All I Am: Defining Music as an Emotional Catalyst through a Sociological Study of Emotions, Gender and Culture

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"ALL I AM": DEFINING MUSIC AS AN EMOTIONAL CATALYST THROUGH A
SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF EMOTIONS, GENDER AND CULTURE.

by

Adrienne M. Trier-Bieniek

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This dissertation, "'All I Am': Defining Music as an Emotional Catalyst through a Sociological Study of Emotions, Gender and Culture", is based in the sociology of emotions, gender and culture and guided by symbolic interactionist and feminist standpoint theory. A primary focus is on understanding the emotional and empowering relationships women build with music that is written and performed by women, especially if they are using the music for emotional support or as a means to heal themselves. This study examines the cultural, emotional and gendered role music plays in day-to-day social life using data collected during forty-two semi-structured interviews with women who identified as fans of musician Tori Amos, as well as observations at three of Amos' concerts in 2009. Analysis focuses on how this music allows them to express emotions which have been labeled taboo or inappropriate for a woman (i.e. anger), how women have used Amos' music as a holistic approach to healing and how Amos' feminist identity is defined and understood as empowering for women. The findings conclude that women often seek out music written and composed by other women because they want to see their experiences reflected in the music they listen to. Further, the women interviewed described Amos' music as something they use to coax out, understand, or label the emotion they are feeling. Finally, women discussed Amos'
status as a feminist musician as central to both helping them heal as well as empowering them to challenge hegemonic perceptions and patriarchal expectations of who or what a woman should be and what emotions are appropriate or her to express. This is significant because gender, emotions and music have not been explored from the perspective of the female fan, and are rarely discussed in the context of popular music. From a scholar-activist perspective, these results can be applied and used when training people (in clinical settings, social work settings, etcetera) to understand the stereotypes placed on women’s emotions and to also consider holistic approaches to healing using female, feminist musicians.
DEDICATION

For Tim: Thank you for helping me make this dream a reality. You are my best friend and my partner in crime. I love that I get to come home to you.
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I have been lucky enough to have been raised by a couple of hippie-turned-social worker parents whose life and music influenced me to no end. Thanks to Rick and Deanne Trier for deciding early on that you were going to allow me to be the best version of who I wanted to be. I am awfully proud to be your kid.
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A special thanks to my four-legged friends Charlie and Mara who were never far during the writing of this dissertation.

On August 3, 2009 I got to meet Tori Amos outside The Riverside Theatre in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I had the opportunity to tell her about my life and my project. It is fair to say that your work, Tori, has inspired me, my feminism, my activism and continues to act as the soundtrack to my life. But I now realize that the community your music has built is a community of survivors, warriors and creators. People who stare at destruction and say “I can fix that.” Thank you for bringing us together. Finally, while my Ph.D. is from Western Michigan, I earned a M.S. from Virginia Tech in May of 2007. I take this moment to honor my fellow Virginia Tech community, the people whose lives were lost, and those who were injured on April 16, 2007.

Adrienne M. Trier-Bieniek
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CHAPTER I- INTRODUCTION

The first time I heard Tori Amos sing I was seventeen. The song was “I’m on Fire,” which was a cover of the Bruce Springsteen song, on a CD I was given by a friend. I was enchanted by her voice and wanted to hear more of what she had to say. I asked around to a few people to find out what CDs she had out and was told to purchase her first work, *Little Earthquakes* (1991), which I immediately did. As I listened to her songs I was amazed at how a person who did not know me could understand my experiences. In that moment I became a fan and Amos’ work became my primary music of choice. Since that day I have purchased all of Amos’ albums and DVDs and have seen her in concert every year since 1998, in total about thirteen concerts.

As I have matured, I have never wavered from my appreciation of Amos’ music. This has extended into my academic life. As I have gone through the process of acquiring undergraduate and master’s degrees, primarily by studying gender and feminism, I have found myself becoming more and more curious about female fans of Amos and what motivates their interest in her music. Specifically, I have become interested in Amos’ openly feminist identity and performance style, which can be considered more of a theatrical display than simply a music concert as her intention is to place the oppression of women at the center of her performance (Amos and Powers 2005; Daly 1998). I detail more of my position as a fan of Amos in the “Researcher Position” statement in Appendix A.

In this chapter I begin by describing the purpose of my study and research questions. I address why I selected Tori Amos as the performer to focus on for this study by providing a background of Amos’ work. I then present a brief explanation of the
development of fan studies as well as address the ways in which gender has factored into scholarly accounts of female fans. I then detail why I narrowed my sample down to women who are fans of Amos through an explanation of her fan base and the effect her music has had on her female fans. I end this chapter with an overview of the following chapters within my dissertation.

**Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is to examine the emotional and healing relationships between the feminist music of Tori Amos and the people who identify as her fans. This is important because, while the emotional relationships created between music and listener have been explored (e.g., Kotarba and Vannini 2008; Vannini 2006; Bessett 2006; Greig 1997; Becker 1990), little has been done on relationships between openly feminist music and its effect on female fans. While some research (e.g. Loue et al.’s 2008 work with HIV positive Latina women or Bessett’s 2006 study of ways men and women listen to music) serve as frameworks for understanding links between gender, emotions and music, what is missing from the sociological literature is a feminist approach to understanding relationships between fans, music and healing. Further, there is very little literature focused on understanding how women use music to heal and how music can be used to heal the self. Because Amos uses her art to define women’s experiences as well as to challenge patriarchy, addressing the ways that Amos and her fans help fill this gap in the literature is what will be explored in this study. Amos’ songwriting, performance style and feminist approach to music are deliberate challenges to the typical personification of relationships between female fans and musicians, and
serve as a bridge between symbolic interactionism and cultural feminist theories of music and society.

Guided by feminist standpoint theory as well as phenomenological approaches to research, I collected data qualitatively by performing semi-structured interviews with forty-two female fans of Amos as well as observations at Amos’ concerts during her summer 2009 U.S. tour. In order to frame the data I will discuss the literatures surrounding these research questions, relying upon Blumer’s (1969) explanation of symbolic interactionist theory as well as provide a conceptual framework for examining the relationships between gender, music and aesthetic (Kotarba and Vannini 2008; Bessett 2006; Vannini 2004). With this research I intended to answer the following questions:

1. In what ways do fans of Tori Amos identify her music as a source of emotional support and/or facilitative of healing?
2. What is the nature of the emotional connection(s) fans of Tori Amos make with her music?
3. In what ways do Tori Amos’ feminist beliefs, as illustrated in her lyrics and performances, facilitate this emotional support and/or healing?

My discussion is premised on one of the central tenants of third wave feminism, which is to further explore the position of women in popular culture (Kinser 2004; Orr 1997). Looking at feminism through the lens of popular culture is one of the ways that the third wave of feminism remains distinct from the previous two waves. In general, the first wave of feminism is characterized by a focus on women receiving the right to vote and the second wave of feminism focused on women’s liberation and worked to achieve equal pay, protect women who had been battered or raped, provide women with reproductive rights and grow the number of women who pursue college degrees and post
graduate work, to name a few. Transitioning from second to third wave feminism meant that young women would begin to shape the next feminist generation while still attempting to honor the pathway created by the first two waves (Kinser 2004; Baumgardner and Richards 2000).

One characteristic of third wave feminists has been their work to challenge the negative connotations of the word “feminist” (Baumgardner and Richards 2000). Yet, the perception of who a feminist is continues to be varied. Aronson (2003) found that young women generally fit into five categories of “I am a feminist”, “I am not a feminist but…”, “I am a fence sitter”, “I never thought about feminism” and “I am not a feminist”. Understanding these labels as well as understanding how young women defined feminism (e.g. McCabe 2005; Peltola, Milkie and Presser 2004) became key to understanding how feminism is used to challenge patriarchal standards and improve social life for women.

Gibson (2004) addresses the contributions third wave feminism has made to popular culture by noting that popular culture helps feminism stay visible. Understanding popular culture and feminism has been explored through perspectives on cultural feminism (e.g. Heywood and Drake 1997; Skeggs 1995) and, as Alcoff writes, “For cultural feminists, the enemy of women is not merely a social system or economic institution or set of backward beliefs but masculinity itself…” (1988:408). Alcoff asserts that cultural feminism revolves around creating a healthy environment for women though eliminating patriarchal dominance and validating women’s attributes. For example, studying popular music from a feminine perspective and challenging the patriarchal structure which has dominated the music industry would serve as a common goal for
cultural feminists. This became particularly salient with the third wave of feminism because it was a point when “[i]t ought to signal a far more important shift in the strategic consciousness of feminist ideology/praxis” (Gillis et al. 2004:33).

The roots of cultural feminism are found in the second wave of feminism, particularly with the work of Carol Gilligan (1982) and Nel Noddings (1984). Both have discussed an ethics of care, asserting that women hold a larger capacity for empathy and understanding. This relates to cultural feminism’s assertion that women, when given a task for example, approach finding a solution in a way which is different than men. Third wave feminists have attached themselves to this notion as a way to show gender difference. I use this definition, for the purposes of this project, as a potential explanation for the ways in which women approach the composition of music in ways which are different than men.

Cultural feminism has been exemplified through female musicians who primarily came into the public eye in the early 1990s (O’Brien 2002; Heywood and Drake 1997). Ani DiFranco, the Riot Grrrl movement (e.g. Schilt 2003; Rosenberg and Garofalo 1998) as well as Amos (O’Brien 2002; Whiteley 2000; Whiteley 1997) all fall into this era. What has distinguished these women from more typically produced female pop acts (e.g., Britney Spears, Kelly Clarkson) is their willingness to write and compose music which explicitly declares their feminism and places their experiences as women at the center of their music. Further, Amos in particular often speaks of her work as placing “mother”, “the divine feminine” or “mother earth” at the center of her songs (Amos and Powers 2005) and her feminist identity through lines like, “Eagles serve mother first” (“Strong Black Vine”, Abnormally Attracted to Sin 2009). Or, “My dark twin/the annihilating
Because Amos places women at the center of her lyric writing and musical composition, many women are attracted to her music. This attraction is one of the reasons why I selected Amos and her female fans as the focus of my study.

Why Study Tori Amos?

Brief Biography of Tori Amos

In order to discuss Amos’ fans, I find it appropriate to first offer a brief biography of Tori Amos. (A discography can be found in “Appendix B” in the Appendices). Tori Amos was born Myra Ellen Amos in 1963 to a Methodist minister, Edison Amos, and his wife Mary Ellen, a southern white woman who had a Cherokee bloodline (Jacobs 2006; Amos and Powers 2005; Rogers 1996). (Being part of a Cherokee background would influence Amos’ identity throughout her career). At the age of two and a half Amos was playing piano in her parent’s house and by the age of five was composing and playing music as a student at The Peabody Institute in Baltimore Maryland, making her the youngest student to study at the institute (Jacobs 2006; Amos and Powers 2005; Rogers 1996). While Amos was expected to play the classical music of Mozart, Beethoven and Bartokay, it soon became clear that she was more interested in Led Zeppelin and Jimi Hendrix (Rogers 1996). The institute expected Amos to break her natural “musical ear” in which she memorized music and played compositions from her memory rather than reading it from sheet music and writing her compositions using traditional music notes (Amos and Powers 2005; Rogers 1996). Amos rebelled and instead played variations of

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1 All song lyrics reproduced with permission of Sword and Stone Publishing. Please see Appendix B for a discography of Amos’ work and a signed release covering permission to use lyrics.
classical musician’s pieces infused with her own compositions as well as inserted the work of Led Zeppelin and Jimi Hendrix (Amos and Powers 2005).

The time at The Peabody Institute carried Amos through to her adolescence. However, her unwillingness to conform to traditional styles of music lead to her eventual parting with The Peabody Institute at the age of eleven (Amos and Powers 2005; Jacobs 2005; Rogers 1996). Knowing her love of the piano, Amos’ father suggested she begin playing in several gay bars in the Georgetown area of Washington D.C. As Amos explained, “At fourteen I started performing on the lounge circuit and learning my repertoire. That was my father’s idea, and though it may forever seem strange that a minister sent his teenage daughter into gay clubs to sing and play, thank God he did. There was nowhere else that would accept me as a performer” (Amos and Powers 2005:51).

Performing in piano bars would be Amos’ main work until she turned twenty-one and moved to Los Angeles. There she signed a record deal and made her first album, Y Kant Tori Read (1988) as part of a band of musicians. Once released, the album was considered a failure, both with regard to sales as well as personally to Amos (Amos and Powers 2005). The marketing of the album put Amos in push-up bras, big hair and tight clothes. Her love of the piano, writing and composing music was considered irrelevant (Amos and Powers 2005; Rogers 1996). Explaining this experience, Amos said, “That was where all the illusions came crumbling down. It had all become about being accepted instead of making music I believed in” (Rogers 1996:37).

Rather than continue on this path, Amos choose to make music which was focused on her piano compositions and songwriting skills. After being released from her
first record deal she shopped her demo album around until it was eventually picked up by Atlantic Records. However, in the beginning Atlantic Records wanted her to not play the piano on her first album, rather they suggested that she instead sing over guitars (Amos and Powers 2005). Amos rebelled against this and eventually won over her label. Her solo debut album, *Little Earthquakes* was released in 1991. The album was a sonic diary of a woman in her late twenties exploring who she is and the experiences that brought her to this point in her life. Major themes in the album included sexuality, feminist identity, religion, finding oneself and rape. Each of these themes would continue to emerge throughout Amos’ career. Amos has said that this album was about breaking down her own life and exploring who she wanted to be. "Bells started going off every time I wouldn't stick up for myself... A door opened and the demons started to show up” (1992:4).

Being born to a Methodist minister would shape Amos’ perceptions of sex, religion and shame and each theme would become foundational to her music. Her paternal grandmother served as her first muse as it was her fundamentalist views of women, sex and religion that sparked Amos’ critical thought process (Rogers 1996). For example, she has spoken of a connection she feels with Mary Magdalene, a woman commonly thought of as sinful. Amos has said,

> I realized that my Mary had been minimized by The Patriarchy\(^2\). I realized that I knew that she truly was The Lost Bride. They were working too hard to convince me otherwise... The Virgin Mary has been stripped of her sexuality but has retained her spirituality; the Magdalene has been stripped of her spirituality but has retained her sexuality... There are so many people who come to my shows with this division in them” (Amos and Powers 2005:62-64).

---

\(^2\) Capitalizing “The Patriarchy” is Amos’ emphasis.
This combination of sex (The Virgin Mary as a sexual woman) and religion (assertion that Mary Magdalene was hidden by the church because she had relations with Jesus) has been a backbone of Amos’ work throughout her career. Sexuality is reflected in Amos’ lyrics with songs like “Leather”,

Look I’m standing naked before you,
Don’t you want more than my sex?
I can scream as loud as your last one.

Religion is reflected in songs like “Dark Side of the Sun”,

So how many young men have to lay down their life and their love of their woman for some sick promise of a heaven.
Lies go back now to the garden.
Even the four horses say all bets are off (“Dark Side of the Sun”, American Doll Posse 2007).

It is this dynamic that brings attention to Amos. As O’Brien notes, her appeal lies in her ability to combine various themes in her songs. “She interweaves myth and fantasy into salty songs about womanhood, love and lust. And unlike the ladies who decorously tickled parlor piano in the nineteenth century, Amos brings out the inherent feminine sensuality of the instrument, playing the piano in a way that is raw, ultimate and, at times, overtly sexual” (2002:206).

**Why Study Tori Amos’ Female Fans?**

In general there is a lack of study dedicated to women who are fans of other women or women who identify as feminist and are fans of other feminist musicians. Arguably, one can be a fan of just about anything (Gray, Sandvoss and Harrington 2007; Lewis 2001; Harris 1998). Therefore finding a specific definition of who a fan is, is difficult (Hills 2002). This is further complicated by scholarly work on fans being
ignored, not taken seriously, or viewed as a novelty (Gray et al. 2007; Lewis 2001). Perhaps this judgment may have something to do with the image of a fan as a “fanatic”, a person whose adoration is excessive, deviant and deranged (Jenson 2001), or the notion that female fans are screaming teenage girls who cannot control their emotions when male performers are present (Bennett 2008; Kotarba and Vannini 2008; Ehrenreich, Hess and Jacobs 2001). Indeed to date, studies on female fans have focused on understanding the economic gains made by (generally male) entertainers (e.g. Fiske 2003), often portraying female fans as screaming, inarticulate, crying, shuddering messes whenever their favorite (usually male) entertainers are present (either in real life or on television) (e.g., Ehrenreich, Hess and Jacobs 2001; Hinerman 2001; Frith and McRobbie 1979).

In general, female fans of feminist artists like Amos challenge hegemonic perceptions of fandom because they are attracted to the music of a female artist based on a combination of her lyric writing, activism, feminist message and emotional/healing potential. Many of Amos’ fans flock to her songs because they serve an introspective purpose, as I will discuss in Chapter’s five and six. This is consistent with some scholars who assert that “[t]he authentic voices of fans themselves are rarely heard” (Harris 1998:5). As Leonard (2009) and Whiteley (2000) both address, the music industry is set up from the perspective of men. Thus, marketing of artists, the songs artists sing and the persona the artist takes on is generally orchestrated by male representatives in order to fit the needs of fans. Yet, much like the music of Joni Mitchell, The Indigo Girls or Cyndi Lauper, Amos’ music is presented as an alternative to these conceptualizations, as well as an example of third wave feminist concepts of music.
Consistent with female singer/songwriters, Amos' songs are introspective and confessional. She writes music which merges observations of a patriarchal society with poetic descriptions of her experiences as a woman attempting to navigate her life. This combination of feminist expression and vindication for the oppression of women has lead to Amos having a fan base of people who not only hold similar beliefs, but who have very openly declared their devotion to her efforts at combining activism and music (O'Brien 2002; Whiteley 2000). Further, this challenges the music industry which often supports production of music written, composed and produced by men (Amos and Powers 2005; Leonard 2007; Whiteley 2000; Whiteley 1997).

