a. Accessories (triangle/tambourine/suspended cymbals/etc.)
- b. Bass Drum
- c. Bells/Chimes
- d. Crash cymbals
- e. Marimba/Xylophone
- f. Snare Drum
- g. Timpani

h. Tom-toms/timbales/hand drums

i. Vibraphone

18. Has your choice of repertoire ever been affected by the attire you were expected to perform in? (Yes/No) If yes, please describe.
19. Are there any challenges that you find to be unique to percussionists as opposed to other musicians?
20. Do you feel that one type of ensemble setting (concert/symphonic band, marching band, percussion ensemble, orchestra, etc.) is more conducive to being an environment where gender is an issue for female percussionists?
21. Which instrument parts in a piece of music would you say are the "best"? What makes them the best? Do female or male members of the section typically play them?
22. How did (or didn't) your experiences in high school as a percussionist differ from those as a college music major?
23. What recommendations might you have for other females wanting to be successful in the field of percussion
24. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences as a percussionist?

Once the questionnaires were collected, subjects' responses were recorded and grouped according to gender in order to make comparisons of potential differences between the male and female percussionists' experiences, and to look for general trends in their opinions and perceptions. When a written response was provided, responses containing similar or contrasting ideas were noted and compared. In ranking instruments

the average position was calculated separately for males and females. When asked which gender was best suited to a particular percussion instrument the number responding male, either, or female was tabulated and compared across the instrument group.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Percussionists' Perceptions Regarding Issues Related to Gender,

Instrument Choice & Ensemble Experiences

Female Percussionists' Responses

When asked if percussion was their primary instrument all three female participants confirmed that it was. Their responses tended to suggest that they generally perceived that they were an “integral” part of the percussion sections they had participated in, and that these sections had felt like “family” to them. One respondent stated that sometimes the percussion sections she had played in left her feeling like an “outsider” but did not say why. When asked why they chose percussion, the two female subjects who responded stated that they did so at a young age (fourth and fifth grade). One participant stated that she chose to play percussion because it seemed like an easy instrument, while the other female subject reported that she chose to play percussion because she had wanted to stand out. At this point one respondent declined to answer the remaining questions leaving a total of 2 female respondents whose survey responses could be included in the study.

While neither of the two females who responded to all of the questions in the survey expressed having ever felt pressure to switch instruments, both expressed concern that they felt their ability to play percussion instruments was often judged based on them being female. Both reported that they perceived that they had had negative experiences being unfairly judged as less competent percussionists at times because they were not male. One explained that she had had a specific instructor who had been “sexist” toward her during her tenure in her high school band, and that he “never seemed to think [she]

was very good.” The other female subject was more general in her comments, reporting that she perceived that people assumed that as a female percussionist she must be as good as her male percussionist counterparts. Interestingly, both subjects reported that at times they had received positive responses from people in general once they found out that they played percussion instruments.

Even though both female subjects expressed their belief that they had at times been disadvantaged by biased attitudes toward their abilities as percussionists, neither reported ever having been denied or granted opportunities as percussionists due to their being female. The female subjects’ perceptions seemed to suggest that overall they felt that to this point in their careers people had responded to them positively as being musicians regardless of whether or not, they were male or female. Despite this, one of the female respondents stated that when she told people she was a percussionist they seemed “shocked” - especially when they discovered that she was a drumline percussionist - but that they did not explain the reason for their negative reaction.

The only comment reported by the female subjects about repertoire being affected by gender specific attire was that they found it difficult to play keyboard instruments while wearing heels. One subject reported that as a solution to this problem she typically just wore flats or played barefoot. No other comments indicated repertoire choices were hindered or aided by any specific wardrobe decisions. Female and male responses to gender related issues are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1
Male & Female Percussionists' Responses to Issues Related to Gender

Respondent	Gender	Principal Percussion	Belong/ Fit	Pressure to Switch?	Ability Based on Gender?	Given/Denied Due to Gender	- or + Reactions	Gender & How You Play	Physical Limitations	Gender Best Suited	Novel	Repertoire & Attire
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1	M	Y										
2	M	Y	Y	N	N	N	+	N	N		N	N
3	M	Y										
4	M	N	Y	N	N	N	+	N	N			
5	M	Y	N (HS)& Y(C)	N	N	N	+	N	N		N	N
6	M	Y	U	N	N	N	+	N	N	Either	Y - Snare	N
7	M	Y	U	Y	N	N	+	N	N			
8	M	Y	Y	N	N	N	+	N	N	Either		N
9	M	Y	Y	N	N	N	+	N	N	Either	N	N
10	M	Y	Y	N	N	N	+	N	Y Vision	Either	N	N
11	M	Y	Y	N	N	N	+	N	N	Either	N	N
12	M	Y	Y	N	N	N	+	N	N	Either	N	N
13	F	Y	Y									
14	F	Y	Y	N	Y	N	+ & -	Y	N	Either	N	Y Pedals need flats
15	M	Y	Y	N	N	N	+	N	N	Either	Y	N
16	M	Y	Y	N	N	N	+	N	N		N	N
17	M	Y	Y	N	N	N	+	N	N		Y	N
18	F	Y	Y & N	N	Y	N	+	N	Y told too short for Tenor	Either	Y	N
19	M	Y	Y	N	N	N	+	N	N	Either	Y	N
20	M	Y	Y	N	N	N	+	N	N	Either	Y	N

