Patriarchal pits: The gendered experiences of female concert photographers

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**Purpose**

While the presence of women in photojournalism is increasing, the way they are treated by their male counterparts remains unbalanced. Through the lens of feminist theory and embodiment, this study examines how the gendered experience plays out for women in a particular niche of photojournalism, concert photography.

**Method**

In-depth interviews (N=18)

- Female and male subjects
  - Industry estimates 85% male
  - My sample: 55% male

Direct and indirect questions regarding role of gender in concert photography

Iterative analysis of interview transcripts to develop themes

“...became just one of the guys.”

“Well you got the shot but you damn near knocked over the poor girl.”

“I have a lot of friends that are female photographers and they are just as good as the rest of us … it’s a man’s world as a photographer … like well, you know that chick, look at her. It’s like she should not be known as a chick but as a photographer.”

Patriarchal Language

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<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Photographer Status</th>
<th>Percent of work as a woman</th>
<th>Amount of concerts per week</th>
<th>Male attitude working for you</th>
<th>Years experience</th>
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**Movement in space**

“I’ve had male photographers hit on me, or come to me and touch me … pushing up against me in a sexual way while shooting and think they can get away with it. I have experienced men sexually objectifying women on stage in my presence and thinking it was okay. And I’ve seen women bend to that gendered expectation.”

**Direct Contact**

“There are taller guys, and [some] will totally like back up a little bit and be like ‘come here’ and let me come stand in front of him because he knows he can just shoot over my head. I mean, they always help me more. Maybe because in, like, a protective role kind of way? I mean, anything I feel like they have thrown me a little bit of help sometimes.”

**Indirect Patriarchal**

“[some photographers] don’t want this ‘Mom’ coming in the pit and getting in their way.”

“Wow, they just let anybody with a camera in the pit.”

“Once you put your foot down, they back off very easily.”

**Identification and reaction**

“When I say ‘oh, I’m a photographer,’ I always have people look me up and down. When my male friend says he’s a photographer, they look him straight in the eye and say ‘Yeah, yeah, what about that?’ It’s just a split-second difference.”

**Skepticism**

“I’m usually the only female at a show, and it’s a bunch of guys and they’re there with their big ol’ equipment and I feel like … I have to be a little more aggressive … It’s a whole mentality thing … In my head, I automatically think ‘Oh man, I guess I have to prove something,’ which is a terrible thing, but in my head, it’s what I feel at first. I don’t think that sense goes away.”

**Exceptions**

“I have never run into a rude situation like that … it’s a thing, though … I know that it’s a thing. I mean, it’s not not a thing.”

“I think it’s not so much a male/female thing as it is that photographers are assholes. I really think that photographers are just assholes. And I think that somebody could maybe attribute that to being female if they’re sensitive about it.”

“I refuse to believe that photography is a male dominated field, but I guess I just see the male opinion and the male presence kind of taking up space in a lot of places”

—Kristy