In conceptualizing this project I made the decision to approach studying Amos' female fans from a phenomenological perspective. This decision was made because I am not attempting to generalize or characterize Amos’ fans. Rather I am interested in understanding the individual experiences of the women I interviewed and how these experiences translate into the larger phenomenon of Tori Amos fans. In general, Amos’ fans have been defined as having an almost obsessive devotion to her music. Being a fan of Amos for almost half of my life has allowed me to experience this behavior through observing fans on message boards, at concerts or through reading articles written about her. What has been interesting about these observations is the gendered tone they often take. To research a female fan, as I have mentioned, is met with a picture of a crying, emotional teenage girl. This takes on the assumption that in order for women to enjoy music they must resort to channeling their inner teenage girl and ignore their womanhood. Amos’ fans challenge this notion.
Further, Amos’ approach to music and fans serves as an example of third wave feminism’s assertion that feminism should be a blend of theory and activism. Because Amos recognized the impact of her songs on her fans, she found it necessary to start the first national rape crisis hotline (the Rape Abuse and Incest National Network or RAINN). This was in response to the women who regularly spoke to Amos about their own rapes and would confess to Amos that her music was what lead them to tell their stories (Whiteley 2000). This is directly related to Amos’ feminist identification as it has given her the ability to recognize and respond to the standpoints of her fans. As Amos herself has commented, “The key question is, ‘Can you listen?’ You really learn from people’s stories and can see, ‘Wow, these are the people relating to these songs’” (Amos and Powers 2005:255). Others who work with Amos have echoed this. Chelsea Laird, one of her managers, has said, “There is a posse of fans who travel to every show, and she does know them. I’ve gone so far as to send books to fans whom she’s hoping she can reach with something they can relate to” (Amos and Powers 2005:255). Further, Amos has noted, “Sometimes I know why the kids have come to the show, because there’s not a lot in that town that is encouraging and they’re starving” (Amos and Powers 2005:259). Indeed, she has recognized that many of her fans may see themselves (and be seen by others) as social outcasts. Through her music, they are hoping to find an identity or a connection to her as a performer (Hills 2002; Lewis 2001).

While I am choosing to focus on Amos’ fans, I would also like to acknowledge that it is not my intention to privilege Amos over other feminist musicians. Rather, my intention is to explain Amos’ female fans as their own phenomenon in order to understand how or if Amos’ feminist identity translates to her fans and contributes to any
emotional release or healing. I understand that she is not the only artist who does this, yet I also recognize that her fan base is considered devoted and fanatical because of the connection they have to her music (e.g. O’Brien 2002; Daly 1998). Examining Amos’ female fans can lead to a further understanding of fan relationships with a feminist artist who uses feminist music as an empowering or healing force.

Summary of Following Chapters

As I have mentioned, the purpose of this dissertation is to explore the ways in which female fans of Tori Amos use her music as a catalyst for healing as well as what emotional connections they are making with the music. Further, I am interested in understanding the ways in which Amos’ feminist identity facilitates emotional support or healing with her female fans. This study is relevant to the literature in sociology of emotions as there is limited work which explores women and emotion or, more specifically, women expressing emotion through listening to music. This study is also relevant to sociological approaches to music and fan studies as both areas have neglected to discuss the experiences of women with music and the music industry. This research also further develops the feminist literature connecting popular culture to cultural feminism and the third wave of feminism.

Therefore this document will be organized in the following manner. In Chapter I I have introduced the central objectives of my study through presenting my research questions and a short description of my methods and methodology. I also gave a brief biography of Tori Amos and discussed a few of the themes in her music which directly relate to women. I presented and discussed many of Amos’ songs which fit these themes
and provided a discussion of why I have chosen to study female fans in general and female fans of Amos in particular.

In Chapter II I explore the literature surrounding fan studies, the sociology of music and gender, including sociology and music culture, cultural feminism and music, understanding the role of female singer/songwriters, and scholarly work on Amos. I also discuss how Blumer's (1969) conceptualization of symbolic interactionism acts as one theoretical guide for understanding how and why people have emotional connections to music. The second half of Chapter II is dedicated to literature which explores sociological approaches to emotions as well as gender and emotion. I also develop a discussion of healing and the medical research done on relationships between healing and music. I note that most of the literature surrounding healing and music is done through the lens of medicine, specifically nursing (e.g. helping patients achieve physical healing from surgery). I also briefly examine the literature on music therapy and healing.

Chapter III focuses on the methodological framework of this project by detailing the phenomenological approach to studying fans of Amos as well as why I used feminist standpoint theory and symbolic interaction as a guide during data collection and analysis. I then explain the research design used to conduct interviews with fans of Amos and to undertake participant observation at three of Amos' concerts. I also include a brief discussion of the content analysis I performed to find major themes of Amos' albums. I detail the coding process I went through to find the major themes in my data. Finally this section offers a discussion of quality assessment in regard to my qualitative research design, data collection and analysis.
In Chapter IV I begin a discussion of my findings by answering my first research question, “In what ways do fans of Tori Amos identify her music as a source of emotional support and/or facilitative of healing”. I begin the chapter by first addressing major themes I found in Amos’ performance style and albums and use this as a basis for framing the women’s use of Amos’ music as healing and/or emotional support. Using holistic approaches to healing combined with symbolic interactionism theory, I then explore how the women have used Amos’ music to heal and interweave songs and albums noted by the women as helpful in the healing process. I continue the theme of emotional support in Chapter V where I answer my second research question, “What is the nature of the emotional connection(s) fans of Tori Amos make with her music?” I define what emotions and expression of emotion the women in the study described as they were explaining their emotional connection to Amos’ music. I use feminist standpoint theory to examine how these emotional responses are attributed to each woman feeling like she was able to find her own identity through Amos’ music. I also discuss how this emotional support translates into the women feeling like they have healed themselves. Finally I discuss how Amos’ work has inspired women to create supportive environments for each other through following Amos on tour and social networking on message boards.

In Chapter VI I answer my third research question, “In what ways do Tori Amos’ feminist beliefs, as illustrated in her lyrics and performances, facilitate this emotional support and/or healing?” I discuss how the women conceptualized who a feminist is and where they found feminist themes in Amos’ work as well as detail how Amos’ feminist identity translated into healing and empowerment through Amos’ live performances,
song lyrics and musical composition. I also detail how Amos' feminist activism was founded as a means to help women heal. I connect how women used Amos' music and activism as a guide to bring activism into their own lives and help other women in their communities heal.

In Chapter VII I present a discussion of my findings and offer suggestions for future research and non-profits who work with women. I also discuss how this research fills gaps in existing literature. In the Appendices I offer a discussion of my own researcher position as a fan of Tori Amos, as well as provide bracketing to detail experiences I had while conducting interviews and observing concerts. The Appendices also include a discography of Tori Amos, permission from her publishing house, Sword and Stone, to re-print her lyrics as well as my HSIRB process of gaining consent and communication with HSIRB regarding my study. I also present my interview questions and observation guidelines as well as provide the list of websites and message boards I used for recruitment and present a graph detailing the demographical information of my participants.
CHAPTER II- CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In first half of this chapter I review the literature regarding sociology of music culture and how this relates to sociology of gender within popular music. I further discuss cultural feminism and its space within gender and music, specifically with regard to women who are singer/songwriters, followed by an overview of scholarly work done on Tori Amos. The second half of this chapter will focus on links between sociology of emotions and gender. Here I present literature focused on the foundations of sociological approaches to emotions in order to show how gender has been incorporated and neglected in current studies. I also use this section to present literature which explores connections between healing, women and popular music. I present Blumer’s (1969) approach to symbolic interaction as central to understanding a sociological approach to music. This is particularly relevant considering sociologists who study music focus on Blumer’s explanation of symbolic interaction as a major theoretical contribution, particularly his assertion that objects have significance for people based on the meaning they assign to them.

Sociology, Music and Gender

Sociology and Music Culture

Sociologists have documented music’s role as a cultural and societal force by, for instance, studying musical products and artifacts (e.g. CDs, live concerts, memorabilia, DVDs), as well as how music makes people feel (e.g. Kotarba and Vannini 2008; Bessett 2006; Vannini 2006). Further analyses have focused on how individuals are perceived based on their musical selection, as well as music as a natural part of our lives (Kotarba
and Vannini 2008; Bennett 2006; Shuker 2001). Thus, to study popular music is to study a phenomenon rooted in day-to-day social life (Shuker 2001).

Just as studies of fandom were first found within the literatures of cultural studies, the sociological study of music can also be traced to this literature, mainly due to the interdisciplinary nature of cultural studies (Bennett 2008). The essence of cultural studies is, of course, the study of contemporary culture as culture is meant to be engaged and participated in (During 1993). Cultural studies thus examine sounds, inscriptions, objects, images, magazines, television, etcetera in order to analyze how they are understood in social contexts (Barker 2008). In order to truly discuss sociological approaches to music, there must be a resignation of the idea that there is one true format to examining culture (Bennett 2008; Kotarba and Vannini 2008; During 1993). In sociology, a discussion of music is often centered around the “cultural turn” which calls into question current social structures and their impact on everyday life (Bennett 2008). As Bennett notes, “We feel particularly keen on attempting to understand and explain the most taken for granted and minute cultural expressions” (2008:6). Therefore, in essence, the musical sociologist is looking for culture in everyday life.

Exploring Gender through Culture and Music

One of the main subject areas to emerge from the third wave feminist movement of the 1990s is a focus on the relationship between gender and culture, especially in popular music (e.g. Leonard 2009; Gilles et. al 2004; O’Brien 2002; Whiteley 2000). This is distinguished from the second wave by having a greater literacy in technology and popular culture, as well as a willingness to work within systems that were traditionally
viewed as patriarchal (Murphy 2001). Founded in the work of Gilligan (1982) and Noddings (1984), this approach has been commonly referred to as “cultural feminism” (Gillis et al. 2004; Heywood and Drake 1997; Skeggs 1995). In referencing cultural feminism, Heywood and Drake state that “[t]hird wave feminists might revalorize constituted female identity and its representation, whilst incorporating both a radical analysis of the signifying chain and a belief that the agent can somehow manipulate that which is signified” (1997:45). Essentially, cultural feminism suggests that women and men occupy separate spheres within society and that they make up two different, yet complimentary, aspects of cultural life (Gillis et al. 2004; Koskoff 1987). However, up until recently, studies of culture and music have focused explicitly on the male sphere, neglecting to recognize the differences between men and women (Koskoff 1987). Further, as Lury (1995) points out, the merging of cultural theory and feminism has been problematic because “[c]urrent feminist cultural studies are repeatedly held back by the continued dominance of undgendered understanding of culture” (1995:33). She goes on to note that cultural theorists have argued that culture is gender neutral and that there are only specific uses of culture which are problematic from a feminist point of view, further proving that studies based in cultural feminism are needed to contribute to discussions of inequality in a cultural context. This is especially salient when considering that concerns with power relationships are fundamental to examining the impact of the patriarchy on feminist approaches to culture (Inglis, Blaikie, and Wagner-Pacifici 2007).

For example, in contemporary feminist music culture, “girliness” has been “[v]iolently rearranged, to powerful effect” (McCarthy 2006:75). One example of this is the appearance of musician Ani DiFranco, who has said, “I’m an unglamorous person
and I don’t have the need to be pretty or pleasant” (McCarthy 2006:76). While DiFranco identifies as female, she has juxtaposed this identification with dreadlocked hair, or sometimes a shaved head, and with short dresses paired with massive boots (McCarthy 2006). Women have also expressed gender within their fandom culture by embracing a girlish identity. Wald (2007) notes the examples of Lisa Loeb performing in pigtails and using a child-like voice when she sings and Courtney Love performing in tights and baby doll dresses. She also notes that female performers have felt pressure from the industry to present themselves as “girls” as opposed to “women” in order to appeal to young women. While some women, such as Love, seem to use the persona of “girl” as a type of retaliation against this mentality, other female performers embrace it (Leonard 2009; Wald 2007). Leonard quotes “Baby Spice” (a.k.a. Emma Bunton) of The Spice Girls as saying, “Of course I am a feminist! But I could never burn my Wonderbra! I’d be nothing without it!” (2009:160).

The Spice Girls were a group which championed empowerment for young women while dressing in costumes associated with various personas (O’Brien 2002). Their statement of “girl power” came with the explanation that “Feminism has become a dirty word. Girl Power is just a 90s way of saying it. We can give feminism a kick up the arse” (Leonard 2009). While the motto of the Spice Girls was self-empowerment, their personas tended to be hegemonic and sexualized and constructed around the identity that you can kick feminism’s “arse” but you must also be wearing heels and make-up to do so (Leonard 2009; Wald 2007; O’Brien 2002). This phenomenon was explored by Railton (2001) who asserted that acts such as The Spice Girls or even Britney Spears were akin to a carnival-like disruption in women’s advancement in music. She asserts that “Just as
This music is perhaps the only form of popular music to have a predominately female audience, the threat that it poses is the threat of the feminine, and of female encroachment into what is still predominately a male and masculine world” (2001:321).

This gendered dynamic in music has also been challenged through the Riot Grrrl’s of the 1990s. The Riot Grrrl music scene began as a way to show the influence of second wave women and musicians, while also asserting that a new generation of female musicians has emerged with a unique consciousness of their own feminism (Whiteley 2000). Riot Grrrl bands started in the Washington D.C. area in the early 1990s as a way for young women to participate in the punk rock scene which was dominated by men (Frith and McRobbie 1979). The Riot Grrrl’s were a group of young women decided that watching their boyfriends on stage was not enough for them and that they would like to perform aggressive punk music (Rosenberg and Garofalo 1998). The “Riot Grrrl” title was conceptualized as a way to “[r]eclaim the validity and power of youth with an added growl to replace the perceived passivity of ‘girl’” (Rosenberg and Garofalo 1998). The Riot Grrrl movement has been supported and popularized through ‘zines’ (electronic magazines) as well as various internet websites and blogs, whose main purposes are to promote the position of young women in music. Further, Riot Grrrl bands created feminist music festivals such as Ladyfest, which included workshops on feminism and identity. These workshops were explicitly aimed at changing young women’s perceptions of who and what a feminist is (O’Brien 2002). These debates regarding what makes music feminist is one of the reasons why studies such as mine are necessary.
Third wave cultural feminism attempts to reclaim what it means to be male and female in contemporary society (Inglis et al. 2007; Skeggs 1995; Koskoff 1987). Because gender is a product of socialization, achieved through cultural means, and is all around us all the time, we have developed expectations for gender roles (West and Zimmerman 1987). Therefore, perceptions of what it means to be male and female in society (e.g. Butler 1999) directly translate into music (Whiteley 2000; Reynolds and Press 1995; Koskoff 1987; Frith and McRobbie 1979). The most popular male musicians, for instance, tend to exhibit hegemonic masculinity, both in their lyrics and in their presentation of self (Leonard 2009; Kotarba and Vannini 2008; McCarthy 2006; Frith and McRobbie 1979).

Frith and McRobbie’s (1979) study of gender within music is cited as the first study to examine hegemonic masculinity in music. Frith and McRobbie broke music up into two gendered categories, “cock rock” and “teeny bop”. “Cock rock” is based in male performance of music. The male musician is typically portrayed as “[a]gressive, dominating, boastful, and constantly seek[ing] to remind the audience of their prowess, their control. Their stance is obvious in live shows; male bodies on display, plunging shirts and tight trousers, a visual emphasis on chest hair and genitals” (1979:65). Cock rock artists take the form of the quintessential rock star, whose fans are mainly female and whose music serves as a sedative for their adoration. In another vein, “teeny bop”, as described by Frith and McRobbie (1979), revolves around the female fan as always the consumer of music, rarely the performer or producer of music. “What they’re buying is also a representation of male sexuality (usually in the form of teen idols)…” (1979:66). Examples include Beatle Mania (e.g. Ehrenreich, Hess and Jacobs 2001), or (to give a
more contemporary example) the image of young girls screaming over “boy bands” like Nsync or The Jonas Brothers. With teeny bop, the image fed to young women is of a squeaky clean boy next door whose sexual prowess is both signaled by and restricted to the swinging of hips (Frith and McRobbie 1979). This persona of masculinity has also been explored in country music. Neal (2007) notes that some men within country music, historically, had identified themselves as “rednecks” in order to express their hyper masculine identity. Perhaps a good example of masculine identity in country music is in Johnny Cash’s song, “A Boy Named Sue” where Cash sings:

It seems I had to fight my whole life through.  
Some gal would giggle and I’d get red,  
And some guy’d laugh and I’d bust his head,  
I tell ya, life ain’t easy for a boy named “Sue.”  
Well, I grew up quick and I grew up mean,  
My fist got hard and my wits got keen,  
I’d roam from town to town to hide my shame (“A Boy Named Sue”, Johnny Cash at San Quentin 1969).

While the example of teeny bop and cock rock is illustrative of aspects of fandom, it is important to note that it is not all encompassing. Leonard (2009) points out that cock rock and teeny bop served as an important attempt to define masculinity in rock, yet she also addresses that Frith and McRobbie are referring more to the career path for men and women by stating that it only addresses positions of men and women within the music industry. Further, as she writes, “The production of a cultural product by a male or female does not explain why it might be understood as intrinsically gendered” (Leonard 2009:24). She contends that Frith and McRobbie constructed these styles in order to show clear differences between men and women in music. Citing Krenske and McKay (2002) she asserts that there is still a cock rock and teeny bop paradigm within music.
Krenske and McKay found that fans at a heavy metal music club behaved in highly
gendered ways with aggressive men and passive women. However, she also notes that
performers such as Kurt Cobain, who played aggressive music, had a persona which
appeared to be more vulnerable and sensitive.

the perceptions of women who front rock bands and their performance of gender. Her
study connects with Herrmann (2008) who argued that fandom can empower girls
because “[i]t offers a sense of control over and adds pleasure to people’s everyday lives”
(2008:81). Herrmann also says that a female centered fan community, regardless of the
performing artist, gives young women and girls the opportunity to create friendships and
engage in a community. She notes, “Devoting hours of their time each day to fan
activities in the absence of male peers or adults seems as suspect and potentially
threatening to the rational order as other typically feminine activities…” (2008:85-86).
Yet, Herrmann also recognizes that, regardless of the empowerment young women feel in
private, in public and in the eyes of the media, they will still be characterized as
screaming, obsessive and hysteric. She exemplifies this in her assessment of the German
magazine Bravo which dedicated its January 2001 cover to female fans of The Backstreet
Boys. The image presented is a parody of the fans of the band, namely of frenzied,
screaming young girls on the hunt to find them. A paradox then becomes constructed
around having the need to understand what young women receive from listening to music
which they view as empowering, while also understanding that most people may write
these feelings off as crazy or obsessive (Herrmann 2008).
Further, categories such as “cock rock” and “teeny bop” do not account for the experiences of homosexual fans. While certainly male fans could experience the same exuberance while in the presence of a male performer, “cock rock” specifically insinuates that male performers perform for women. The work of Valentine (1995) argues that with performers who identify as “gay”, “lesbian” or “queer”, the reaction of fans to their music rests less in having a sexual icon to look up to and more in having a person with a shared identity as their role model. Valentine argues that lesbian fans of performers like k.d. Lang are less interested in having a sexual relationship with Lang as they are finding a woman with whom they can identify with (1995). She writes, “The meanings and identities attributed to different artists and their music in this way are not fixed but are fluid imaginings which are continually reworked, elaborated on and renegotiated in conversations between women” (1995:475).