Male Percussionists' Responses

R #	G	Beginning Instrument	Why?	Perceptions of F & M Perc.	Influences	Gender Best Suited	Physical Challenges	Setting & Gender	Best Parts & Gender	HS vs College Experience
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As a group, the male participants (N=17) seemed to agree that they had not ever experienced bias against them with regard to their choice of instrument based on their gender. Of the 17 male respondents surveyed, 16 responded that their primary instrument was percussion, while the remaining male participant responded that he was a trumpet player who marched cymbals. Only one of the male participants responded that he did not feel like he belonged to the ensembles he played in because he did not play in the symphonic band at his college but only played in marching band (R17). R1 said that he almost changed his principal instrument concentration from being a percussionist to being a guitarist and pianist but chose to stay with percussion instead.

When asked why they had originally chosen to study percussion instruments, the majority of male respondents reported that they had done so because they either thought playing percussion instruments looked “cool,” or that they had been encouraged by others to play percussion, or that they were drawn in by the opportunity to just “hit things” None of the male percussionists surveyed felt that their playing ability was judged positively or negatively based on their gender or that they had been granted or denied special privileges in terms of musical opportunities based on their gender. The only physical limitation expressed by males was vision impairment. These are documented in Table 2.

1	M									
2	M	Snare Drumset Bells Xylophone Marimba Tenor drums	Family Member M	M = Fun & lazy	Observations over years		Forearm strength	Marching Band		More F in HS than C
3	M									
4	M	Trumpet	School Option							
5	M	Snare Bass Marimba Timpani	Family Member M	F= Less ego, equal ability	Good female percussionist in H.S.		Mobility	Marching Band	Snare & Timpani, mostly M	Harder for F. Observed in HS & C
6	M	Bells & Snare Timpani Latin Marimba Vibes	Self Drum Corps Member	F = Badass	Females gravitate toward pitched percussion	Either	Competency on wide range of instruments	N	Depends on tempo. Evenly divided.	
7	M	Snare & Bass Timpani & Set	Self Coolest Instrument							
8	M	Bells, Snare, Drum Set, Timpani, Bass Drum, Tenors	Self & Family Member M	M = Loud & Show off	Other percussionists	Either	Different way of learning	N	Tenors in MB, Snare Drum	
9	M	Xylophone & Snare, Bass Drum, Tenor, Timpani, Cymbals	Self & Family Member M	Not many differences		Either	Being awesome & avoiding getting a big head.	N	Goes to the best player.	College a little more laid back.
10	M	Snare Drum, Xylophone, Timpani & Drumset	Self	M very common	Experience & time	Either	Memorize quickly	N	M play snare & timpani, F play others.	College much more relaxed.

Table 2
*Male & Female Percussionists' Responses to Issues Related to Instrument Choice
 & Ensemble Experiences*

Table 2, continued

R #	G	Beginning Instrument	Why?	Perceptions of F & M Perc.	Influences	Gender Best Suited	Physical Challenges	Setting & Gender	Best Parts & Gender	HS vs College Experience
11	M	Snare, mallets	Self	M aggressive	Experience	Either	Many instruments	Marching Band	Snare drum, usually M	N
12	M	Snare drum, Mallets, & Drumset. Timpani & Accessory. Marching	Family Member Dad = BD & P	F less intensity hitting a drum	Ratio of girls to guys is low	Either	Variety of techniques	Marching Band	Timpani. Either sex.	N
13	F									
14	F	Concert Snare, Bells, Cymbals & Bass Drum.	Self – P = Unique	F tough & independent		Either	Multiple instruments	Potential for All	Snare Drum & Bass Drum.	Don't care about proving self at C
15	M	Percussion	Family = Cousin	F – minority but equally talented		Either	Technique & instruments	Marching Band	Snare Drum & Timpani Either Gender	More instruction in C e.g. theory classes
16	M	Mallets & Snare, then others	Self – Fun & Cool	M – typically more confident	Ensembles/ Band			F - Mallets, M- Battery	Snare & Tenors Typically M	Level of playing & faster pace of learning
17	M	Snare & Drum Set	Self – Rhythms	F- prefer melodic instruments	HS Music & Marching		Independent parts	Marching Band		
18	F	Snare & Bells, Bass Drum, Timpani & Mallet	Self- 4th grade	M – cocky, egotistical, put others	Experience & Stereotypes	Either	# instruments & notation	Depends on group	Snare More often M than F play it	Fewer concerts in C as non-major
19	M	Snare/ Mallets, Drumset, Timpani, Latin Perc., & More	Self - Piano	M – take snare, bass & timpani, F –	M & F are similar	Either	Technique & Multiple Inst	Marching Band - Battery	Timpani -M & Marimba & Mallets -F	In C put more focus on non-music studies
20	M	Many, keyboard	Self & Family – Parents	F- same as male maybe more focused	It's not who it's how they play.	Either	Much more & heavier equipment	Marching Band	Parts that are most fun to play	

Combined Responses

Combined responses concerning the order in which percussion instruments were learned by the subjects suggested that the snare drum, was generally studied first as seen in Table 2. The timpani, other mallet instruments and accessory instruments were listed as the instruments that the subjects had learned next. Some of the study participants responded that they had learned percussion instruments with a marching band focus and focused more on snare drum and drumset, but the responses were similar regardless of gender.