Musician Annie Lennox further expresses this sentiment by saying, “Being in a middle place that’s neither overtly male or overtly female makes you threatening, it gives you power” (O’Brien 2002:249). Indeed one of the reasons why k.d. Lang goes by “k.d.” rather than “Kathy Dawn” is because she recognized that women are exploited within the music industry and that by giving herself a more androgynous name she was perhaps shielding herself from that exploitation (O’Brien 2002; Bruzzi 1997; Valentine 1995). Lang, along with Melissa Etheridge, found success in coming out to their fans because they both realized that their lesbian identity was going to attract an audience interested in claiming their own identities.

Indeed, female musicians tend to be overly sexualized, their presentation of self being constructed, intentionally or not, from the perspective of the male gaze (Kotarba
and Vannini 2008; McCarthy 2006; Mulvey 2003; Koskoff 1987; Frith and McRobbie 1979). This is perhaps best explained through discussing theories on the body as they relate to women’s music. As McCarthy writes, “Increasingly in this context, the female body is presented not (only) as a locus of oppression, but as a kind of performance site, where cultural expectations about gender are rehearsed but also, at least potentially, manipulated and resisted” (2006:71). This is further complicated by the assertion that women’s bodies are sexual vessels, that they are available as visual representations of male desire (McCarthy 2006). This concept was perhaps most notably explored in Laura Mulvey’s work, Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema, which used psychoanalysis to examine the ways of looking at women in film (Mulvey 2003; Cowie 1997; Doane 1991). Mulvey concludes that the place of women in film is to appease the male gaze by projecting the fantasy of the male onto the female performer. Essentially, the gaze becomes a form of scopophelia, or “[p]leasure in looking at another person as an erotic object” (Mulvey 2003:141). With scopophelia, the male gaze is inescapable by the female performer, she will always be a product of the male fantasy. Mulvey’s work serves as an example of showing the audience to be active and even dominating in relation to the work of the performer. Therefore, feminist performers who openly challenge the male gaze (such as Amos) are also challenging the cultural constructions of the body placed on women by patriarchal society.

*Intersections of Gender and Race in Music*

In between “cock rock”, “teeny bop” and the gaze, there have been approaches to music which challenge typical expectations of women. For example, the women who
participated in the music style of "Rockabilly", a style of music which emerged in the 1950s and combined country music with rhythm and blues and western swing, exemplified both gendered and racial challenges to popular music (Sanjek 1997). Rockabilly gave women of color, who traditionally have been marginalized in popular music, an opportunity to use the rhythm and blues present in the south as their own platform. Sanjek (1997) lists women such as Eliza Brown, Memphis Minnie and Sippie Wallace as examples of those who participated in creating rockabilly music, stating “[a]s a body, these women ritually exorcised the feelings of their peers, who collectively engaged in and suffered the benefits as well as the repercussions of the mass migration of rural African Americans to the urban centers of the north” (1997:141). For example, in her song “When the Levee Breaks” Memphis Minnie sings about the floods in Mississippi in 1927.

Oh cryin' won't help you, prayin' won't do no good,
Oh cryin' won't help you, prayin' won't do no good.
When the levee breaks, mama, you got to lose.
I works on the levee, mama both night and day.
I works on the levee, mama both night and day.
I works so hard, to keep the water away ("When the Levee Breaks", 1929 Blues Classics by Memphis Minnie 1929).

In her analysis, Sanjek explains the way in which these women became the voice for working class and poor women attempting to share their experience through their art.

Recognizing the exclusion of women of color from discussions and creation of music runs concurrent with third wave feminism’s contention that women of color have been marginalized within feminism. Much of this has stemmed from the second wave of feminism’s concentration on gaining women the right to work outside of the home. For
many women of color there has never been a choice regarding whether or not they would work outside of the home, they simply had to. Therefore such work was anything but empowering and symbolic of gender equality (e.g. Ehrenreich and Hoschild 2004; Langston 2003; Railton 2001; hooks 2000). Thus many women of color feel that their voice has not been heard within feminism and therefore object to claiming a feminist identity (Springer 2002). However, during the third wave of feminism there have been many women of color artists who have expressed feminist sentiments in their songs. Exploring the combination of women of color, music and the third wave of feminism is often also called “hip-hop feminism”. The basis for hip-hop feminism is found in the work of third wave women of color who assert that there is a need for young women of color to have a space of their own within feminism, separate from the work done by women of color in the second wave (Peoples 2008; Springer 2002). Springer (2002) asserts that young women of color want to separate from their mothers’ gardens (a reference to Alice Walker’s book *In Search of Our Mothers Gardens* [1984]) by creating a third wave hip-hop feminist identity. This sentiment has been connected to hip-hop through the work of Shani Jamila. Jamila writes, “As women of the hip-hop generation we need a feminist consciousness that allows us to examine how representations and images can be simultaneously empowering and problematic” (2002:92). This is further explored by Morgan (2005) who writes,

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3 It is important to note that while I recognize that the women I am choosing to highlight may identify as third wave feminists, others may not find that their perspective is in line with the third wave. I recognize that some feminists feel more in line with the second wave of feminism. However, I have selected these women to highlight because they are most commonly associated with current generations of feminism within feminist literature (e.g. Leonard 2009; McCarthy 2006; Baumgardner and Richards 2000; Heywood and Drake 1997; Becker 1990). I have also highlighted these particular performers because their messages of female empowerment has been noted as an influence on the feminist identity of young women (Lugo-Lugo 2001).
Instead of hip-hop aggressively putting 'bass in your face’, it places race and class in your face—as well as the womb, the clitoris, the family, the ancestors and Bessie Smith. Because they focus on women’s responsibility for their own lives and bodies, women in hip-hop consistently explore feminism, the intersections of race and class and gender marginalization and oppression (2005: 440-441).

Hip-hop feminists want to declare their own position within feminism as well as within music. This is especially significant when considering the misogynistic tone that rap music can often take (Peoples 2008; Morgan 2005; O’Brien 2002). Peoples (2008) asserts that young third wave feminists who identify as hip-hop feminists are attempting to challenge this tone, typically generated by male artists, producers and writers (Leonard 2009; Peoples 2008). Hip-hop feminists are juxtaposing music, hip-hop and the third wave of feminism as a way to claim the empowerment they feel in rap music. They do this through promoting self-respect and highlighting “strong women,” such as Angela Davis, to challenge patriarchal and racial stereotypes.

Many hip-hop feminists cite the work of Queen Latifah as their inspiration for empowerment (O’Brien 2002). Queen Latifah challenged gender roles within rap music by addressing, among other topics, domestic violence and women’s independence (Whiteley 2000). One aspect of Queen Latifah’s feminist leanings, as noted by Whiteley, is that her music and her music videos have sought to present African American women as fighters and warriors against oppression. “Latifah celebrated their [African American women] historic accomplishments as ‘queens of civilization’, demonstrating that the African-American was part of a global majority who had been victimized and oppressed by Euro-American racism and imperialism” (Whiteley 2000: 190). Further, Latifah’s video for “Ladies First” (1989) showed her performing the song standing in front of images of Angela Davis, Sojourner Truth and Madame C.J. Walker so as to highlight the
struggle against apartheid in South Africa (Roberts 1994). In the lyrics to the song, Latifah references that women bear children and thus are strong enough to take on patriarchal society. This has lead to scholarly comments on the music of Queen Latifah, while a feminist politics of entertainment is troubling and ambivalent, there are feminist entertainments such as “Ladies First” that present the viewer with moments of resistance to dominant exploitative images of women. In its serious exploration and glorification of African American women's history, ‘Ladies First’ seizes a tele-visual moment and breaks the continuity of sexism and racism that dominates the music video flow (Roberts 1994: 245).

Morgan (2005) points out that female rappers have often proclaimed the names of feminist foremothers in their music, including Angela Davis, Sojourner Truth, Billie Holiday and others. She also notes that understanding the roots of oppression is just one step in composing feminist hip-hop. There is also a component of understanding intersectionality (exemplified in music of women like Lauryn Hill) as well as empowerment. Morgan further cites the work of Sarah Jones as an example of how, for hip-hop feminists, gender and race are combined to illustrate the experience of Black women. She writes that with Jones’ performances, “Any critique of hegemony is also a critique of race” (2005:431), thus presenting a performance centered around placing the experiences of Black women at the center of her art.

*Examples of Third Wave Feminism in Popular Music*

Examples of third wave feminism’s goals being reflected in music can be seen in artists like Ani DiFranco, Alanis Morissette, Missy Elliott and Beyonce (McCarthy 2006; Whiteley 2000). DiFranco’s lyrics often openly question the male gaze and patriarchal authority:
I am not a pretty girl.
That's not what I do.
I ain't no damsel in distress, and I don't need to be rescued.
So put me down punk.
Wouldn't you prefer a maiden fair?
Isn't there a kitten stuck up a tree somewhere? (“Not A Pretty Girl”, *Not A Pretty Girl* 1995).

While DiFranco seems to feel secure in her feminism, Morissette’s music shows introspection on the part of the singer who is fighting and questioning her own ideas of what it means to be a feminist.

How to hate women when you’re supposed to be a feminist?
How to play all highest when you’re really a hypocrite. (“Eight Easy Steps”, *So-called Chaos* 2004).

When considering the influence of women like DiFranco and Morissette, there should also be a reflection on how contemporary R&B lends itself to the anti-patriarchal gaze. A good example can be found in the lyrics of Missy Elliott. Elliott raps,

“She’s a bitch.”
When you say my name,
Talk mo’ junk but won’t look my way.
“She’s a bitch”.
See I got more cheese,
So back up on while I roll up my sleeves.
“She’s a bitch.”
You can’t see me, Joe,
Get on down while I shoot my flow (“She’s a Bitch”, *Da Real World* 1999).

Another example is the songwriting and performing of Beyoncé Knowles (O’Brien 2002). An example of Knowles’ writing can be found in the song “If I Were a Boy”:

If I were a boy, I would turn off my phone.
Tell everyone it's broken so they’d think that I was sleeping alone.
I'd put myself first and make the rules as I go.
'Cause I know that she'd be faithful.
Waiting for me to come home, to come home.
If I were a boy I think I could understand how it feels to love a girl.
I swear I’d be a better man ("If I Were a Boy", I Am... Sasha Fierce 2008).

Indeed, Knowles’ status in the music industry has garnered the attention of women like Elliott. Elliott has said, “Being a producer has won a lot of respect for me beyond just being an artist, but it is hard. Lil’ Kim and I talk about it all the time: It’s all guys out there and only a handful of women. But I think it’s getting better. Look at Beyoncé—she’s doing it like a man!” (Dwire 2009:10).

These women illustrate an exploration of their feminism vis-à-vis their written lyrics, something that is becoming central to understanding the impact a feminist musical performance has on an audience. As Whiteley writes, “Their contribution to popular music - not least in opening the doors to the next generations of women musicians - is equaled only by their personal struggle against the inherently sexist attitudes that underpin the ‘material world’ of the music industry” (2000:1). That hegemonic masculinity and stereotypical forms of femininity are present when performing popular music is not surprising given that the music business is run primarily by men. Indeed, writers and producers of music are mostly men and the essence of performance is almost exclusively male-centered (Whiteley 1997; Frith and McRobbie 1979). Women’s position or contribution to music is often relegated to that of singer. This is not necessarily negative; female musicians such as Madonna and Britney Spears have been very popular when not writing or producing their own material (Leonard 2009; O’Brien 2002). The difference is that, from a business perspective, those who write and produce music tend to make the most money (Leonard 2009). Further, women who perform music written and produced by men are, in effect, silenced within the music writing
process. This leads to the assertion that men make music and women either perform music constructed by men or watch men perform it (Leonard 2009; McCarthy 2006; Reynolds and Press 1994; Frith and McRobbie 1979).

Women performing music written by men is also explored in studies focused on the effect of the male gaze on fans of a female performer. For example, Vannini studied the music of Avril Lavigne (a female pop singer) and noted that the male gaze is present and manipulated because her public persona cannot be separated from her gender (Vannini 2004; Mulvey 2003; Butler 1990). However, Vannini argues that the fans of Lavigne view her image as an alternative to femininity based on the “alternative” classification of her music and persona. Vannini even goes as far as to say that “punk” or “alternative” female performers fall into the status of “anti-Britney”, referring to the pop singer Britney Spears. This is a reflection of a debate among music scholars concerning the limits or idea of what femininity is when presented within music (McCarthy 2006; Vannini 2004; Lowe 2003; O’Brien 2002; Whiteley 2000).

Another example of how the gaze may be challenged in popular music is highlighted in Lowe’s (2003) work. She ran focus groups with young girls to “[e]ngage this audience not as passive recipients of questionable material but as active agents in the creation of their own culture” (2003:123). Her intention was to show that new generations of girls are immersing themselves in images of pop music and presenting their own feminist interpretation and critique. Lowe played some of Britney Spears’ songs for the girls and discovered that the girls found some empowerment from them, particularly those in which they thought Spears’ personality was represented. At the same time, the girls also liked songs in which they found their own personalities
represented. Further, Lowe discovered that when the girls discussed Spears’ songs they presented feminist attitudes toward the music. For example, they articulated frustration at songs aimed at the message of “I’ll-do-anything-to-get-my-boyfriend-back” (2003:134) as well as those which presented a man as a necessity in a woman’s life (Lowe 2003). It could be argued that the girls’ reaction is characteristic of feminism’s third wave in that young women often may not identify (or realize) that they are feminist, yet they may hold feminist beliefs (Aronson 2005; Richards and Baumgardner 2000).

**Exploring Women Singer/Songwriters**

Cultural feminism has countered hegemonic presentations in music by highlighting the efforts of female artists, many of whom declare an independence from the male world of music production by writing and producing their own art (Whiteley 2000). In particular, the work of Angela McRobbie (2003 and 1999) and Sheila Whiteley (2000) has been cited as one of the few foundations for a cultural feminist and sociological approach to studying gender, music and audience. McRobbie (1999) asserts that feminist ethnographic studies, for example, challenge positivist traditions of research where the desire for objective data is preferred over an examination of the lived experience. This is concurrent with feminist methodological perspectives on data collection which state that research must be re-directed so as to place the experiences of women at the forefront (Stanley and Wise 1993; Harding 1987; Smith 1987).

One of the ways which female musicians who align with, embody or support third wave feminism, have exemplified McRobbie’s (2004) approach is by placing their own lives as central to their work (Whiteley 2000; Greig 1997). They have challenged the
perception of women as performers who are subject to the gaze through writing, producing and performing their own music and holding the title of singer/songwriter (Whiteley 2000; Greig 1997; Becker 1990). Since, traditionally, music has been written and produced by men, women’s perspective on their own lives and experiences has been underdeveloped just as their opportunity to present work in their own voice has been minimized (Leonard 2009; Greig 1997; Becker 1990). This is challenged through the female singer/songwriter because her lyrics hold the potential to invoke an emotionally compelling truth central to the experiences of women, such as childbirth, abuse by a partner, or issues with one’s body (McCarthy 2006; Greig 1997). Through writing and performing their own music, the female singer/songwriter also challenges the male gaze.

To be more specific on this point, McCarthy (2006) argues that female musicians who were present during feminism’s second wave (specifically Joni Mitchell, Carol King and Carly Simon) made an impact because they placed the “female” experience center to the writing and composition of their music (McCarthy 2006). The work of these women opened the door for more recent female singer/songwriters. Indeed, in building upon the second wave of feminism, and the prominent popular female musicians of that time, many contemporary singer/songwriters create and perform their music and lyrics from a feminist point of view. Their work is largely conscientious of the need to place examinations of women in music (under the umbrella of popular culture) as separate from the work of men within music due to the systematic oppression women face based on gender (McCarthy 2006; Gillis, Howie and Munford 2004; Heywood and Drake 1997; Koskoff 1987).
Joni Mitchell, Carole King and Carly Simon are often mentioned as three of the foremothers in the cultural feminist musician movement because of the revolutionary power of their music for young women growing up in the second wave of feminism. Weller (2008) writes, "Carole King’s, Joni Mitchell’s and Carly Simon’s song were born of and were narrating that transition-a course of self-discovery, change and unhappy confrontation with the limits of change, which they and their female listeners, had been riding" (2008:26).

Mitchell is the most referenced of these three because she, "[d]emonstrated that she was capable of earning a living through selling her creativity" (Whiteley 2000:1). As Whiteley argues, current generations of women have grown up with female artists like Joni Mitchell, whose work has planted seeds in their minds as to what music can be. Mitchell is perhaps singled out the most because her style of writing combined the poetic with the confessional (O’Brien 2002). This combination allowed Mitchell to center presentations of her own life experiences within her music. Women, more so than men, respond to this dynamic within music (McCarthy 2006; Bessett 2006). This leads to a possible conclusion that women’s relationships with music comes from a more personal level (McCarthy 2006; Bessett 2006; Vannini 2004).

Further, Mitchell’s style of music and songwriting challenged racial as well as gender boundaries. By infusing jazz into her music in the 1970s, Mitchell was often challenged by male musicians of color on her ability to properly construct jazz music (O’Brien 2002). Mitchell asserted that her creativity was without boundaries. Some assert that her exploration of jazz music did alienate some of her core fans (O’Brien 2002). Yet Weller (2008) argues that because Mitchell spent most of her time composing
and writing music in Detroit during the civil rights movements of the 1960’s she could not help but be influenced by the jazz and R&B music coming out of the city. It was because of Mitchell’s willingness to take in various sounds and assertive musical composition that she remained a groundbreaking artist who infused multiple music styles.

Mitchell’s position as a female singer/songwriter also crossed into the business of her private life. For example, *Rolling Stone* magazine published a chart of Mitchell’s relationships with men, branding her “Old Lady of the Year”. In response, Mitchell refused interviews with the magazine for eight years (O’Brien 2002). From her perspective, *Rolling Stone* was portraying her as a victimizer of men vis-à-vis her relationships, something she asserted would not happen to a male musician. Further, Mitchell’s relationship with *Rolling Stone* and MTV has historically been contentious, as she takes issue with the way each choose to present young women through sex and calculated musical compositions (O’Brien 2002). Mitchell’s ability to craft songs and cross racial boundaries with her music as well as to navigate terrain which is well traversed by men, by standing up to the patriarchal systems in place in music, are among the reasons why she is considered a main influence on third wave cultural feminists.

*Scholarly Work on Amos*

Amos herself has acknowledged that the work of women like Joni Mitchell facilitated the efforts of new generations of women musicians. For this reason Amos’ music has often been described as a juxtaposition of Joni Mitchell and Kate Bush. Bush, who is primarily known for her high pitched voice and unique songwriting, created songs around the characters of novels such as *Wuthering Heights* (O’Brien 2002). Indeed, in a
nod to their similarities, Amos has covered Bush’s song “Running Up that Hill” (*Hounds of Love* 1985). On recognizing the influence of Mitchell and Bush, Amos has stated,

Some have paved ways, and women before me have taken their machete into the jungle, parts of the jungle that are not so traversed, like Kate Bush and Joni Mitchell. Other offshoots, Alanis [Morissette] and Fiona [Apple] make their own. You honor the women before you and after you. There isn’t a copy write on this story (O’Brien 2002:492-93).

In third wave feminism, the work of Tori Amos has been examined, mainly, in one of two areas. The first is more introspective, defining her work as providing

“[i]nsights into the relationship between subjective experience and the meaning of women’s lived reality” (Whiteley 2000:196). Amos’ approach to writing and performing music comes from her experiences as a minister’s daughter. She is cautionary about religion, expressive about sexuality and passionate about applying her own voice to contemporary music (Reynolds and Press 1995), while being openly feminist in her songwriting and performing (Amos and Powers 2005). As Amos herself has commented,

These songs are not about make-ups and break-ups… They’re about the things that go on in a woman’s heart - the things that are expressed and the things that have to remain hidden. They’re about the breaking down of the patriarchy within relationships and the idea of women claiming their own power (Reynolds and Press 1995:267).

Amos is also aware of the mixture of the private and public self (Kotarba and Vannini 2008), between which women are often asked to choose (the common expectation being to the private self). She is concerned with the necessity of stripping away the more patriarchal ‘public’ masks in lieu of becoming “[a] few layers closer to what each of us considered to be truer to her real, private self” (Amos and Powers 2005:299). It is here that Amos’ music transcends traditional perceptions of pop music, focusing instead on an exploration of the patriarchal systems. As such, Amos’ work has
been identified as a place where dominant religious and gender discourses are called into question (O’Brien 2002; Burns and Lafrance 2001; Whiteley 2000).

The second area of scholarly work examines Amos’ music through her musical composition, lyric and vocal delivery (Burns and Lafrance 2001; Whiteley 2000; Reynolds and Press 1995). Deconstructing her lyrics as a way of decoding the vocal and lyrical content of a song has resulted in the recognition that Amos’ lyrics are “[a] feminist form of resistance in the domain of popular music” (Burns and Lafrance 2001:65). As an example, Amos has questioned the Christian church’s treatment of women in a song called “Crucify”:

I’ve been looking for a savior in these dirty streets
Looking for a savior beneath these dirty sheets
I’ve been raising up my hands, drive another nail in
Got enough guilt to start my own religion (“Crucify”, Little Earthquakes 1991).

“Crucify” is one of the most commonly deconstructed songs of Amos’ work. Burns and Lafrance note that the narratives of the song “[y]ield a nuanced illustration of what one woman understands to be a most oppressive facet of her social existence” (2001:72). Further, with a song like “Hey Jupiter”, Amos has been credited with exploring the ambiguity of gendered identity and sexuality (O’Brien 2002; Whiteley 2000), “Hey Jupiter. Nothing’s been the same so are you gay? Are you blue? Thought we both could use a friend to run to.” (“Hey Jupiter”, Boys for Pele 1996). This song, in particular, has been noted as being “...about the emotions surrounding relationships and this, together with the thoughtful sparseness surrounding of her arrangements and her powerful vocal lines, remains a defining characteristic of Tori Amos’ musical output” (Whiteley 2000:207). While previous scholarly work has demonstrated Amos’ ability to
connect her music to the listener, there has not been a study which focuses on the impact of her music on her fans in general and female fans in particular. Further, the work I have previously mentioned are based more in the interpretation and theoretical aspects of Amos’ work. There has not been a study which examines her music or her fans with a sociological eye focused on the connection between her music and society. These are contributions I intend to make with this study.

**Emotions and Gender**

In this section I transition from the literature surrounding music and gender into literature which focuses on emotions and healing. This literature is necessary to help me answer my research questions which focus on Amos’ fans emotional response to her music. In order to address this, it is necessary to discuss the sociological approach to emotions and incorporate connections between symbolic interactionism and sociological studies of gender and music. Exploring how gender and music are related to healing through holistic practices presents the potential to engage in self-healing.

**Sociology of Emotions and Gender**

An emotion is generally defined as a cognitive flair up of feeling which is often accompanied by physical characteristics, such as a rapid heartbeat, facial features or body postures (DeNora 2003). However, to define emotion in this way does not necessarily mean that a feeling is labeled. Rather, a feeling can be classified based on variations of how a person is defining what they feel (Clore and Ortony 1988). Thamm (2006) argues that the strategy of classifying emotions can be divided into three stages which people generally go through when they begin to feel an emotion. The first stage involves
formally constructing categories without considering the effect of the emotion. The second stage involves labeling the emotion categories from stage one. The third stage involves the formal mapping of categories.

Even with these categories as a guide, the sociology of emotions is a subfield of sociology which has only fully been explored over the last thirty years, making it relatively young for the discipline (Turner 2009). Perhaps one of the most cited people in the field of sociology of emotions is Jonathan Turner. Turner argues that sociologists should recognize the biological foundation of emotions. He writes, “It is clear that biology is an essential factor in emotions; just how much and what kind is not so easy to say…” (2000:80). Considering emotions neurologically, Turner asserts that “The brain provides templates for ordering and organizing the presentation and interpretation of emotional cues, both conscious and unconscious, that humans use to attune their response to each other” (2000:81). Turner does say that “[s]ociologists study how humans construct culture and social systems… Yet some go even further and argue that the biological underpinnings of emotions are so diffuse and vague that all emotions are socially constructed” (2009:341). Thus Turner notes that understanding human emotions is linked to their social construction.

This connects to Hochschild’s (1979) assertion that there are two accounts of emotions, the “organismic” and “interactive” account. The organismic account focuses on relationships between emotions and biology while the interactive account focuses on the socialization of emotions. This helps define Turner’s assertion that, when studying emotions, it is hasty to assume that emotions are only socially constructed. Yet, as Hochschild (1979) posits, social factors are often ignored and must be considered when
understanding how emotions are suppressed or evoked. While presenting this discussion of Turner's connection between biological and social construction of emotions is key to discussing sociological approaches to emotions. Turner’s intent was to attempt to lay a foundation for the study of emotions through a multi-dimensional analysis of the origins of emotions. However, in this project I focused on the social construction of emotions, particularly with regard to soliciting emotions through music.

Utilizing symbolic interaction to examine how emotions are socially constructed is based in the idea that emotions have meaning when they are designated labels by culture (Turner 2009). Historically symbolic interaction has been attributed to the work of George Herbert Mead (1934), utilizing his approach to pragmatism and theories surrounding the relationships people build with symbols. Symbolic interaction is also linked to the work of Charles Cooley (1902) whose theory of the “looking glass self” served as a foundation for symbolic interactionist theories as it attempted to explore how our actions are influenced by the actions of people around us.

These approaches have been further explored with symbolic interactionists like Harold Blumer (1969) (a student of Mead's) who, utilizing symbolic interactionist perspectives, asserted that people act toward things based on the meaning they ascribe to them. Blumer (1969) offered three ways to study social reality:

1. Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings they ascribe to those things;
2. The meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with others and the society;
3. These meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he/she encounters (1969:2).
Blumer’s work shows that the purpose of symbolic interaction is to “highlight individual accountability and agency and addresses structural, cultural, and material conditions as people experience and reproduce them in their day-to-day lives” (Fields et al. 2006:157). Thus, Blumer’s work frames a sociological approach to emotions by asserting that individuals assign meaning to objects based on the meaning they have been exposed to within their cultural experiences. Connecting symbolic interaction to sociology of emotions, especially for a study which focuses on music and emotions, helps to guide discussions on how human’s posses the ability to attach emotions to things like song lyrics and albums. Further, using symbolic interaction in a study of gender and emotions helps to present the meaning behind emotions which can be considered gendered. For example, at weddings it is expected that women will show their emotion for the bride by crying. If a woman does not cry or if happiness is not expressed then the woman may be looked down upon. Turner (2009) does acknowledge that there is the potential for some emotions to be universal, but he emphasizes that culture dictates the emotions people should feel in certain situations.

Understanding how a person defines and identifies an emotion is thus central to understanding how symbolic interactionists view emotions as an innate response to external stimuli (Fields, Copp and Kleinman 2006). Fields et al. (2006) write, “In studies of emotions, interactionists explore how individuals use their capacity for agency to bring their feelings in line with what is expected of them... People can work out their feelings, trying to create within themselves the proper response to a situation” (2006:156). Fields et al. (2006) argue that symbolic interactionists view emotions as not merely a natural impulse. Rather, emotions are shaped by culture and our capacity to react to our feelings.
They contest that people develop a sense of self as they recognize "[t]hat others in their society, culture, and subculture have particular expectations for and values attached to their actions, desires, and identities" (2006:157).

When considering links between gender and emotions perhaps the most cited work is Hochschild. In two of her works, The Managed Heart (1983) and The Second Shift (1989) Hochschild explored the gendered aspects and expectations of emotions. Through a study of airline stewardesses Hochschild explores “emotional labor”.

Hochschild (1983) writes, “I use the term emotional labor to mean the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display” (1983:7). In order to produce the proper emotion in varying situation Hochschild also asserts that “[a] set of shared, albeit often latent, rules (1983:268) are used to help connect the emotion with the situation. In The Managed Heart Hochschild describes an interaction between a stewardess and a male passenger. The passenger sees the stewardess pushing a heavy drink cart and says a variation of “Give me a smile”. This exchange presents a gendered expectation for women to be pleasant and happy even in difficult situations. Hochschild argues that women are thought to be more emotional than men, yet evidence points to women doing more “emotion managing” than men.

Hochschild’s work is influenced by Erving Goffman’s (1954) theory of dramaturgy is focused on how a person presents his or herself to person based on cultural values, norms, and expectations. Because dramaturgy stems from symbolic interaction, linking Hochschild to symbolic interaction is not difficult. As Hochschild (1979) notes, “Goffman’s approach might simply be extended and deepened by showing that people not only try to conform outwardly, but do so inwardly as well” (1979: 556). This is
evident in *The Managed Heart* as Hochschild (1983) notes that women’s emotions and feelings are expected to be adaptive. As she writes, “In being adaptive, cooperative, and helpful, the woman is on a private stage behind the public stage…” (1983:168).

This is further reflected in *The Second Shift*. Here Hochschild studies links between men and women’s emotions upon entering a marriage. Hochschild identified that men and women enter a marriage with either traditional, egalitarian or transitional (supporting a mixture of traditional and egalitarian) approaches to the household (Hochschild 1989). These “feeling” rules, she found, supported the gendered expectation of each spouse. For example, a traditional wife felt that she could not get angry if her husband did not do housework because she feels it was her role (Hochschild 1989). Further, Hochschild noted “gender strategies” where she determined that men and women feel guilty when their expected roles within the family are not achieved. For example, if the wife is working outside of the home she might express a feeling of guilt for not spending enough time with the children (Turner and Sets 2005; Hochschild 1989). This runs concurrent with sociological approaches to emotions which assume that individuals acquire the emotions of their culture through socialization, in this case gender socialization (Turner and Sets 2005).

Combining symbolic interaction with the influence of dramaturgy is evident in the scenario of the husband and wife discussing housework, the wife has attached meaning to the housework based on the meaning it represents for her. To have a clean house is to achieve a status relevant to defining a good wife. While the husband and wife struggle over these roles, Hochschild is presenting the symbolic relationship the wife has with regard to her position in the family.
A further example of gender and emotion can be found in the expression of sympathy and anger. In general, with the display of sympathy, women are expected to display sympathy more than men (Turner and Stets 2005). This has roots in Butler’s (1990) theories of sex and gender socialization. As Butler writes “It becomes impossible to separate out ‘gender’ from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariable produced and maintained” (1990:3). Further, Lupton’s (1998) assertion that “[i]n recent times it has been seen as typical and more appropriate for women rather than men to express such emotions as grief, fear, sentimentality, vulnerability, envy and jealousy” (1998:106).

The socialization of gender is also present when considering anger. In general, women report that they are not allowed to express their anger because the expression of anger means that they are malevolent or out of control (Turner and Stets 2005; Lupton 1998; Crawford, Kippax, Onyx, Gault and Benton 1992; Brownmiller 1984). Further, women who engage their anger through acts like murder appear more out of control and evil than men who commit similar acts (Lupton 1998). Yet, women who express anger in the face of injustice (e.g. being raped or abused, seeing harm done to a child, experiencing discrimination at a job) are often socially justified in their emotion (Lupton 1998).

While the above studies regarding the expression of sympathy and anger certainly seem to contribute to the picture of the emotional woman, Aldrich and Tenenbaum (2006) argue that such explanations are too simple and thus should be challenged. Aldrich and Tenenbaum assert that portrayals of women as the more emotional gender is a stereotype. Through studying the impact of language on children they found that
daughters used more emotional words than sons in conversations with their parents. However, they also found that daughters were more willing to use words to express frustration with their parents than sons and that there were no gender differences between the ways in which daughters and sons expressed anger. Aldrich and Tenenbaum further asserted that sons were more likely to express sadness with their fathers than with their mothers. This is significant, they argue, because a gendered stereotype of emotions is that mothers often take on the role of nurturing parent, as compared to fathers. Therefore it can be assumed that sons will be more open with their mothers than their fathers. Thus, Aldrich and Tenenbaum’s findings challenge the notion that women are discouraged from expressing anger in situations where they are not directly being affected and that men cannot express their emotions with other men.

*Gender, Emotions and Music*

One area within sociology of emotions which has not been explored is the connection between gender, emotions and music. What has been done on this area generally focuses on symbolic interactionist theory. As Gilmore notes, “The development of an interactionist approach to social structure has greatly benefited from research in the arts…” (1988:148). Vannini and Waskul (2006) relate Blumer’s theory to music, arguing that at its core, symbolic interaction is musical. “Symbolic interaction is harmonic in the sense that relationships with others yield more than instrumental value. Interactions with others are aesthetic, and we routinely gauge relations on the basis of such gratifications” (1969:6). Beauty (the aesthetic) can be found in the rhythm, melody and harmony which comprise music and thus compose the embodied experience of the
listener. Within music, aesthetic and emotions, people can cultivate an experience based around the meaning the music has for them (Bessett 2006).

One of the most cited scholars in the field of sociology of music in general, and popular music in particular, is Simon Frith. Frith asserts, "The question we should be asking is not what does popular music reveal about 'the people' but how does it construct them" (1987:137). Frith suggests that within the sociology of music there must be an intention by the researcher to examine music aesthetic from this alternative point of view. To understand how music constructs people, Frith provides four suggestions. First, popular music creates a certain form of self identity for the listener. It allows us to feel like we have a particular place in society. Second, music can be used as a way to manage our relationship between our public and private lives. This is especially relevant when considering the dynamic of feminist music and women in music because, traditionally, the "public" realm has been reserved for men in terms of who is most allowed and encouraged to participate in the work force, make political decisions, etcetera. In contrast, the "private" realm has been regulated more exclusively to women, who have been more encouraged and expected to stay at home with children, perform house work, etcetera (Kotarba and Vannini 2008). Frith’s third use of popular music is to assist us in organizing our sense of time (i.e., where you were when you first heard your favorite artist sing). Finally, Frith’s fourth use of popular music suggests that popular music is something to be possessed. Music fans take ownership of their favorite performer (Amos’ fans included) and they see the music as something that is intrinsically important to them (Frith 1987).

*Author emphasis.*
Frith's discussion of the aesthetic qualities of popular music has been used in the work of many scholars who link the sociology of music to symbolic interaction (Bennett 2008; Kotarba and Vannini 2008; Bessett 2006; Vannini and Waskul 2006). There is an “[i]mportant role of aesthetics in the constitution of meaning, interaction, self and society” (Frith 1987:5). For example, DeNora’s (2003) research focused on the role of music in the day-to-day lives of American and British women. She found that the women often selected music which reflected their mood, perhaps to elevate a state of being or to intensify an emotion in order to help move beyond it (DeNora 2003). In short, DeNora found that the music provided the medium from which the women expressed their emotions, as one woman described with regard to musical theatre:

It depends on what mood you are in because if I feel like I want to do something jolly then I may listen to something jolly like Annie or Kiss Me Kate or something like that or Oklahoma say. But then if I am feeling a bit more...If I am sort of feeling a bit miserable I might listen to Les Miserables and then I quite often listen to Jesus Christ Superstar because that is very emotional (2003:93).

In other words, the women in DeNora’s study articulated the relationship between emotional states and the music they selected, which furthers the theories presented by symbolic interactionists who claim that people create meaning around objects.