Also there did not seem to be an observable desire to change instruments or any special opportunities given to the percussionists based on their gender. A majority of the study participants reported that they perceived that marching band was the most likely ensemble setting in which performers might experience because of gender, but one respondent (18) suggested that the size of a group would contribute to whether or not a female or male performer would stand out more.

When asked to respond to what they perceived the differences between high school and college bands were in terms of their own overall experience, most of the participants' answers centered around differences in the pace of learning, or differences in the purpose (competition or pleasing the audience) for which a performance was being prepared. Only two responses discussed gender issues related to this question. R12 stated that, "I can see while the ratio of girls to guys is still low, the talent at higher levels for girls can be great. ie. Carolina Crown's center snare was a girl." This was verified through email correspondence with Carolina Crown's Percussion Caption Supervisor,

Zach Schilcher. R14 discussed less of a need to prove herself in college than in high school.

Summary of Responses in Tables 1 & 2

The order in which instruments were first learned by the percussionists was the same for both the male and female percussionists. The snare drum and the bells were the first instruments that the respondents indicated having learned regardless of gender. Two of the male percussionists referenced learning the drumset, while neither female respondent did which could imply that males are more likely to play the drumset but that is not conclusive.

The male respondents reported that they had not chosen to study a percussion instrument out of a desire to be noticed, but that based on other males they knew who already played percussion, or because percussion instruments had always intrigued them. One female respondent (R14) mentioned that she had chosen to play percussion instruments because she wanted to stand out; that she had felt that it would be unique to be a female percussionist. This response was consistent with Abeles and Porter's (1978) findings that students who go against stereotypical instrument choices do so sometimes out of a desire to be noticed.

Both female percussionists reported feeling that their ability to play was often judged based on their gender, while none of the 14 male percussionists who responded to this question felt their ability to play was often judged based on their gender. This finding is consistent with the Abeles and Porter (1978), Delzell and Leppla (1992), Fortney et. al (2003), and McWilliams (2003) studies that suggested that percussion was a predominately male instrument. R14 reported perceiving that she was generally viewed

as a less competent percussionist as a female, while R18 responded that she had once had a “sexist” instructor. What was interesting was that the instructor she identified was her percussion instructor and not an ensemble director.

The reactions to the respondents being percussionists were not did not change based on gender. The responses were generally positive regardless of whom they came from. If they were not positive they were neutral. Only one of the 17 respondents responded that she felt that gender affected they parts they played. Furthermore, she (R14) reported feeling that she had to "prove" that she could play as well as or better than the males, and that she felt she had done so by the time she graduated from high school. This female respondent was snare captain in her high school.

The subjects' were also questioned about the physical limitations of playing percussion. Their responses documented limitations that were not unique to either males or females. One respondent (18) responded that she was told she was too short to play the tenors. While physically, females tend to be shorter than males, respondents reported not perceiving this as a gender related issue. Respondents also responded that either gender can have vision problems which might also come into play in terms of disadvantaging one when learning an instrument regardless of gender. Also in reading the response, she (R18) was in middle school when wanting to play tenors, and it is possible that her age and experience were more of a concern than her height, and maybe a few years later this may not have been an issue as she may have grown in height and talent.

Male percussionists were described by the respondents as often being identified as being lazy, fun, aggressive, cocky show offs who typically play the drum parts. Females

were identified as being less egotistical, independent, assertive, focused and equally talented to males.

These responses reflect the perception of percussionists as being extroverted and loud found by Zervoudakes and Tanur (1994), and of Hersey's (2006) findings that females are often identified as being less aggressive and quieter than males. In the current study male percussionists were described identified as being lazy while females were perceived to be assertive. These biases about male and female percussionist came from what the respondents had experienced in high school and college.

When it came to playing ability, R5 and R15 (both male) agreed that playing ability is not limited by gender, but both female respondents felt they were thought to be less capable percussionists because they were female. R18 ended the survey by advising female percussionists to "keep working for it and ignore everything negative someone says about you relating to gender. There is absolutely no reason why you cannot be as good or better than any male." R14 felt she was at a disadvantage in college auditions due to student leaders, not directors making decisions as to who made which instrument and not seeing the "potential" in the female players.

The majority of subjects tended to be in agreement that female percussionists generally to preferred to play the keyboard parts. R9 stated: "there are not many differences between female/male percussionists...gender has nothing to do with percussion." Yet the descriptions are different even in what instruments the respondents identified as being the instruments they "normally" gravitated toward (males toward drums, females toward keyboards). This bias did not align with how the female

percussionists responded to the question of what their favorite instrument was—both said it was the snare drum.

Perceptions Regarding Gender Most Often Playing & Best Suited to
Playing Specific Percussion Instruments

In comparing the responses to the question of which gender is typically associated with playing a particular instrument, there were three major disagreements between the male and female subject groups, but for the most part they agreed (see Table 3). The disagreements were over bells, crash cymbals and the toms group (tom-toms/timbales/hand drums). No male subjects' responded to the question about which gender most often played the bells with the response "males," and the female participants responses to this question were evenly split in their perception that the bells were played by both males (50%) and females (50%). Slightly over a third of the male subjects (38.9%) surveyed responded that their perception was that either gender plays bells, and 61.5% of the male subjects responded that they perceived bells to be a more feminine instrument.

The female respondents were evenly split in their perceptions that either gender or females alone could play crash cymbals, and the male subjects responses seemed to suggest that they were of mixed opinions that either gender (84.6%) normally plays the crash cymbals, or that males only (15.4%) normally played the crash cymbals. Both female subjects responded that their perception was that males normally played the toms and other similar drums, whereas the male participants were divided in their responses that they felt that either mostly males played toms (53.8%) or that either gender (46%) normally plays them.

Table 3
Perceptions Regarding Gender Most Often Playing Specific Percussion Instruments

	Male Responses			Female Responses		
	Male	Either	Female	Male	Either	Female
Accessories	0	12	1	0	2	0
Bass Drum	6	7	0	1	1	0
Bells	0	5	8	1	0	1
Crash Cymbals	2	11	0	0	1	1
Marimba/Xylophone	0	3	10	0	0	2
Snare Drum	12	1	0	2	0	0
Timpani	5	7	0	1	1	0
Tom-Toms, etc.	7	7	0	2	0	0
Vibraphone	1	1	11	0	1	1

When asked which gender was best suited to play the different categories of percussion instruments, the female subjects reported that their perceptions were that all of them were suited to either gender (see Table 4). The male respondents had similar responses but they were not as unanimous in them. The one instrument that was perceived as being notably different in terms of whether or not makes or females would normally play it, was the bass drum. Twenty-three percent (23%) of the male participants responded that they felt the bass drum was better suited to performance by male musicians, and the remaining 77% of male subjects reported that they felt the bass drum was suitable for performance on by either gender.

Table 4
Perceptions Regarding Gender Best Suited to Playing Specific Percussion Instruments

	Male Responses			Female Responses		
	Male	Either	Female	Male	Either	Female
Accessories	1	12	0	0	2	0
Bass Drum	3	10	0	0	2	0
Bells	0	12	1	0	2	0
Crash Cymbals	2	11	0	0	2	0
Marimba/Xylophone	1	10	2	0	2	0
Snare Drum	2	11	0	0	2	0
Timpani	1	12	0	0	2	0
Tom-Toms, etc.	2	11	0	0	2	0
Vibraphone	0	11	2	0	2	0

The female participants were split as to who felt like they stood out when playing a given instrument with the exception of snare drum (both said they did not). The male subjects' responses were not too different (see Table 5). The male percussionists reported that they did not feel out of place gender-or other-wise when playing the vibraphone or the bass drum, and that they were slightly more likely to feel out of place when playing snare drum.

Table 5
Perceptions Regarding the "Novelty" Factor of Playing Percussion

	Total		Male Responses		Female Responses	
	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Accessories	5	10	4	4	1	1
Bass Drum	3	12	2	2	1	1
Bells	5	10	4	4	1	1
Crash Cymbals	5	10	4	4	1	1
Marimba/Xylophone	5	10	4	4	1	1
Snare Drum	7	7	7	7		1
Timpani	5	10	4	4	1	1
Tom-Toms, etc.	6	9	5	5	1	1
Vibraphone	3	12	2	2	1	1

In determining whether the male or female participants typically played a given percussion instrument, crash cymbals and accessories were found to be to be played equally often by both genders. Results suggested that the bass drum, the timpani and the toms were considered to be a slightly more “masculine” instrument by the subjects. Results further suggested that the vibraphone, the bells, the marimba and the xylophone were all perceived as being more “feminine” instruments, and the snare drum was considered a more “masculine” instrument. Despite these responses, all of the subjects generally responded that it was their perception that of these percussion instruments, all could be played by either gender.

When asked to rank specific percussion instruments in order by most preferred to least preferred, the female percussionists identified (in order) the snare drum as being their favorite instrument, followed by the bass drum, the toms, the marimba/xylophone, the vibraphone, the timpani, the crash cymbals, the accessories and the bells. The male percussionists favored the snare drum, followed by (in order of preference) the toms, the bass drum, the timpani, the accessory instruments, the crash cymbals, the marimba and xylophone, the vibraphone, and the bells. The instrument favored by both gender groups were the “drums.” The male percussionists identified keyboard instruments as being their least favorite of the percussion instruments. Subject responses are documented in Table 6.

Table 6
Favorite Instrument Orders

Male order		Female Order	
Average	Instrument	Average	Instrument
2.46	Snare Drum	1	Snare Drum
2.92	Tom-Toms/Timbales/Hand Drums	3.5	Bass Drum
3.23	Bass Drum	4	Tom-Toms/Timbales/Hand Drums
3.62	Timpani	4.5	Marimba/Xylophone
5.38	Accessories	4.5	Vibraphone
5.85	Crash Cymbals	5.5	Timpani
6	Marimba/Xylophone	7	Crash Cymbals
7.38	Vibraphone	7.5	Accessories
8.15	Bells	7.5	Bells

When asked what the “best” parts generally were, in percussion music the respondents answered that the snare drum or tenors (implied-in marching band) often had the best parts. The percussionists also responded that these parts were typically played by males. Several respondents commented that they believed the “best parts” on percussion instruments would normally contain a solo or what is the most “fun” to play. A few respondents also commented that the best parts normally went to the best player, regardless of gender.