When gender is tossed into the mix of emotions, music and aesthetic, some scholars attest that the formulation of the aesthetic changes (Macarther 2002). Macarther asserts that the second wave of feminism influenced this change, arguing that the “Personal is Political” mantra made by second wave feminists served as a foundation for feminist approaches to composing and writing music. She finds that feminist music often serves as a way to connect a relationship between the musician, her body and her voice (Macarther 2002). Because composing music is a behavior, it is fair to assume that there
are differences in the ways which men and women create and digest music. Thus, the emotional aesthetic developed by the individual’s choice in music impacts more than just the individual’s emotional state. It can affect her politics and interpretation of the social stratification of society (Bessett 2006; Fields et al 2006; Macarther 2002).

**Musical Healing**

One of the potential outcomes of this study is to show a relationship between feminist music and women who make emotional connections to it, which may potentially lead to a gendered analysis of how music is facilitative of healing. This is an area which is underdeveloped in sociological literature. Current work has centered on very specific, and often publicly traumatic, events (e.g., 9/11 and Bruce Springsteen’s album *The Rising* or school violence and The Boomtown Rats’ song “I don’t like Mondays”, which Amos covered in 2001). In general, when healing is mentioned in American popular music it has often been used to show solidarity, to rally around a cause, or to show reactions to events in American history (Gengaro 2009). The purpose of these songs is to allow the listeners to engage their emotions, whether they involve mourning, happiness, political unrest, etcetera (Gengaro 2009; Bessett 2006). This is related to theories of symbolic interaction, as confirming an emotion through music directly connects the person to an object based on the value placed on it.

A common approach to music and healing has to do with healing in a medical sense. Specifically with regard to informing nurses on therapeutic practices, McCaffery (2008) found that people who listen to music while receiving medical treatment show positive progress toward healing. Positive effects of listening to music while partaking in physical therapy or medical treatment can include a reduced amount of stress, as it may
help people to relax while undergoing surgery (McCaffery 2008). McCaffery (2008) found that music being played immediately following these procedures immediately lowered the anxiety level of the patients. This is similar to the work of Loue, Mendez and Sajatovic (2008), who analyzed the effects of HIV positive women listening to music while undergoing treatment for depression, schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. Loue et al. (2008) found that the women expressed elevated mood levels and improved overall well-being. According to the authors, listening to music increased each woman’s ability to communicate her emotions depending on the genre of music. For example, because most of the women in the study identified as Latina, they had grown up around salsa music. Many of the women expressed that listening to salsa music represented a feeling of survival, specifically survival from abuse, which many of them admitted to having experienced. In this way then, Loue et al.’s study serves as a framework for examining social relationships between music and gender.

To consider social relationships between music and healing, I turn to literature found in holistic approaches to healing. As I have stated above, most of the existing literature on holistic health is found in medical and nursing research. Sociological approaches to holistic healing often relate back to the societal structure of illness. For example, with regard to cancer treatment, Broom writes “Previously, sociologists have pointed towards the existence of highly restrictive discourses regarding cancer, including war and sport metaphors espousing the ‘fighting of cancer’ and ‘toughing it out’… What then of the increased prominence of complimentary and alternative medicine (CAM)-related discourses of self-help, self-responsibility and self-healing in cancer care?” (2009:75). In doing research with cancer patients, Broom found that patients participated
in holistic approaches to healing (generally referred to as “self-healing” in his article) as a way to re-gain control of their bodies, retain a sense of power over their disease and treatments and to find an inner peace and relaxation.

Holistic approaches to healing define “healing” as something that happens when the mind, body, self, and spirit are working together, which in turn creates a more balanced individual (Koslander, Barbosa da Silva and Roxburg 2009). Holistic approaches to healing are generally related to connections between the physical, emotional and spiritual. As Koslander et al. write, “A holistic approach to health care considers patient’s knowledge and resources as valuable and vital for good care” (2009:34). Robinson and Carrier define holistic health as “[a] philosophy and a set of beliefs (a paradigm) about how people get sick and what they need in order to heal... For medicine this means approaches that don’t seek to just medicate suffering and disease away but to explore how these physical manifestations are connected to underlying social, emotional and spiritual pain” (2004:69). One area which Robinson and Carrier assert as essential for mind and body health is to have social and spiritual influences. They argue that having close relationships with other people is essential when determining how healthy a person is. This can relate to fan studies and studies of women who use music as a healing force. By forming a community around a feminist performer, many women find that their lives are reflected in the performer’s music as well as in the lives of the women they meet in the fan community.

Approaching music, and the possible therapeutic benefits thereof, from a holistic point of view illustrates how certain people need the combination of mind, body and spirit working together in order to overcome things like mental illness, trauma or changes
in day to day life (Koslander et al. 2009). Robinson and Carrier address the importance of a holistic approach to trauma through a field of holistic study called body-based psychotherapy. In body-based psychotherapy a person would explore how trauma has predisposed them “[t]o specific types of acute and chronic illness” (2004:76). They argue that it is the combination of the spiritual and the physical which causes illness in a person who has experienced something like trauma and that the person can only be healed when they recognize both aspects. Further, expressing emotion such as crying is often something that is suppressed with men and encouraged with women. Robinson and Carrier argue that holistic approaches to healing must combine the emotion (sadness) with an expression of the emotion (crying).

Linking holistic approaches to healing to Blumer’s theories of symbolic interaction and sociology of emotions can best be exemplified through music therapy. The foundation of music therapy is centered on helping people use an ever-present aspect of life to heal from trauma, debilitation, life changes, illness etcetera (Bruscia 1998; Tusler 1991). To be clearer, some of the basic characterizations of music therapy find that “[m]usic is a temporal art, its sounds are organized cumulatively through time in rhythm, it stimulates the intellect and emotions and it may or may not have meaning” (Tusler 1991:11-12). These components, when coupled with the understanding of holistic approaches to healing, provide an example of how individuals may benefit from enhanced health via music and the connection it can provide between mind, body and spirit (Lapatra 1978). Combining both may very well empower individuals to place healing in their own hands.
This assertion does contradict traditional and medical ideas of healing which state that a medical professional must be present in order for treatment to occur (Bohart and Tallman 1999). Yet, one of the goals of holistic healing is to consider “alternative” ways in which to treat our mental and physical states (McNiff 1992; Lapatra 1979). Thus, a potential juxtaposition of music therapy and holistic healing becomes central to the healing process. This has been acknowledged in literature discussing music therapy. For example, as Bohard and Tallman argue, “The client is the intelligence that ultimately makes the therapy process run. In some sense, clients are themselves the therapists. Clients can be creative, going well beyond the input that therapists give them to develop what they need” (1999:15). Further, music therapists recognize that people often do most of their healing at home and, as Bohard and Tallman point out, many scholars have found that people who engage in “self help” through “self help books” at home have had as effective of results as people who engage in therapy with a clinical professional.

In sociology this combination of healing, therapy and the self is referred to as “emotional recall” (Ellis 1991). The purpose of emotional recall is to deconstruct experiences using introspection, or a dialogue with the self through narratives (Ellis 1991). Introspection and dialogue with the self is perhaps unique to music because “[m]usic is not merely a text or thing: it is performed and heard” (Leavy 2009:114). An example of emotional recall can be found through the singing of “torch songs”. Holman Jones (2007) describes “torch songs” as songs performed by popular female performers which adhere to a traditional pop music formula and which profess an unrequited love. She asserts that one of the reasons torch songs are innately popular among female fans is due to the song leading the audience in common emotions. Emotional recall is present in
these moments as women use the narrative of the song as a catalyst for introspection (Leavy 2009; Holman Jones 2007). Ellis further asserts that when emotional recall is used it is to understand an experience we have lived through. In performing emotional recall we often learn more about ourselves than we originally intended (Ellis 2003).

Further, emotional recall, for many women (e.g. Leavy 2009; hooks 1999) often takes the form of simple journal writing, an act many women carry out without guidance by a therapist (Wright 2009). Wright details emotional recall and journal writing as a way for patients to deviate from traditional therapeutic formats and re-claim their own power. She writes,

Perhaps this is partly why women have long been the keepers of diaries, journals, and other forms of autobiographical writing, to become their own therapists... The power dynamics between ‘client’ and ‘therapist’ are complex. An inner dialogue avoids the vulnerability of disclosure, both literally and more metaphorically (2009:636).

Using music as a catalyst for emotional recall and then documenting those emotions in a journal is one way women heal themselves.

Another example of healing the self can be found in Bessett’s (2006) work on the social impact of music, which was grounded in understanding relationships between emotions, music and listening practices as they relate to gender. She asserted that men and women have distinctly different listening habits when it comes to music. Essentially, listening practices relate aesthetically to emotions, as people often interpret music through an elevated state of consciousness, experiencing their favorite songs on cognitive, social and spiritual levels. Drawing from symbolic interactionism, Bessett writes, “People can ‘cultivate’ experiences with objects toward an intended outcome and, in the process, cultivate themselves” (2006:50). By asking people what they thought
about during the practice of listening, Bessett found that women who listened to female musicians (specifically music classified as “angry female performers”) expected the music to be about the specific experiences of women. When the women discovered that the music was gendered and that they could relate to it, they expressed a feeling of relief. Bessett quotes a participant named “Tulah” as saying:

When [Ani DiFranco] sings about her conflicting feelings in “Gravel,” I know what that feels like. And maybe I’m feeling the same way. I forgive me and I forgive her. I don’t feel OKAY, but I don’t feel like a freak. I’m not the only one. It’s like talking to a girlfriend (2006:55).

In describing her findings, Bessett explained,

They saw the music of ‘good’ angry female performers, which often included references to previously ‘taboo’ topics such as abortion, rape and daily experiences of gender inequality, as capturing something of their own experience as women, deepening their understanding not only of themselves but of other women as well (2006:55).

In short, women expected the music to forge a deep emotional connection between performer and listener. Men, on the other hand, found that the music performed by the same women artists required them to forge a split between performer and music. In other words, the performer’s gender did not play a role for men in this particular genre of music. In fact, the gender of the performer came secondary to the story or mood the music created. This is not to say that there is not music which men will respond to more than women. Rather, Bessett found that men and women potentially have a more positive response to music performed by a person of the same gender.

While studies like Loue et al.’s (2008) work with HIV positive Latina women and Bessett (2006) serve as frameworks for understanding links between gender, emotions and music, they also illustrate that a feminist approach to understanding how female fans
conceptualize their relationship with music and healing. This is further complicated by the lack of literature which focuses on understanding how women use music to heal and how music can be used to heal the self. This is what is explored in this study.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I explored the construction of sociology of music through an examination of sociological approaches to culture and discussed how sociology and music culture are fused together through theories of symbolic interaction. I have related music to gender by framing my discussion through the lens of cultural feminism and the ways in which women are presented and treated within popular music. I discussed the ways in which emotions are categorized and conceptualized within sociological literature and related sociology of emotions to gendered expressions of emotions and connected these literatures to the work of Blumer (1969). I have discussed the ways in which music is discussed in emotions literature as well as provided examples of how music has been connected to healing from illness. I also explored the ways in which people describe their listening practices and the potential these practices have for healing the self. Exploring these literatures was necessary as they serve as a foundation for my study of women who are fans of Amos and the emotional/healing connections they make with her music. In the next chapter I explain how I developed the methodology and methods for data collection and analysis.
CHAPTER III- METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

I begin this chapter with a discussion of phenomenological approaches to research and transition into a discussion of the rationale for using qualitative methods for this study as well as describe feminist standpoint theory as it relates to research. From here I outline my research procedures, including the ways in which I conducted interviews and observed women at Amos’ concerts, as well as how I performed a content analysis of Amos’ album themes and performance style. I will discuss how I sampled and recruited participants, how I gained consent, what questions I asked and where and how I observed people at concert venues. I end by explaining how I performed quality assessment in this through a discussion of reliability, validity and generalizability.

I think it is important to note that this study was informed by feminist and phenomenological approaches to research (e.g. Creswell 2007; Harding 2004; Hartsock 2004; McCorkel and Meyers 2003; Naples 2003; Stanley and Wise 1993; Heidegger 1998; Harding 1987; Berger and Luckman 1967). Such approaches allowed me to most aptly examine my data using the symbolic interactionist perspective that humans’ actions toward things are based on the meaning they have given them (Blumer 1969).

Phenomenology

Phenomenological approaches to research “[d]escribes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon” (Creswell 2007:57). Phenomenology is based in the notion that reality in society is socially constructed and that individuals’ knowledge of what society is has become embedded in a social system (Berger and Luckman 1966). Thus, to consider research phenomenologically is to
consider how every day life should be studied (Luckman 1973). Luckman writes that the
science of everyday life considers aspects of human existence which “[a]re connected and
bound” (1973:215) to each other and to outside worlds. In this project I apply the
phenomenological approach by considering what all the participants had in common as
they experienced Amos’ music to paint a picture of their fandom by describing what they
experienced and how they experienced it (Creswell 2007; Moustakas 1994; Heidegger
1988; Luckman 1973). Thus, I explored the relationship these women have with Amos’

music.

Considering the position of the researcher is also an aspect of approaching
research phenomenologically. A phenomenological approach to research asks that the
researcher take their interpretation of the research and place it in one section of the
research report. This process, called bracketing, attempts to keep the researcher from
infusing the research with her or his own experience (Creswell 2007; Husserl 1913). The
concept of bracketing, introduced by Husserl, asks that the researcher suspend her
judgment regarding a phenomenon and attempt to experience it as a multi-layered event
(Husserl 1913). For my purposes, bracketing was used as a way for me to place my
experience or reaction to themes or instances that came up in an interview or observation
as a separate area of my findings. This further allowed that the voices of each participant
are privileged in my research. (My use of bracketing is found in Appendix B
“Bracketing”).

Rationale for Qualitative Field Research

Because this research was conducted qualitatively it is necessary for me to define
why I selected qualitative methods and methodology for collecting data. According to
Denzin (2008) “Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world” (2008:4). Denzin asserts that the purpose of qualitative research is to collect a variety of experiences that describe moments in the lives of individuals. Therefore qualitative methods can take the form of interviews, used to gather first hand accounts of a participant’s life, or performing participant observation which can allow a researcher to experience a phenomenon first hand. I selected qualitative methods for this project because I was interested in the potential ontological questions which can be asked of participants. I wanted to know how women who listen to Amos’ music were using the music as an emotional or healing catalyst and if they were connecting to Amos’ feminist identity.

Approaching this study from a qualitative perspective also meant that there was a more in depth understanding of the phenomenon I explored (Kvale 1996). While both quantitative and qualitative researchers are concerned with the individual’s point of view, qualitative researchers feel that the best way to explore this point of view is through interviewing and observing participants (Denzin 2008). Further, qualitative researchers differ from quantitative researchers in several distinct ways. For example, quantitative researchers “[e]mphasize the causal relationships between variables, not process” (Denzin 2008:14). In contrast qualitative researchers “[s]tress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning” (Denzin 2008:14). This perhaps poses a greater challenge for qualitative researchers than quantitative researchers because qualitative research is done against the backdrop of everyday life. Qualitative researchers
are more likely to come up against the challenges of “[t]he everyday social world” (Denzin 2008:16). Denzin argues that this is a challenge rarely faced by quantitative researchers as their data collection is most often done by selecting a large random sample of participants based on probability. This does not mean that one approach is better than the other. Rather it means that performing research qualitatively is not the same as performing research quantitatively and vise versa. Data collection done qualitatively provides in-depth and rich descriptions of the social world, something that is not accomplished using quantitative methods. For this study I wanted to present an in-depth description of Amos’ fans and the emotional support and healing they have experienced as well as define this relationship with Amos as a feminist artist. I found qualitative data collection to be the best methodology to achieve this.

**Feminist Standpoint Theory**

One of the theoretical approaches feminist researchers take as a tool to combat patriarchal foundations and critiques of feminist methods in research is to utilize feminist standpoint theory. Feminist standpoint theory emphasizes the importance of all women’s voices being brought to the forefront because women’s lives and experiences have (traditionally) been left out of research (Harding 2004; Hartsock 2004; Naples 2003). In other words, feminist standpoint theory re-frames the way research is designed because it places the lives, words and stories of women at the foreground of the research (Harding 2004; Hartsock 2004. In this project I have presented the women I interviewed as the expert in their own life, something that feminist standpoint theory maintains as foundational to feminist based research. As Harding (2004) notes, feminist standpoint
theory was developed as both a theoretical and methodological guide for feminist research and was distinct because it mixed a feminist agenda with theories of epistemology, two areas which scholar’s were expected to keep separate. Feminist standpoint theory was also developed because of Smith’s (2004) concentration on women’s positions in sociology. As Smith (2004) writes, “Thinking more boldly or perhaps just thinking the whole thing through a little further might bring us to ask first how a sociology might look if it began from the point of view of women’s traditional place in it and what happens to a sociology which attempts to deal seriously with that” (2004:21). In this vein, I have also included Harding’s concept of strong objectivity which presents an increased motivation by the researcher to become knowledgeable of power structures within her (or his) research.

Essentially, when considering research from a feminist standpoint, strong objectivity “[r]equires that the subject of knowledge be placed in the same critical causal plane as the objects of knowledge” (Harding 2004:136). Therefore, strong objectivity runs against traditional sociological notions of what it means to be objective, traditionally requiring that the researcher remain disengaged from her/his research in order to achieve an unbiased result (Stanley and Wise 1993; Harding 1987). As a counter to this, strong objectivity asserts that women who participate in studies are not “subjects” or “respondents” (connoting passive, recipient type roles within a study), rather they are viewed as partners in the process of understanding social phenomena (Stanley and Wise 1993; Harding 1987).

One of the ways in which I achieved strong objectivity is through considering my position as a researcher. Acknowledging my position in research means I must provide a
reflexive examination of my own relationship with those whom I study by privileging the voices of my participants within my findings (McCorkel and Meyers 2003; Finlay 2002). As part of this process I have written a “Researcher Position Statement” that is found in Appendix A. I also compiled written field notes during and after the interviews regarding what my thoughts and feelings were during the session. Here I recorded other relevant information such as any emotional reactions which would not show up on the tape during in-person interviews, as well as changes in vocal quality which indicated that a participant may be “choking up”, laughing or other vocal acknowledgement on her part that she is feeling emotional for phone interviews. Such practices required me to be self-aware (e.g., how my presence affected answers) as well as aware of the women’s reactions to my questions (McCorkel and Meyers 2003; Fonow and Cook 1991). The result of this was that I was able to pay attention to the some of the intuitive aspects of gathering data, on behalf of those I interviewed as well as myself, which gave me the potential to have a more contextual understanding of the relationship fans of Amos have with her music (McCorkel and Meyers 2003; Fonow and Cook 1991).