Summary of Responses in Tables 3, 4, 5 & 6

Responses to the question that asked subjects to identify which gender they thought most often played which instrument often did show a bias. Males were seen as more likely to play the bass drum, the snare drum, the timpani, and the toms. Females were seen as more likely to play the bells, the marimba, the xylophone or the vibraphone. Accessories and the crash cymbals were seen to be gender neutral. The snare drum was the instrument most identified by the subjects as being “masculine” with 14 subjects

responding that males should play it and only one subject responding that either gender could play it. The marimba and the xylophone were considered more “feminine” instruments with 12 of the subjects responding that they thought that females mostly played it, and three respondents saying either gender could play them. The vibraphone was second to the marimba and the xylophone with 12 subjects responding that females most often played the vibraphone. Two subjects responded that they felt that either gender played vibraphone equally, and one responded that males most often play vibraphone.

Based on the responses of the subjects in this study it could be said that there is a clear trend in females tending to play the keyboard instruments, and males tending to play the drums. Griswold and Chrobak (1981) listed the glockenspiel (bells) to be a more feminine instrument, as did this study, and the eleventh grade trumpet player in Sinsabaugh's (2005) study also expressed his opinion that males were better suited to playing the drums (p. 68) than females which also support the findings of this study. Tarnowski (1993) agreed that the bass drum was more likely to be played by a male than a female, yet disagreed that snare drum was a “masculine” instrument, responding that the snare drum to be gender-neutral.

When asked which gender was better suited to playing a specific percussion instrument the general response was either. Respondents in this study perceived that keyboard instruments were perhaps more likely to be played by female percussionists while the drums would be slightly more likely to be played by male percussionists. Despite this, however, 80% of the participants responded that either gender was equally suited to play either one of these two types of percussion instruments. With regard to the

percussionists' responses, only accessories and crash cymbals met the same gender neutral criteria. The 80% of the percussionists surveyed in this study identified the marimba, the xylophone and the vibraphone as being more feminine, while 93% of respondents identified the snare drum as being a more "masculine" instrument.

The respondents disagreed with their own biases about which gender typically plays a given instrument and their own favorite percussion instrument. The top three instruments favored by both males and females were the snare drum (ranked first by both genders), and then the bass drum and the toms. The drums were favored by all subjects over the percussion keyboard instruments. The bells were the percussion instrument least favored by both genders. Females tended to prefer the percussion keyboard instruments more than the timpani, the crash cymbals and the accessories, whereas the males were the opposite of the female subjects preferring the accessories, the timpani and the crash cymbals over the keyboard percussion instruments. While the two categories of instruments that the percussionists seemed to identify as being more "feminine" (the bells and the marimba and xylophone) were ranked higher by females than males, but both genders responded that snare drum was their favorite to play.

Only R14 had faced a challenge with her wardrobe in her experiences playing percussion instruments. She responded that she could not play wearing heels, especially when using a pedal on vibraphone, so she wore flats. I expected more concerns about wardrobe choices.

The results of this study would seem to suggest that any possible challenges faced by the percussionists surveyed were simply general challenges, not gender specific. Specifically, these self-ascribed challenges for the percussionists were: learning to play

more instruments; having complicated set ups; having to play more soloistic parts at times; having the appropriate amount of forearm strength; the need to move around to play the various percussion instruments; and needing to memorize music faster. I am not sure why percussionists felt like they needed to memorize music faster, unless they were referring to marching band specifically, and the need to memorize extra cadences in it that the rest of the band did not have to learn.

The marching band experience tended to be the ensemble where the percussionists surveyed tended to perceive gender as being more of an issue in general due to the fact males tend to be concentrated in the battery and females in the pit. This concurs with Abeles and Porter's (1978) findings that discrimination may be higher in marching band situations (p. 49). Females may have a harder time in marching band because physical strength can be an issue at times according to R20 and they hit the drum lighter according to R12.

A number of common physical challenges experienced by many percussionists were not mentioned by the respondents to this survey, especially those specific to marching band. One physical challenge that some percussionists experience is that the harnesses for their drums used to be made "one size fits none", but they tended to be more suitable to taller males. The fiberglass vest style harnesses are also very uncomfortable for some females due to figure differences. The t-bar harnesses currently used are much more adjustable and are able to be tailored to individual's body types. Very large players have a hard time keeping a snare drum or tenors flat because of the angle the drum intersects with their bodies. Individuals with small hands have a hard time holding marching snare sticks with a traditional grip, or may have a hard time playing

with multiple keyboard mallets in one hand. When asked if they felt like a “novelty” when playing a given instrument, the subjects’ responses were varied. The responses were not similar for all of the males or for all of the females. It seems that this was a personal response not tied to either gender.

It was clear that the subjects believed that the “best” percussion parts tend to go to the males in the section. R8 and R16 responded that the males may tend to play the best parts most often because there tend to be more males in percussion sections. In marching band the tenor (quad) drum parts were said to be the best, and in concert band the snare drum and timpani parts were said to be the best. When marimba parts were said to be the best those were said to be played by females. This agrees with the biases stated earlier that the males tend to play the drum instruments while the females concentrate on the keyboard instruments.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

It was an interesting coincidence that the questionnaire elicited 20 responses, 17 male and 3 female—the exact same numbers and genders as the number of orchestral percussionists I found in the informal survey I made of five prominent orchestras in the United States prior to commencing this study. In pre-existing studies that examined which gender tended to play an instrument, percussion instruments were determined to be perceived as being a masculine instrument. Clearly, more often than not, the percussion section is also a predominately male section of the orchestra or band.