Feminist Approaches to Interviewing and Observation

Because I approached the interviews and observation for this project from a feminist perspective, it is important that I address what a feminist approach to interviewing and observation is. Feminist researchers often approach interviews with an awareness of how power and authority might impact the interview (Hesse-Biber 2007). When taking a feminist approach to interviewing Oakley (2008) writes, “In most cases, the goal of finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the
relationship of interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical” (2008:222). Oakley states that a feminist approach to interviewing should begin with an understanding that the women being interviewed are not seen as simply data to be exploited. This idea was born from Oakley’s experience of doing feminist based research and finding that sociological approaches to data collection can be based in masculine paradigms. Oakley asserts that sociological research can be used to give women greater visibility and allow them to give their own accounts of their lives. Hesse-Biber agrees with this sentiment, writing “As a feminist interviewer, I am interested in getting at the subjugated knowledge of the diversity of women’s realities that often lie hidden and unarticulated” (2007:113). Further, Oakley asserts that feminist approaches to research allow women research participants the opportunity to ask questions of the researcher. Oakley argues that in feminist interviewing it becomes necessary to abandon “[t]he mythology of ‘hygienic’ research with its accompanying mystification of the researcher and the researched as objective instruments of data production” (2008:231).

Feminist approaches to observation can be particularly interesting when studying popular culture (Leavy 2007). As Leavy writes, “By investigating culture in general, and popular culture more specifically, dominant narratives, images, ideas, and stereotyped representations can be exposed and challenged” (2007:224). For a feminist ethnographer, a key element to approaching observation in popular culture is to consider whether she will be able to pay attention to issues of power and exploitation (Leavy 2007; Bach and Staller 2007). For example, when observing Amos’ fans during her concerts it was important for me to understand that I might have been viewed as an outsider based on my status as a person present at shows taking notes and observing women. Further, it was
important for me to consider that the women attending her shows did so because they wanted to feel empowered. Thus my presence, as an observer, may have felt distracting or suspicious to those attending shows. (It should be noted that I was never approached by any fan regarding what I was doing. However I do not think that my presence and note taking went unnoticed. See “Research Process” under the “Participant Observation” section below for more of a discussion of this dynamic).

In this section I have focused on the methodological and theoretical approaches I took to designing this study. In the following section I transition into discussing the methods I used while collecting and analyzing data.

**Research Design**

In this section I will detail how I interviewed and observed women who are Tori Amos fans. My sampling and recruitment methods were primarily done by snowball sampling and purposive sampling using online recruitment via the use of fan message boards and fan created websites. Interviews generally lasted between thirty minutes and an hour and a half and were done both in person and over the phone. Observation was completed at three of Amos’ concerts in the Midwest over the course of three days in August of 2009. Data was analyzed using an open coding process and major themes were identified through three rounds of coding.

**Interviews**

My first approach to data collection utilized semi-structured interviews (Fontana and Frey 2003). The purpose of conducting semi-structured interviews was to understand, rather than explain, those who have been impacted by Amos’ music (Fontana
and Frey 2003). Semi-structured interviews allowed me to have some questions prepared, but also provided me the freedom to chart the course of the interview based on how each person responded to my questions. With semi-structured interviews I was able to ask questions in the order which worked best for the interview as long as I covered all of the questions written in my interview script, as well as asked probing or follow-up questions specific to each interview (Hesse-Biber 2007; Hoffman 2007; Kvale 1996).

By using semi-structured interviews I was able to control the course of the interview while leaving space for spontaneity on the part of myself and the participant. Further, conducting a semi-structured interview meant that I could interject questions at points in the conversation which seemed natural rather than being concerned with sticking to a particular order in my interview script. This was particularly helpful when women would bring up topics outside of my prepared questions. For example, in one interview a woman mentioned that she had six Amos inspired tattoos which she had gotten over the course of thirteen years. The interview structure allowed me to ask questions about her motivation for the tattoos and their relationship with Amos’ music. Having the tattoos as a topic of conversation allowed this woman to feel like she could explain how Amos’ music relates to her personal healing through body art.

For the purpose of this study, interviews were conducted either in person or over the phone, according to the participants’ preferences and my available resources (e.g., local interviews were more likely to be conducted in person while long distance interviews were conducted by phone). Conducting interviews over the phone enabled me to expand my sample beyond west Michigan. Only 19% of the women I interviewed lived in Michigan and almost 70% of my sample came from states not located in what is
typically considered the Midwest. (Please see Appendix G for participant demographics). Moreover, contrary to the methodological notion that phone interviewing should be used as a last resort (e.g. Weiss 1995), the women interviewed in this way often expressed how comfortable it was to be in their homes talking with me. Indeed, conducting interviews over the phone seemed to provide the same results as those conducted in person (Holt 2010; Novick 2008; Crowley 2007; Sturges and Hanrahan 2004) and in some ways enhanced the interview experience.

My experience in doing this project was that phone interviews did add a level of comfort and convenience for the women. For example, several women asked that I call them while they were making their commute home from work and they mentioned how nice it was to unwind by talking about their favorite performer. I even conducted interviews with a couple of women while they were on their lunch breaks at work as well as with many women who needed to schedule the interview around their children’s nap time. Such flexibility related to Oakley (2008) and Hesse-Biber’s (2007) assertion that feminist approaches to interviewing ought to allow women to feel like they are part of the interviewing process, empowering them by structuring the conversation to meet their needs.

**Gaining Access and Recruitment**

My initial intention with this study was to conduct between twenty-five and thirty-five interviews. However, because the response from women interested in participating was so great, I applied and was granted permission by the Western Michigan University HSIRB to conduct up to forty-five interviews. I ended up conducting forty-two interviews, which lasted from thirty minutes to one and one half
hours with most lasting an hour. Criteria for participation was that interested persons be adult women who identify as fans of Tori Amos and her music. I specified adults so as to avoid parental consent issues and to maintain a lower overall ethical risk to the study. I examined only women because my study is based in feminist standpoint theory which suggests that women’s experiences be placed at the center of research, as well as focus on the ways in which women present their lives in their own words. Indeed, the voices of female fans of feminist performers have been neglected in literature surrounding sociology and popular music as well as literature exploring relationships between feminist performers and fans. Further, as discussed in the previous chapters, Amos’ music places the experiences of women at the core of its composition, which further justified my gendered focus.

Potential interview participants were recruited either in-person or via a publicly accessible website and fan discussion/message boards related to Amos’ music. In-person recruitment occurred with women I knew fit the inclusionary criteria because I had a previously established relationship with them. Of the forty-two women I interviewed I recruited only seven in person, four people who I have been friends with for a number of years and three people who I knew from various Amos’ associated events and concerts. When recruiting in person I sent an email to each woman and asked her if she would be willing to participate in my study. When she responded that she would participate I then her the approved HSIRB language and consent form. Once the form was signed we decided on a place to meet or a time to talk over the phone. With the women whom I was friends with, we met at either their house or a coffee shop. With women who I knew
from various Amos related activities, we talked over the phone. (I elaborate further on HSIRB language and consent later in this chapter as well as in Appendix E).

Online recruitment occurred primarily for the purposes of expanding the sample beyond southwestern Michigan and women I know. I focused on recruitment through a major Amos fan-created website as well as through two Amos related fan message boards. With website recruitment I emailed requests for participants to two of the major Amos fan-created websites, www.hereinmyhead.com and www.undented.com. I knew that both of these are known among fans as the websites which have up-to-the-minute Amos related news, either from fans, directly from Amos or from various media outlets. Part of this knowledge comes from my own status in the fan community for thirteen years as well as examining how often each are updated and maintained. (I have also listed these in Appendix D). I ended up having my recruitment message placed on www.hereinmyhead.com by the administrator. (Administrator contact information is generally found in sections of websites which allow people to email and request assistance with an Amos related project, such as research, requests for paraphernalia or just general information about Amos). I then asked the administrator to post my recruitment message. When I received an email from a potential participant I then responded using my recruitment script and attached a consent form for her to review, sign and return. Verbal and written recruitment scripts, including follow-up letters I sent once I was contacted about the study and letters sent once a participant agreed to be interviewed, can be found in the Appendix D.
With message board\textsuperscript{5} recruitment I recruited participants through using three message boards created and maintained by fans of Amos. (For a list of these message boards and the fan website please see Appendix C). I selected these three by visiting multiple Amos related message boards and determining which had the most members as well as the most recent date people had posted. With these three message boards it appeared that people were posting periodically throughout each day.

Because I am a member of these message boards I was able to send an e-mail to the moderators letting them know about my research and that I was interested in recruiting fans for my study and ask their permission to begin a thread with my recruitment message. Once I received approval from the moderator(s) I posted messages on the message boards explaining that I am a researcher and that I am present on the board. I then briefly explained my study and asked that any interested women send me a message via the message board personal message system. When I would receive a message on the system I would first answer any questions the individual had and then ask for an email address where I could send my consent form and provide further information on the study. (For a description of the script I used when I was contacted please see Appendix D). If any person needed further confirmation of my status at the university I provided them with the name of my dissertation chair, Dr. Angela Moe, as an official

\textsuperscript{5} Throughout this dissertation I will use “message board” and “forum” interchangeably. Both refer to the area of a website which allows fans of Amos to discuss her music, performances, etcetera. Deciding on labeling a website a “message board” or “forum” is generally left up to the creator of the website. A “fan site” refers to a fan created website which does not have Amos related message boards or forums. Rather a fan site contains updates on Amos related news, a guide to lyrics, pictures of Amos and at times mp3 or fan uploaded recordings of concerts.
reference. However, none of the women whom participated felt it necessary to contact Dr. Moe during my data collection.

**Sampling**

Sampling was handled in one of two ways. The first was through utilizing a snowball sample. The purpose of snowball sampling is to recruit participants by using referrals from one or two people who have already been interviewed and then gathering more participants from the participants who have been referred/participated (Newman 2003). I achieved this by noting times when women mentioned that they had a friend who might want to be interviewed. When this occurred I would send her my recruitment script either via email or postal mail, depending on what was easier for her, and asked that she contact her friend and pass it on.

A second way I sampled was by using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is done by “[r]ecruiting participants from places where they are easily accessible” (Miner-Rubino and Jayaratne 2007:310). Purposive sampling allowed me to sample people based in their interests, as well as by using many different methods of identifying those whom I interviewed (Newman 2003). A caution of purposive sampling should be noted. In general, purposive sampling is used to “[p]rovide insights into the sampled population” (Miner-Rubino and Jayaratne 2007:310). Miner-Rubino and Jayaratne argue that it should not be used when a researcher is attempting to generalize about a population of people. Because I am not attempting to generalize, (see the discussion of quality assessments later in this chapter), purposive sampling worked well for my study.
I used purposive sampling in one of two ways. The first was by contacting the administrators of Amos fan websites and asking permission to post my recruitment message (see “Recruitment” in this section, as well as Appendix D). This allowed women to contact me directly if they were interested in participating. The second way was to look at the Amos fan message boards (see Appendix C) and to identify threads which discuss Amos’ music/lyrics/concerts (generally these are marked as the heading to the forum). I then identified potential contacts based on their contribution to the message boards by looking at the number of times they have posted, when their last posting was (the date), and what their posting(s) generally consisted of (e.g., In what ways were they professing their appreciation for Amos’ music? Do the postings show an interest in understanding Amos’ lyrics or musical composition? Had they mentioned how Amos has impacted their lives? Are they highlighting Amos’ feminist identity?). It stands to reason that a person who is dedicating a great deal of time to continuously posting on the message boards can be considered a fan. Looking at the date of the posting told me how recent their comments were and the number of postings they have contributed to the board over a period of time indicated a willingness to explore Amos’ music in depth. Further, the content of the posting (i.e. how they expressed their feelings about her music) suggested the fan’s willingness to discuss Amos’ music and its impact on fans.

Once I identified a potential contact, I checked to see if there was a profile available for the individual. Most message boards allow users to create an online profile as a way to share some basic information about themselves. If she had listed in her profile that she is a fan of Amos, or that Amos’ music is a large part of her life (generally found under “interests” or “activities” in typical forum layouts) I sent her the recruitment
message via the message system provided by the message board. If she had a limited profile, or no profile at all, I excluded her from my sample based on the criteria that the person’s fan status could not be confirmed. I also excluded people from my sample who had messages that provided little information on their interest in Amos, seemed to be “lurkers” (people who are on message boards simply to be argumentative and/or have limited input or knowledge), or described their age as under eighteen. To that end, I made sure to get the age of participants prior to conducting an interview.

My goal was to produce as diverse a sample as possible in terms of age, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. However my recruitment procedures did not guarantee this. A potential way I was be able to affect this was by posting subsequent recruitment messages on fan websites as well as exploring any online “profiles” fans created on the message boards. (An online profile generally lists a person’s demographic information).

It is my contention that each of these recruitment strategies, whether it be in person, via message boards or through fan created websites, had both positive and negative effects on my study. A positive effect was that the recruitment strategy allowed me to have far more women volunteer to participate in my study than I had expected. I also found that this strategy helped me to have some control over having a diverse group of women based on age, sexual orientation and region of residence. I also believe that this strategy allowed women to contact me who might never have had the nerve to participate in such a study. Indeed a few women expressed in the interview that they had never felt compelled to participate in a study before, but that sending me an email seemed simple and accessible. I feel that this way of recruitment created a means for women to feel safe with contacting me and communicating with me within the actual interview.
A potential negative affect of this recruitment strategy was that I was not able to completely control the amount of racial diversity I received. (In Appendix G I provide a break down of the diversity of my sample as well as the demographics of my sample). While I did speak with a small group of women of color, I did not get the large percentage that I was hoping for. This could be due to my recruitment strategy. Also, a potential negative aspect to my recruiting this way was the personal responsibility I began to feel when women emailed me wanting to participate and, in so doing, provided me with details about traumatic or devastating things which had lead them to Amos’ music. For example, one woman contacted me a month after I was done recruiting to inquire if I still needed participants. She explained that she had stage four breast cancer and that Amos' music was what was keeping her going. While I expected that I would hear such stories in the actual interviews, I was not prepared to hear them during recruitment. Further, I was not emotionally prepared to have to explain that the recruitment for my study had ended to a person who obviously would have had a lot to contribute to my data. (I have explored my reactions to these interactions further in Appendix B “Bracketing”).

Informed Consent Process

When a woman indicated that she was interested in participating in an interview, I emailed her my recruitment letter which explained the process of the interview and made clear that transcription would be done by me, verbatim, via my typing our conversation using Microsoft word after the interview was completed. I then either emailed or mailed a consent form for her to sign and return to me, (see Appendix D for the recruitment letter
and consent form), and, once I received the signed consent I contacted each woman to set a date and time for the interview. As an extra assurance, I began each interview by providing different variations of, "Do you agree to the terms outlined in the informed consent form?"

I also began each interview by highlighting the consent document. I asked each individual if she had questions about the study, myself, or what was to occur during the interview. I explained that she had the freedom to end the interview at any time and that her identity would be known only by me and would be protected throughout the analysis of data via the use of a pseudonym. I also let her know that at any time she wished to retract any of her statements to let me know and I would refrain from including them in the transcript. I mentioned that approximately two weeks after the interview a copy of her transcript would be available. At this time she could contact either myself or Dr. Angela Moe via phone to receive a copy of her transcript (by setting up a place to meet at which point her transcript will be delivered in person). At the end of the interview I asked her to select a pseudonym to be used in lieu of her actual name. Most women selected their own pseudonym, however a few asked me to assign one for them. In these cases I selected a name from various Amos songs.

To receive her transcript, I let her know that she needed to remember her pseudonym in order to gain access to her transcript. If she preferred to not meet with me in person, I let her know that she could send me an email using her pseudonym and that I could either return her transcript via email or through the postal service. I also assured her that she could call me to request changes to her transcript after the interview. I expressed to her that once she read-through her transcript, she could contact me with any
changes she might like to have made. Finally, I noted that all conversations about the interviews between myself, Dr. Moe and the participant were used only for the purpose of this research and would remain confidential. Once I completed this I asked the individual if she had any questions before I turned on the tape recorder and beginning the interview. I then would say “I am going to turn on the tape recorder” and the interview then began.

Research Process

Interviews which were conducted in person took place in either a local coffee shop or restaurant, or in the home of the participant. As previously mentioned, interviews which took place in a participant’s home were only done with participants I knew and had a personal relationship with. These interviews, along with those that occurred at coffee shops or restaurants, were purposely planned for less busy times of day (when an establishment or participant’s house was most quiet). Interviews which were conducted over the phone took place from my university office. I set up a time to call each participant and asked that she be available to talk from a quiet, private place that was free from interruptions. Interviews conducted in person were recorded using a micro-cassette tape recorder. Interviews conducted over the phone were similarly recorded by putting the participant on speaker phone and turning on the tape recorder. I did not provide any monetary compensation for the participants’ time.

The interview questions were asked in a semi-structured format, beginning with questions about each participant’s reactions to hearing Amos’ music, as well as asking if she had a favorite song and album, and how long she had been a fan (see Appendix E for a copy of my interview script). These were meant to simply establish rapport with each
participant and provide some context to the more in depth questions concerning healing, emotion and feminist identity. Questions which focused on healing and emotion asked things like “Has Tori’s music been healing in any way?”, “What has it meant for you to see her perform live?”, and if they had met Amos I would ask “What is your memory of meeting her?” To gather an understanding of the participants’ feminist identities I would ask “Do you consider yourself a feminist”, “Do you know Tori identifies as a feminist?”, “What do you think about Tori identifying as a feminist” and “What do you think a feminist is?” The questionnaire ended with my asking some basic demographic inquiries, such as “What is your racial or ethnic identity?”, “What is your sexual orientation?”, and “How old are you?” I should note that I chose to refer to Amos as “Tori” during interviews as this is the way she is addressed by most fans. Rarely do people, in discussions of her music, consistently refer to her as “Tori Amos” as this seems too formal for fans who feel they have an intimate relationship with her music.