The overarching question this study sought to answer was: “Do female percussionists have unique challenges in the processes involved in learning and performing on their instruments that male percussionists do not?” From the results of this survey, the answer seems to be yes. There is a need for further exploration into what these challenges are, and how they might be addressed by the music profession so as to minimize the potential for gender specific challenges.

With only three female respondents (two completing the questionnaire) one might question the applicability of these results. The participants who responded are from schools that are similar in make-up (both large, public universities in similar areas of Virginia and one would imagine similar student bodies). In addition perhaps the resulting number of returned questionnaires reflects the fact that there are fewer women percussionists at the university level. It would be interesting to see how the results of this study might be different if the subjects had been from either a smaller college, or a private college, or a college or university without a football team or marching band, or with a historically black college or university? It would also be interesting to see how the

results might be different if the survey were completed outside of the Commonwealth of Virginia, and indeed if the responses elicited from high school percussion students would differ to those of professional musicians with regard to gender?

Another potential weakness of this study was the fact that some of the percussionists surveyed were music majors while others were not. While this type of population is probably representative of many percussion sections in both bands and orchestras at many universities and colleges, the experiences and perceptions of students who are music majors may well be quite different to those who are not music majors. An examination of the differences between the perceptions of music major versus non music major percussionists would provide another avenue for research.

Overall, it is the conclusion of this study that the percussionists surveyed seemed to have differing opinions about whether or not gender bias exists in favor of male in the world of percussion. According to my participants, the female percussionists surveyed perceived there to be bias against them while their male counterparts did not share their opinion with regard to the existence of biases against female percussionists. While the male percussionists in this survey responded that they did not believe there were biases against women in the field of percussion, the female participants expressed their displeasure at having had to face that gender bias at times in their experiences as percussionists.

That said, the females comments specific to perceived biases were few. Examples of potential examples of gender bias experienced by the female percussionists included the following: comments from a “sexist” instructor; wanting to stand out; other’s assumptions that because they are female they could not play as well as the males; and a

general attitude of having to prove their abilities. The female percussionists also reported that they had had experiences where they felt singled out because of their gender. This bias is also suggested that females play keyboard instruments and that males play drums both in comments and in response to the question of which gender is best suited to play instruments. This is consistent with previous research suggesting that drums are a masculine instrument, and that females need to play an instrument that appears feminine.

Only the female respondents were given the opportunity to leave advice for other female percussionists. Both gave responses indicating to continue working on musical skills: "Practice with someone who's better than you and have them teach you technique" (R14), and "Keep working for it and ignore everything negative someone says. There is absolutely no reason why you cannot be as good or better than any male" (R18).

The results of this study serve as a reminder about the importance of overlooking the gender of musicians and accepting individuals' talent regardless of their gender. We should not look at a female percussionist or a male percussionist, but simply view the individual as a percussionist. Music educators must be aware that there are biases in their classrooms based on societal expectations of which gender should play a particular instrument. Educators should do all that is reasonable to minimize or end gender discrimination in their ensembles. Males who excel on the flute or females who are interested in percussionist instruments should feel the freedom to play their instrument without fear of unnecessary criticism based on the combination of their gender and instrument choice. As individuals we must put aside our preconceived notions about the abilities of female percussionists compared to male percussionists and enjoy the music

they create equally while at the same time creating equal opportunities for them regardless of their gender.

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

Select your gender.

- Male
- Female

Is a percussion instrument your primary instrument? If not, please describe your experience with percussion instruments.

- Yes
- No

How do you feel you fit in to the percussion sections you have participated in?

What instruments were you encouraged to learn as a beginner? As you progressed through playing were instruments added?

Why did you choose to learn an instrument? Why percussion?

Have you ever felt pressure to switch instruments? If so please describe.

- Yes
- No

Have you ever felt your ability to play was judged based on your gender and not your performance? If so, how?

- Yes
- No

Have you ever been in a situation where you felt like you were given or denied any special opportunities because of the combination of your gender and instrument?

- Yes
- No

What reactions have you received when others found out what instrument you played? Did you feel they were negative or positive? Did you feel accepted or singled out? Were they different if they came from males/females, percussionists/non-percussionists or musicians/non-musicians?

Have other's reaction to being a [male or female] percussionist influenced the manner in which you play (more/less aggressive, choosing different parts, etc.)? If so, how?

- Yes
- No

Have you had any physical limitations on your playing? If yes, please describe.

- Yes
- No

Describe your perception of a female and male percussionist.

- Female
- Male

What has influenced the similarities/differences in your perception of male/female percussionists?

Which gender do you feel most often plays the following instruments?

- Accessories (triangle/tambourine/suspended cymbals/etc.)
- Bass Drum
- Bells/Chimes
- Crash cymbals
- Marimba/Xylophone
- Snare Drum
- Timpani
- Tom-toms/timbales/hand drums
- Vibraphone

Which gender is best suited to play the following instruments?

- Accessories (triangle/tambourine/suspended cymbals/etc.)
- Bass Drum
- Bells/Chimes
- Crash cymbals
- Marimba/Xylophone
- Snare Drum
- Timpani
- Tom-toms/timbales/hand drums
- Vibraphone

Please rank the following instruments from your most favorite (top) to least favorite (bottom) to play.

- Accessories (triangle/tambourine/suspended cymbals/etc.)
- Bass Drum
- Bells/Chimes
- Crash cymbals
- Marimba/Xylophone
- Snare Drum
- Timpani
- Tom-toms/timbales/hand drums
- Vibraphone

Do you feel others view you as a novelty when you play:

- Accessories (triangle/tambourine/suspended cymbals/etc.)
- Bass Drum
- Bells/Chimes
- Crash cymbals
- Marimba/Xylophone
- Snare Drum
- Timpani
- Tom-toms/timbales/hand drums
- Vibraphone

Has your choice of repertoire ever been affected by the attire you were expected to perform in? If yes, please describe.

- Yes
- No

Are there any challenges that you find to be unique to percussionists as opposed to other musicians?

Do you feel that one type of ensemble setting (concert/symphonic band, marching band, percussion ensemble, orchestra, etc.) is more conducive to being an environment where gender is an issue for female percussionists?

Which instrument parts in a piece of music would you say are the "best"? What makes them the best? Do female or male members of the section typically play them?

How did (or didn't) your experiences in high school as a percussionist differ from those as a college music major?

What recommendations might you have for other females wanting to be successful in the field of percussion?

Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences as a percussionist? If you would like a copy of the results please leave your email address.

APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

1. Select your gender.
 - a. Male-17
 - b. Female-3
2. Is a percussion instrument your primary instrument? If not, please describe your experience with percussion instruments.
 - a. Yes-19
 - b. No-1
3. How do you feel you fit in to the percussion sections you have participated in?
 - a. Well-15
 - b. Declined to Respond-2
 - c. Depends on the band-2
 - d. I haven't played very long-1
4. What instruments were you encouraged to learn as a beginner? As you progressed through playing were instruments added?
 - a. Declined to Respond-2
 - b. Learn Everything-1
 - c. Trumpet is Primary-1
 - d. Percussion, piano, guitar, singing-1

1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Snare Drum, Mallets	Bass Drum	Timpani		
Mallets	Snare Drum			
Snare Drum	Set	Marching		
Snare Drum, Mallets, Set	Timpani, Accessories	Marching		
Snare Drum	Timpani	Latin	Mallets	
Snare Drum	Mallets			
Snare Drum	Mallets	Timpani	Set	
Mallets	Snare Drum	Set, Timpani	Marching	
Snare Drum, Mallets	Bass Drum	Marching	Timpani	Cymbals
Snare Drum, Bass Drum	Timpani	Set		
Snare Drum	Set	Mallets	Marching	
Snare Drum	Bass Drum	Keys	Timpani	
Snare Drum, Bass Drum, Cymbals, Mallets	Accessories			

5. Why did you choose to learn an instrument? Why percussion?

- a. Family (Male)-5
- b. Declined to Answer-3
- c. Not good with pitch-2
- d. New Instrument-1
- e. DCI-1
- f. Looked Cool-1
- g. Like Music/Hit things-1
- h. Avoid general music-1
- i. To Stand out-1
- j. Looked cool-1
- k. Interesting-1
- l. Easy-1
- m. Already had drums-1

6. Have you ever felt pressure to switch instruments? If so please describe.
 - a. No-16
 - b. Declined to Answer-3
 - c. Almost stopped to play piano-1

7. Have you ever felt your ability to play was judged based on your gender and not your performance? If so, how?
 - a. No-15
 - b. Declined to Answer-3
 - c. Yes-2
 - i. not as good because I'm female
 - ii. Sexist Instructor

8. Have you ever been in a situation where you felt like you were given or denied any special opportunities because of the combination of your gender and instrument?
 - a. No-17
 - b. Declined to Answer-3

9. What reactions have you received when others found out what instrument you played? Did you feel they were negative or positive? Did you feel accepted or singled out? Were they different if they came from males/females, percussionists/non-percussionists or musicians/non-musicians?
 - a. Positive-14
 - b. Declined to Answer-3
 - c. Neutral-2

d. Impressed-1

10. Have other's reaction to being a [male or female] percussionist influenced the manner in which you play (more/less aggressive, choosing different parts, etc.)?

- a. No-16
- b. Declined to Answer-3
- c. Yes-1 prove myself

11. Have you had any physical limitations on your playing? If yes, please describe.

- a. No-15
- b. Declined to Answer-3
- c. Yes-2
 - i. Vision
 - ii. Height

12. Describe your perception of a female and male percussionist.

Male Descriptors	Female Descriptors
Plays Drums	Plays Keyboard Instruments (2)
Common	Minority
Lazy	More Focused
Aggressive, Loud	Not Enough Strength
Ego (4)	Independent, Tough
	Talented

13. What has influenced the similarities/differences in your perception of male/female percussionists?

- a. Observation-9
- b. Declined to Respond-6
- c. No Difference-2
- d. Skill Has nothing to do with Gender-1

- e. Females play pitched percussion-1
- f. Observed Ratios-1

	Male Order		Female Order	
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
Accessories	5.38	5	7.5	8
Bass Drum	3.23	3	3.5	2
Bells	8.15	8	7.5	8