During each interview I took notes on the participant’s vocal inflection, body language, emotional response (e.g. crying, laughing), etcetera. These notes were taken in the margins of my questionnaire, which I had in front of me. I acknowledged that I was doing this with each participant and let her know that she could ask me to not write down notes on any behavior she exhibited during the interview with which she was not comfortable. However, no one asked that I not take notes during their interview.

**Participant Information**

Using the above sampling and recruitment strategies, I ended up with the following breakdown of participants. As I have previously mentioned I made the
decision to increase my sample size from thirty-five women to up to forty-five women as a result of my recruitment methods being so successful. I ended up interviewing forty-two women, four in person and thirty-eight over the phone. Eighteen of the women interviewed were recruited using snowball sampling. These were either women I already knew from being a fan of Amos myself, or friends of Amos fans I had already interviewed. Five women were recruited using the message board “Toriphorums”. Four of these women were recruited using purposive sampling and one was recruited via responding to my recruitment message. Six women were recruited at the Amos fan message board “Atforumz”. All six of these women responded to a recruitment message posted on the board. Two women were recruited after they responded to a message posted in the group “I’m an ‘Ear With Feet’, AKA Tori Amos Fan” which is located on Facebook. Eleven women responded to a recruitment message posted on the fan website www.hereinmyhead.com.

The average length of an interview was one hour. The range of interview length was thirty minutes to an hour and a half. Interviews took place between the months of June 2009 through the first week in September 2009. Two interviews were conducted in the homes of women in Michigan, one was conducted at a local coffee shop, one at a local restaurant and thirty-eight were conducted over the phone. Of the women interviewed over the phone, seven lived in New York, six in Michigan, five in North Carolina, four in Texas, three in California, two in Minnesota, two in Massachusetts, two in Virginia, one in Delaware, one in Maryland, one in Missouri, one in Illinois, one in South Dakota, one in Colorado, one in West Virginia, one in Wisconsin and one in New Jersey.
The educational level of the women ranged from high school diplomas to PhD’s and J.D.’s: one woman had a high school diploma, seven had college credits but had not earned a diploma, one had gone to a trade school, two held Associate’s degrees, four were currently in college, five had obtained Bachelor of Science degrees, six held Bachelor of Arts degrees, ten had master’s degrees, two were ABD toward a PhD, two had obtained a PhD, and two held J.D. degrees.

The age range of participants was twenty-one to forty-five with most women falling between the ages of twenty-eight and thirty-two. In terms of racial/ethnic identification, thirty-two identified as “white” or “Caucasian”, one identified as “Black” or “African American”, four identified as “Jewish”, two identified as “Hispanic” and “Native American”, and three identified as “Native American” and “white” or “Caucasian”. Twenty-eight of the women identified as straight, three as lesbian, nine as bi-sexual and two as queer. Further, nineteen women were married, fifteen were single, six had a partner and two were engaged. The median age was between 29 and 30 years old, but the women ranged in ages between 21 and 45.

A reason why the median age was between 29-30 can simply be because Amos became popular in 1991-1992. At this time most of the women I interviewed would have been in their early to mid teens and at an age when they were attempting to understand who they were. As my data will show in Chapter 4, one major theme with each interview was that women were looking to find someone whom they could identify with and who could validate their feelings. Further, having a large number of women who identified as “Lesbian”, “Bi-Sexual” or “Queer” can be related to literature describing Amos’ music as becoming popular during a time when exploring sexuality was acceptable. This median
age can also help explain marriage and partnership. Most of the women interviewed were at an age where marriage and partnership happen.

Of the women interviewed, twenty-two did not request a copy of their transcripts while twenty did ask for a copy. All of the women interviewed were interested in reading my completed dissertation. I had five women email me with additional comments after their interviews and one requested that I remove a section of her transcript as she had decided it posed too much of a threat with her employer. This was the only request I had to alter or change a transcript.

With regard to concert attendance and album's owned, the women had varied responses. Three of the women I interviewed had never seen Amos live but had either owned DVD's of her performances or had sought out YouTube videos of her live shows. Not seeing Amos live generally had more to do with their geographical location or lack of extra money for concert tickets than not wanting to attend concerts. In fact, each of these three women made it a point to mention that they would see her live if it was available to them, but that they also enjoyed watching Amos perform in video format. Of the women who had seen her live, the range of number of shows attended was between two and one hundred and thirteen. However, I treated two and one hundred and thirteen as outliers and calculated the average number of shows attended at twenty-two. Three women said that they do not make a point of seeing Amos perform during every tour, while the rest of the women stated that they attempt to see her each time she performs live. The same variance was expressed when I asked women about the number of albums they own. While two women mentioned that they have not purchased Amos’ albums since 1996, they also said that they find Amos’ new music through iTunes or in a similar
online format. The remainder of women owned between four and ten of Amos’ studio albums (see Appendix C for Amos’ discography) with bootlegs, live albums and compilation albums often numbering over one-hundred.

Exiting the Group

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of doing qualitative research is knowing when it is time to exit the stage of recruitment and data collection (Lofland, Snow, Anderson and Lofland 2006). When I had completed the interviews I sent emails out to the fan site administrator and message board administrators letting them know that I had enough women for my study. I followed Lofland et al.’s (2006) lead by posting goodbye messages and leaving information about when my project would be complete (around the summer of 2011). Likewise, I asked the administrator of the Tori Amos fan site to post a “thank you” on my behalf and let her know when my study would be complete. Because I acknowledge that part of the process of exiting is also removing myself from the group, I took a year absence from posting on the message boards. I also let the administrators know that I was going to be working with the sociology department at Western Michigan University to create a link on the department webpage which would contain a downloadable version of my dissertation. I asked them for permission to email the link when I was done and in each case I was given permission.

Data Analysis

Using the phenomenological and feminist approaches to research I have previously discussed, I approached data analysis in a fairly structured format. Phenomenological approaches to research ask that the researcher begin a project by
bracketing, therefore I set aside my own experience with the research (Creswell 2007). Because I am acknowledging my own position within the project (e.g. McCorkel and Meyers 2003; Stanley and Wise 1993), I discuss my evolution as a Tori Amos fan and my position as a researcher in Appendix A and bracket my experiences collecting data in Appendix B. My hope in doing this was to acknowledge, yet set aside, my own point of view while placing the experiences of the women I interviewed at the center of the research (Creswell 2007). Further, I provided bracketed field notes as they seem relevant to data analysis (e.g., to provide a contextual description of an interview setting, to account for my response to a particular story a woman shared). This practice proved to be an asset to the validity of my analysis, as I describe later in this chapter under “Quality Assessments”.

Phenomenological approaches to analyzing data suggest that I first go through the data to find “significant statements” (Creswell 2007:61). Because the purpose of data analysis is to search for meaning in the data (Hesse-Biber 2007), I began to analyze the data by first reading through the text so as to further familiarize myself with it and make margin notes (codes) regarding initial themes (Creswell 2007). Examples of these themes are found in Chart A later in this section, as well as presented in further detail in Appendix H. I then considered these initial codes as precursors to broader analytical themes, which informed my second read-through. In this second read-through, my goal was to identify any possible themes that I had missed on my first pass, as well as figure out how the various themes I had identified could work together and be combined in accordance with my research questions. Both the first and second read-throughs were aimed at looking for specific explanations, descriptions, references, analogies or
categorizations which attempted to characterize Amos’ fans, their feminist identities and any healing they had experienced from Amos’ music. However, the second read-through was also used for the purposes of data reduction and development of major themes which were informed by previous analysis. My third read-through was done via Microsoft Word, wherein I utilized the highlighting feature to code the data more systematically by different colors. The major themes and colors used to label each theme were 1) “What women are healing from” (green), 2) “Connection to lyrics” (dark red), 3) “Relationships” (teal), 4) “Description of emotion” (pink), 5) “Expression of emotion” (red) and 6) “Feminist identity” (yellow). This involved a focused coding procedure, the goal of which was to move from the literal codes identified in the first and second read-through’s to abstract categories focused on connecting the data to the theoretical frameworks being used to guide the research (Hesse-Biber 2007). The table below provides an example of how I used focused coding. Similarly to Hesse-Biber’s (2007) presentation of how she moved from initial codes to major themes, I provide a more detailed table of the various rounds of coding in Appendix G.

Table 1-Interview Coding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial codes were changed as follows:</th>
<th>To</th>
<th>Color</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using Tori’s music to heal from low self-esteem, rape, violent relationship, eating disorder, death, cancer, illness of a child, suicide of friend/family member, feeling like a misfit.</td>
<td>What women are healing from</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stating which lyrics made her feel like someone understands, someone “gets” her, she is not alone in her thoughts. Direct relationship to using the lyrics to heal or explaining how an emotion relates to the lyric (i.e. “calm”, “angry” etcetera).</td>
<td>Connection to lyrics</td>
<td>Dark red</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1- Continued

| Build a friendship with other fans, form a relationship with Tori via meet and greets, having a relationship with the music, building a community through message board, support system through other fans, support system through attending concerts. | Relationships. | Teal |
| Music made her feel emotion. | Description of emotion | Pink |
| Music allowed her to release an emotion (cry, expressing anger through hitting, laugh, shout, etcetera). | Expression of emotion | Red |
| I am/not/might be a feminist, Tori is a feminist, her feminism impacts my own feminist beliefs, her feminist identity is important to me. | Feminist identity | Yellow |

After coding in this manner, I then cut and pasted these data into separate files, organized by various headings (the major themes), as developed via data reduction after the first two read-through's. Direct quotes from the interviews, identified by pseudonym, were used as evidence of the major themes within Chapters IV and V. Also as part of this final pass at coding, I revisited my field notes, taken during and after each interview. These notes included observations regarding each woman's body language, voice, emotional reaction to questions, etcetera. They also included my own experiences and reactions to each interview. The combination of various coding strategies, along with incorporating notes taken on each woman's behavior while being interviewed and my own reflection on the interview, contribute to what Creswell (2007) calls the "narration" of the experience (in this case, experience of being a Tori Amos fan).
Participant Observation

A central component to this research is being able to understand the reactions women have to Amos' music. One of the best ways to experience this is to be present at Amos’ concerts. Here I was able to participate in the concerts with other fans while also observing and noting their responses to, as many participants noted, “breathing the same air as her”. Therefore I included participant observation as a second approach to gathering data. Generally defined, researchers engaged in participant observation use their senses to scrutinize a physical setting and capture its atmosphere (Newman 2003). Participant observation allowed me to study Amos’ fans in a more organic fashion since I was able to be engaged in the concerts without disturbing them. In this way, I was able to note the ways in which Amos’ fans responded to her music, lyrics and performance in a natural setting, which was quite distinct from the interviews wherein I asked fans specific and reflective questions.

Collecting data in this way certainly may have subjected me to criticism as my concert observations could have been interpreted as a form of “spying”. However, I planned to emphasize, with any individual who approached me about what I was doing, that he or she should not feel compelled to talk to me. I never encountered any negative attention from fans, in fact I was either ignored during the concerts or it was assumed I was a journalist there to review the show. (I overheard this mentioned by a few women who had noticed my note taking in the lobby of the Chicago venue.) In general, I got the feeling that my presence created very little intrusion as I was never asked what I was doing while I was taking notes on what was happening around me and I rarely observed people observing me.
My intent with these observations was to use them as supplemental contextual data to the interviews. This is consistent with phenomenological approaches to research which encourages researchers to present the experience of being a part of a certain phenomenon (Creswell 2007). Combining participant observation and interviews seemed to create a more enriching assessment/narration of Amos’ fans, which fits well within the objectives of phenomenological research. Therefore, I observed Amos’ fans prior to, during, and immediately following three concerts.

Gaining Access and Sampling

I selected these three concerts on the basis that the location of each venue was within a reasonable driving distance from Kalamazoo, Michigan. I also selected them based on the price of the tickets, which vary depending on the city. As I was mainly covering my own travel expenses (with the exception of a grant I received from “The Kercher Center for Social Research” at Western Michigan University in the amount of $500.00), I found it necessary to select cities which would fit my budget. In that regard, while I selected to see Amos perform in Chicago where the tickets were $75.00, I also then selected not to see her in Detroit as ticket prices were comparable to Chicago. Instead I traveled to Indianapolis where the ticket price was $55.00. Further, the cost of a hotel in Indianapolis was much less than the cost of a hotel in Detroit. My final reason for selecting three shows was due to geographical limitations. Amos’ tour only stopped at a few cities in the Midwest which made my options limited as to how many cities I had to select from while still considering budget and travel distance. All were within three to five hours of driving distance from Kalamazoo, Michigan, occurring in Chicago, Illinois;
Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and Indianapolis, Indiana. I simply purchased a ticket to each concert by selecting seats using online seating charts, focusing on seats which were on an aisle when available. This seemed to allow me the best observational position of those around me without interfering with their enjoyment of the show.

**Research Process, Data Collection and Analysis**

I arrived at each venue at the time that the doors opened, which was generally around 7:00pm. After entering the concert venue, I found a place to position myself in the lobby where I could remain out of the way of people entering, purchasing merchandise and interacting, while still being able to observe the space. Once I completed taking notes in the lobby, usually right after the opening act had finished (between 7:30 and 7:45pm), I moved from the lobby to the women’s restroom. Generally the line for the restroom was long so I found this to be a great time to stand in line and listen and observe the interactions of the women present. I did not take notes while in the restroom line, rather I waited until I was either in a stall (if something had happened I did not want to risk forgetting) or until I was in my seat in the venue. I specifically made it a point to visit the women’s restroom because there were great numbers of women congregating in line and in front of the mirrors to touch up their make-up, hair, etcetera. I learned at the first concert that many of the women used this time to discuss how they got into Amos, what songs they were hoping to hear, or why they came to the show. I believe this had something to do with having to stand in long lines with people who are

6 In referring to the observations at various venues within the analysis section of this document, I simply state “At the Chicago venue...” or “At the Milwaukee venue...”.
strangers and needing to pass the time. Further, this was an example of Amos’ fan community. Her music is so universal among them that striking up conversations in restroom lines is acceptable. From here I moved into the theatre to take notes either from my assigned seat or from an area where I could stand and observe without being obtrusive.

Field notes were taken by hand on a five-by-seven tablet. I wrote notes immediately after entering the venue, and continued while the concert was in progress (depending on the amount of available lighting), as well as immediately after the concert. I placed the notes in chronological order labeled by venue name, date and time. I did this both with the handwritten notes and when I typed up the notes after each concert. Each concert lasted between two and three hours and the start and finish time of each was recorded as part of the notes. However, my observation at each concert generally lasted about four hours, from the point of arriving at the venue to exiting.

My field notes consisted of a general observation of the population inside the venue, including the behavior of fans who were wearing Amos related clothing or purchasing paraphernalia, how women were acting and responding to each other, how Amos communicates with her fans while on stage, any moments during the concert where groups of women cheer, laugh, cry, etcetera, as well as Amos’ reaction to her fans. (See Appendix F for my observational rubric.) My notes also detailed the description of the venue (including a hand-drawn map of the layout); descriptors of the activities happening prior to, during, and immediately following the concert; the types of people attending including any commonalities in their dress, hair, or décor; how the fans responded to Amos while she performed, and how Amos reacted to them throughout the concert. For
example, I looked for fans who were wearing Amos-related t-shirts or Amos apparel they had made themselves, as this was suggestive of their devotion to Amos. Further, I considered groups of women together who appeared to be bonding over the performance (i.e. hugging, crying, laughing, dancing, celebrating) to be indicative of Amos' potential to reach out to women. These observations were helpful in understanding the emotional relationships found between fans and Amos' music, as well as the ways in which the fans use her music as a source of emotional support.

After each concert I would type-up my field notes and include any details that I may have missed while writing. In the days following these shows many of Amos' fans put videos of her performance on YouTube. When relevant, or to refresh my memory, I would refer to videos from the concerts I attended in order to incorporate further detail into my observations. I never used these as supplemental, rather as a back-up for my notes and memory.

In a somewhat condensed version of the coding analysis plan detailed earlier for the interview transcripts, I did an initial read-through of these observations to familiarize myself with the data and make notes of any initial themes present. I listed those themes in the margins of the pages. On my second pass, I read for ways that the themes could be woven together as well as to compare the themes within the field notes to the themes found in the transcripts. I did this as a way to gauge whether the themes in the transcripts matched the themes found in my observations. In my third read-through I used Microsoft Word to highlight and more specifically identify illustrations of the themes. As I have previously mentioned, this was more of a focused coding procedure as themes had been identified. I was now looking for illustrations of these themes. I then copied these
highlighted portions and pasted them under specific heading themes within separate
Word documents. The coding for observations is found in Chart B as well as Appendix
H.

Table 2- Observation Coding

*Initial codes were changed as follows:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From</th>
<th>To</th>
<th>Color</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women laughing, crying, dancing, celebrating, putting hands in the air “church style”</td>
<td>Expression of Emotion</td>
<td>Red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standing in line for t-shirts, discussing which size to get,</td>
<td>Relationships/Bonding</td>
<td>Teal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trying on t-shirts, looking through programs and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressing excitement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While Tori performs, screaming, shouting, mass cheering,</td>
<td>Reaction to Tori’s performance</td>
<td>Pink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiness/sadness when a song is performed, hugging</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During songs, laughing during Tori’s discussion with</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience, holding hands, kissing, rushing the stage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tori’s body and facial expressions, what</td>
<td>Tori performing</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinds of response this gets from women, improvisation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In songs which are gender related</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I did find that the themes from my observations provided a context to the
transcripts. The observations allowed me to give greater detail regarding the women’s
emotional reaction to Amos’ live performances. For example, in coding transcripts many
women mentioned that when they hear a song live they scream, cry, shout, etcetera.
Further, they mentioned attending concerts with friends as a way to bond over Amos’
music. This second pass at coding allowed me to further interpret these experiences by
detailing specific moments in songs where groups of women reacted by shouting, crying
and hugging during the performance. I felt that this is an important connection because it
shows how the themes in my transcripts were matched with the behavior I witnessed at
concerts.
An additional reason for observation was because I felt that incorporating these field notes as part of the analysis and discussion of my data was important, especially considering that a main component of a feminist standpoint is that women’s experiences be placed at the center of research. Being able to travel to concerts and observe women respond to a performer who elicits a range of emotions with her music was part of understanding the healing and emotional support women described during the interviews. For example, at the Chicago venue I watched two women embrace and cry while Amos performed a song they both responded to. This observation serves as an illustration of and context for the transcripts’ main themes.