14. Which gender do you feel most often plays the following instruments?

	Male Responses			Female Responses		
	Male	Either	Female	Male	Either	Female
Accessories	0	12	1	0	2	0
Bass Drum	6	7	0	1	1	0
Bells	0	5	8	1	0	1
Crash Cymbals	2	11	0	0	1	1
Marimba/Xylophone	0	3	10	0	0	2
Snare Drum	12	1	0	2	0	0
Timpani	5	7	0	1	1	0
Tom-Toms, etc.	7	7	0	2	0	0
Vibraphone	1	1	11	0	1	1

15. Which gender is best suited to play the following instruments?

	Male Responses			Female Responses		
	Male	Either	Female	Male	Either	Female
Accessories	1	12	0	0	2	0
Bass Drum	3	10	0	0	2	0
Bells	0	12	1	0	2	0
Crash Cymbals	2	11	0	0	2	0
Marimba/Xylophone	1	10	2	0	2	0
Snare Drum	2	11	0	0	2	0
Timpani	1	12	0	0	2	0
Tom-Toms, etc.	2	11	0	0	2	0
Vibraphone	0	11	2	0	2	0

16. Please rank the following instruments from your most favorite (top) to least favorite (bottom) to play.

Male Order		Female Order	
Average	Instrument	Average	Instrument
2.46	Snare Drum	1	Snare Drum
2.92	Tom-Toms/Timbales/Hand Drums	3.5	Bass Drum
3.23	Bass Drum	4	Tom-Toms/Timbales/Hand Drums
3.62	Timpani	4.5	Marimba/Xylophone
5.38	Accessories	4.5	Vibraphone
5.85	Crash Cymbals	5.5	Timpani
6	Marimba/Xylophone	7	Crash Cymbals
7.38	Vibraphone	7.5	Accessories
8.15	Bells	7.5	Bells

17. Do you feel others view you as a novelty when you play:

	Total		Male Responses		Female Responses	
	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Accessories	5	10	4	4	1	1
Bass Drum	3	12	2	2	1	1
Bells	5	10	4	4	1	1
Crash Cymbals	5	10	4	4	1	1
Marimba/Xylophone	5	10	4	4	1	1
Snare Drum	7	7	7	7		1
Timpani	5	10	4	4	1	1
Tom-Toms, etc.	6	9	5	5	1	1
Vibraphone	3	12	2	2	1	1

- a. Declined to Answer-5
- b. No to All-3
 - i. Male-2
 - ii. Female-1
- c. Yes to All-1 (female)

18. Has your choice of repertoire ever been affected by the attire you were expected to perform in? (Yes/No) If yes, please describe.

- a. No-14
- b. Declined to Answer-5
- c. Yes-1
 - i. It's difficult to move around a marimba or use the pedal on a vibraphone with heels on. I typically just go barefoot or wear flats.

19. Are there any challenges that you find to be unique to percussionists as opposed to other musicians?

- d. Learning Many Instruments-9
- e. Declined to Answer-5
- f. How Percussionists Learn Music-3
 - i. Less Preparation Time
 - ii. Have to Memorize Faster
 - iii. Can't Drop Out of Music Without Being Noticed
- g. Changing Setups of Instruments-2
- h. Strength-2
- i. Attitudes-2
 - i. Can Get Egotistical
 - ii. Being Awesome
- a. No-1

20. Do you feel that one type of ensemble setting (concert/symphonic band, marching band, percussion ensemble, orchestra, etc.) is more conducive to being an environment where gender is an issue for female percussionists?

- a. Marching-9
- b. Declined to Answer-5
- c. No-4
- d. All Are Equal-1
- e. Females play mallets, Males play battery-1

21. Which instrument parts in a piece of music would you say are the "best"? What makes them the best? Do female or male members of the section typically play them?

- a. Best Part
 - i. Snare-8
 - ii. Declined to Answer-6
 - iii. Timpani-6
 - iv. Tenors-3
 - v. Mallets-2
 - vi. Bass Drum
 - vii. Suspended Cymbal
 - viii. Drums
 - ix. Most Fun Part
 - x. Solo Part
 - xi. No Part is Better

b. Who Plays the Best Part

i. Male-7

1. 2 Specified Drums

ii. Either-6

1. The Best Player-2

iii. Female-3

1. Only on Keyboard Instruments

22. How did (or didn't) your experiences in high school as a percussionist differ from those as a college music major?

a. Not a Music Major-9

b. Declined to Answer-6

High School	College
	Higher Talent Level (3)
	Laid Back (2)
Competition Driven (2)	Crowd Oriented
Just a Class	Focus on Degree (2)
Played in Many Groups	Only Participate in marching band
	Less Instruction
	Treated Like Actual Musicians
More Females	
Need to Prove Myself	
Closer Knit group	

23. What recommendations might you have for other females wanting to be successful in the field of percussion

a. Declined to Answer-1

b. Use repetition of good technique, practice reading difficult rhythms, practice with someone better than you

c. Ignore the negative comments

24. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences as a percussionist?

- a. Declined to Answer-16
- b. Nope
- c. It's a pretty interesting thought
- d. I never felt like I had a "disadvantage" in high school from being a female percussionist, but I kind of did when it came to college auditions. Because the student leaders pick who makes it, they don't see girls as "potential" right away. Most females get overlooked, and if I hadn't tried out on bells (besides snare) I probably wouldn't have made it. I ended up not trying on snare again even though it saddens me not to keep playing.
- e. The stereotypes you are studying I think are true, but I think it's because people play what they enjoy and males and females often have different interests. I don't think there is any bias in percussion based on gender.

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