Content Analysis

In addition to conducting interviews and performing participant observation at Amos’ concerts, I also conducted a small-scale content analysis of themes present in her performance style and studio albums in order to present a foundational explanation for Amos’ work. The intent behind this analysis was to be able to identify major themes in Amos’ work and connect them with the experiences of the women I interviewed. My analysis of this content was based in Leavy’s (2007) description of feminist content analysis and Denzin’s (2008) discussion of performance studies and content analysis. As Leavy notes “Feminist researchers may use content analysis to examine the extent to which women’s issues or feminist perspectives are explored in a particular medium, as well as the nature of the content” (2007:231). Further, Alexander (2008) explains that when assessing a performance using sociological methods, it is important to note that both reflexivity as well as engagement with the performer’s actions are included. Alexander calls this “performer-based reflexivity” which he says “[i]s a critical self-
examination of the performer’s intentions” (2008:99). These approaches to content analysis, along with identifying common themes in Amos’ work, served to inform this short inquiry. Here I detail how I performed this analysis. I should note that my status as a fan did inform most of my prior knowledge of the themes of Amos’ studio albums.

Research Process and Analysis

In order to decipher common themes in Amos’ performance style, I used the concept album *American Doll Posse* (2007) as a foundation. This album included themes of sexuality, religious oppression, political feminism, violence against women, miscarriage and women’s bodies and oppression of women as its central themes, which subsequently are themes Amos has explored throughout her career. *American Doll Posse* was also the most obvious in terms of performance art, as Amos created five different “dolls” for the album’s songs, packaging and concert tour, each with a personality, physical appearance and songwriting style. In order to identify the characteristics that Amos created for each woman, I read through the accompanying song book and artwork included with the *American Doll Posse* CD as well as referred to online interviews with Amos which referenced the “dolls”. In doing this assessment I was able to identify key characteristics related to Amos’ performance style, and demonstrate how her concerts are unique compared to other female performers. Once I established *American Doll Posse* as an example of Amos’ performance style, I then analyzed how these themes were exemplified through Amos’ live shows. I focused on Amos’ set lists as they change every night and are city-specific, as well as illustrated how the use of costume, set design, lighting and selection of songs distinguishes Amos as more of a performance artist.
Further, I examined how Amos’ use of the “dolls” promoted or presented a political feminist message by reviewing news stories that Amos noted as inspirations for the setlist on each night.

I approached the description of studio album themes in a similar way. I began by first reading through the lyrics of Amos’ eleven studio albums to find major themes. I identified five major themes which related to sexuality, religious oppression, political feminism, violence against women, and oppression of women. I then highlighted song lyrics from the most common or popular songs on four of Amos’ albums. I narrowed my selection of albums down from eleven to four by first noting which albums had songs which were considered, “popular”, i.e. if it had received attention in the past either via music video play or media coverage, as well as identifying which songs most clearly represented the major themes. Due to the sometimes vague or dense lyrics Amos’ produces, it was necessary for me to consider which lyrics would be most suited to an audience which is not familiar with her work. My status as a fan helped me to know which songs to include as well. For example, the first song selected, “Waitress”, has been played at nearly all of Amos’ concerts and served as a commonly referenced song with women interviewed when I asked them about feminism. Further, a song like “97 Bonnie and Clyde” received a lot of national press when it was released as it was a song originally written by the rapper Eminem and chronicles Eminem’s murder of his wife while his daughter watches. Amos opened every concert of her 2001 tour with the song as a protest against the violent lyrics as well as violence against women. As I have mentioned, these analysis were on a small scale compared to the interviews and participant observation. However, the themes they revealed served as foundations for
discussions of my three research questions and thus merited some description of how I developed and constructed them.

Quality Assessments

Because qualitative research presents analysis in a way which is distinct from quantitative studies, it can be argued that qualitative research results in a different form of knowledge (Golafshani 2003). This often leads to questions regarding the validity, reliability and generalizability of qualitative studies. Therefore, I offer a discussion of how validity, reliability and generalizability were illustrated in this project.

Reliability and Validity

To have a discussion of qualitative validity is to also have a discussion of reliability (Golafshani 2003, Kvale 1996). Reliability relates to consistency in research findings. Some researchers feel that if quality is going to be considered as the most important test of qualitative studies then reliability must be considered (Golafshani 2003). This can be done by detailing all the contexts of their observations by beginning with short notes taken initially when entering a setting and then expanding upon their notes as soon as the field session is complete (Silverman 2006). Others express an apprehension with holding too tight to a positivist influenced perspective on reliability because of its potential to limit creativity (Kvale 1996). While quantitative methods are often premised on reliability as central to quality (validity) assessments, they are left with a little more variance in regard to the interpretation of what produces quality. Thus, one way that quality and reliability can be addressed is by considering the trustworthiness of the
researcher. This is demonstrated by researchers constantly, explaining their work so as to show the details of data collection (Golafshani 2003).

When considering observational field notes as well as interviews, questions of reliability rest in attempting to show that a research project presents an accurate and consistent explanation of a phenomenon (Loftland, Snow, Anderson and Lofland 2006). With interviews I did multiple listening’s of the audio tapes recorded as well as read and re-read transcripts. Further, by allowing participants to read and review their transcripts, I was also contributing to reliability (Ratcliff 1995). To find reliability with concert observations I referred to the concerts I attended which were recorded and put on the website www.youtube.com. I did this to ensure that the audience reactions I had in my notes could be double checked with the video. I also referred to concert reviews posted on message boards and forums as a way to check that the points of the concert I viewed as having the most enthusiastic responses was consistent with what others were writing. I should note that I never used either of these methods as a way to take the place of my own note taking nor did I use the words or language presented by another individual. I also consistently referred back to the rubric I created for taking field notes as I participated in concerts and typed up my field notes after them. I used this rubric as a guide to make sure that my observations were focused on answering my research questions and supplementing data gathered during interviews.

Because validity asks researchers to consider if what they are measuring is what they intended to measure, many believe that informing research with our own reflective accounts creates a personal bias (Kvale 1996). Validity is often shown through the researcher’s ability to craft a research project in a way that reflects the intentions of the
researcher as well as the accuracy of her/his data collection (Kvale 1996). I attempted to show validity by disclosing my own experiences with Amos' music through writing a researcher position statement (see Appendix A) as well as through bracketing my responses to the interviews and concert observations (see Appendix B). Thus, rather than deny that I have a bias toward the research, I consider the work of Harding (2004), Finlay (2002) and Stanley and Wise (1993) who note that validity becomes part of the researcher's reflexivity, linking it to knowledge as a social construction of reality (Harding 2004; Kvale 1996; Stanley and Wise 1993) with truth being constructed through dialogue (Kvale 1996). Further, showing validity in observational methods rests in the ability of the researcher to present a picture of the field she is in (Newman 2003). Because how I describe a concert may be different than how another person would describe it, I must be able to show that my being present at the concert was organic. I must show validity through my ability to argue that the events of the concert would have taken place even if I was not there (Newman 2003).

As an additional way to show validity in this research, I provided those whom I interviewed with the option of reading over their interview transcripts. I also consistently went back and forth between the notes I had taken during the interview and the transcripts as I was coding to see if my initial assumptions were concurrent with the emerging themes. With observations I worked off a detailed rubric (see Appendix F) which helped me to produce a detailed and consistent account of what I observed at each venue. I further converged these initial assumptions and themes from the transcripts with the themes I found in observing concerts. With participant observation and validity, Kvale notes that validity is treated like craftsmanship as the emphasis is often placed on
checking, rechecking and questioning what is being observed. However, he also notes that the researcher should go beyond these measures and include conversations about the observations (Kvale 1996). Finally, I used extensive quotations within the analysis from multiple women to show how each theme was reflected in their statements (Golafshani 2003; Ratcliff 1995).

Because my research is overtly feminist it may fall to critiques of its level of legitimate science. Considering reliability and validity in feminist research is addressed by McCorkel and Meyers (2003) on a more practical level. They state that, specifically in feminist research, due to the amount of reflexivity required of the researcher, feminist studies are difficult to replicate. The participants would be different based on the expectations of the researcher and the experience of the research would be different based on who is conducting it. The conclusions a researcher draws will be dependent on her own examination of the data, which is often informed by her various reflective exercises. Therefore, using reliability and validity as a way to measure quality should not be held to a universal standard. Each participant is different and each researcher is different, thus replication of studies may become difficult when considering these factors.

An additional means of reliability and validity within this study involves methodological triangulation, with the use of both interviews and observational data collection techniques as well as a brief content analysis. The purpose of triangulation is to attempt to present multiple perspectives of similar phenomena, as well as to challenge the researcher to accurately present and represent her experience of being a part of a phenomenon (Golafshani 2003). As Denzin writes, “The use of multiple methods, or triangulation, reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon
in question... We know a thing only through its representations” (2008:7). Because I gathered data both by interviewing women and observing concerts, as well as a short content analysis, I applied multiple methods in order to gain a deeper understanding of female fans of Amos.

**Generalizability**

Newman (2003) notes that there is a certain amount of pressure on social science to be able to show generalizability in qualitative research. Generalizability most commonly refers to how research findings are applied across various settings, people and time (Johnson 1997). With qualitative research there is often a question of how the research can generalize about a population of people. This is often based in the positivist science found in quantitative studies, as quantitative studies are set up using traditional forms of generalizability (Miller and Crabtree 2008). Positivist science asserts that if a study is valid and reliable than its findings should be generalizable to a larger population. However, qualitative researchers argue that generalizability could also be presented as a theoretical premise, since the goal of qualitative work is not to generalize in the same sense as quantitative work. Rather, the aim of qualitative research is often geared toward exploring a group, population or phenomenon in depth. This often leads to critiques of qualitative studies. For example, because I interviewed forty-two women as well as observed fans in venues within a reasonable distance to Kalamazoo, MI, it could be argued that my research lacks an adequate representation of all Tori Amos fans. However, as this research is rooted in feminist epistemology and phenomenological methodology, my intent was not to generalize about all of Amos’ fans.
Yet, many qualitative scholars assert that generalizability could be conceptualized by considering how a particular methodology be applied to other contexts and samples (e.g. Golafshani 2003; Newman 1998). My purpose was to explain the lives of the women who participated in my study in a richly descriptive and detailed manner. This is very different intention than generalizing about Amos’ entire fan base because the intent of this research is not to paint a picture of the average Tori Amos fan. The objective was to examine the relationships women within my sample build with her music. Thus I approached generalizability from a more phenomenological position, framing this research within the ways in which it compares and contrasts with other relevant phenomena (Johnson 1997). Further, it is important to note that no one study will be applicable to all situations and contexts (Johnson 1997). For my purposes, generalizability is more located in the truth each woman I interview finds for herself. By approaching the research from a feminist and phenomenological perspective, I am adding description and layers to understanding within the context of these women’s lives (Johnson 1997). Thus, I am looking to provide a small scale account of the fan base of Tori Amos through recognizing the impact her music has made on her fans.

However, it is important to note that the responses given by participants could have varied depending on how questions are asked and who is asking the questions. While it would be possible for another person to take my interview questions and attempt to replicate this study, there would also need to be similar attempts at reflexivity, researcher position, understanding of Amos’ history and the history of her fans etcetera in order to achieve similar results.
Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have detailed the methodological approaches to this research by explaining the use of feminist standpoint theory and phenomenology as a theoretical basis for collecting and interpreting data. Feminist standpoint theory and feminist approaches to research guided how I conducted interviews and interacted with participants. Phenomenology, with its focus on describing the “[m]eaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon” (Creswell 2007:57) aided my analysis efforts.

This chapter also detailed the interviewing process. I discussed the steps leading up to the interviews, including receiving HSIRB approval, sampling through snowball and purposive strategies, recruitment. I also detailed how each interview began, what kinds of questions were asked, the ways in which I offered participants a copy of their transcript, and how I exited from the field. Finally, I explained how I coded the transcripts and what initial and major themes were found in them.

In discussing participant observation I detailed which venues I selected, how long I spent at each venue and how I structured a rubric for my observations. I discussed where I positioned myself to best view the venue, the routine I established at each concert and the ways in which I gained access to the sites. I described the ways in which I took notes, including a map of the venue, noting actions and behavior which corresponded from the themes found in the transcripts, and the script I used as a guide for taking notes. I ended the section by discussing the coding process I used for analyzing my observational field notes and how these worked to enhance the findings gleaned from the interview transcripts. I then included a brief explanation of the content analysis I
performed on Amos’ performance style and albums and explained how these themes connected to the larger themes illustrated by the women I interviewed. Finally, I explored the common challenges to qualitative research in terms of quality assessment by detailing how validity, reliability and generalizability were handled within my study. In the next chapter I begin an analysis of the data I have collected by first discussing the common themes in her performance style and albums and then parlaying these themes into a focus on how women have used Amos’ music as a means to heal.
CHAPTER IV- EXPLORING HEALING

In this chapter I begin to answer my first research question, "In what ways do fans of Tori Amos identify her music as a source of emotional support and/or facilitative of healing?" In order to do this I consider a subset of questions which have been posited to me throughout this project by colleagues, participants and individuals who are curious about this research. Some common questions include: How do the women interviewed relate Tori Amos’ music to their healing? What are fans of Tori Amos healing from? How have the women related their healing to Tori Amos, the performer? By focusing on sociological approaches to gender and symbolic interactionism I provide a foundation for forming a sociology of healing, an area of sociological study which needs further development. As a means to identify participants, each woman has been assigned a pseudonym and will be referred to by this name throughout each analysis chapter. When appropriate I have added demographic information that is pertinent to the analysis. I have also provided demographic information as part of Appendix G.

I begin this chapter by first exploring and analyzing the common themes present in Amos’ performance style and albums. I then use these themes to discuss how the women indicated Amos’ music as a catalyst for their healing by presenting both specific incidents which women indicated they were healing from as well as illustrate how Amos’ music was used as a general means of healing or support. I then transition into the ways in which the women connected gender with Amos’ music as well as detail Amos’ performance of gender both in her live concerts and through her album artwork. I end by discussing the ways in which women were using Amos’ music and Amos herself as a means to heal from such things as abusive relationships (particularly with regard to
sexual assault), eating disorders and neglectful interaction with their fathers. Interwoven with the interview data will be observation data drawn from concert attendance.

Content Analysis of Amos’ Performance Style and Album Themes

Performance Style

Amos’ works have almost always taken on the relationship between patriarchal structures and the sensual identity of women. Subsequently she has chosen to create shows that are more performance art than rock concert. She weaves together set lists which place the oppression of women at the center of each concert through the use of set lists which change every night depending on the changing political and social climate. She has also commented on the treatment of women by creating characters (through the use of wigs, costume, make-up, etcetera) who define various expectations of women. This was the basis of her 2007 album and subsequent tour for *American Doll Posse*. As Amos has explained,

I couldn’t understand how we as women could stand by and allow an administration to get back into office when they clearly don’t have our interests as a priority. Without women, then it all stops… I started looking at the stereotypes that women step into and that I think are incredibly simplified and myopic. Whether it's the career woman or the tart on the red carpet, it just seemed to me that a lot of women were trapped in an image. How do you combat that? Well, you have to fight ideology with ideology. (Dryden 2007:16).

The concept of the album and tour was to answer the George W. Bush administration’s policies with regard to using force and violence. With this album she created five characters, or “dolls” as they are commonly referred to within her fan community, who were credited with writing, composing and performing each song. Thus, Amos centered the album and the subsequent tour from the point of view of each
doll. Each of the dolls had distinct images and personalities, and were based on the Greek Goddesses Armetis, Persephone, Athena, Aphrodite and Demeter and God Dionysus (Dryden 2007). For example, one character Amos created named “Pip” (based off of Athena) sang songs on the album which took a distinctly aggressive tone and was described by Amos as a warrior (Dryden 2007). As an example, for many years Amos performed the song “Me and a Gun” every night during her concert tour. The song describes her rape and is sung a cappella (alone, without musical accompaniment),

It was me and a gun,
And a man on my back.
And I sang “Holy Holy” as he buttoned down his pants.
You can laugh, it’s kind of funny,
The things you think, at times like these.
Like I haven’t seen Barbados.
So I must get out of this (“Me and a Gun”, Little Earthquakes 1991).

Amos has claimed that this piece, and the way in which she performed it, was a means through which she hoped to facilitate her own healing from rape, as well as give a face and a voice to women healing from violence (Amos and Powers 2005). In 2007, at a concert in Chicago, Amos performed her song “Me and A Gun”, as Pip while holding a knife and a gun as a protest of a Philadelphia judge, Teresa Carr Deni, who ruled that the gang rape of a prostitute should be considered theft of services and to call it a rape would “…minimize true rape cases and demeans women who are really raped” (Michels 2007:1). Amos’ performance of the song illustrated her commitment to challenging patriarchal authority and to empowering women by addressing her own rape, and attempting to remove the shame and stigma many rape victims may feel.

While creating characters for her live performances has become commonplace within Amos’ shows, Amos also tailors her set list to reflect the political and social state
of each city she is in as well as U.S. current affairs. Her goal is to perform a set of songs which reflect the conditions of each community (Amos and Powers 2005). She then highlights the set list through character creation, set props and lighting. The result is a fusion of music and images. Using performance art as a way to both present a message of empowerment as well as create a space for public discourse is a staple of Amos’ identity as a feminist musician (Greene 1988). This identity has also been the foundation for her studio albums.

*Studio Album Themes*

As of this writing Amos has released eleven studio albums, each focusing on variations of sexuality, religious oppression, political feminism, violence against women, miscarriage and women’s bodies and the oppression of women. As I previously mentioned she has addressed sexuality with songs like “Leather”,

> Look I’m standing naked before you,  
> Don’t you want more than my sex?  
> I can scream as loud as your last one.  

Religious oppression is reflected in songs like “Dark Side of the Sun”,

> So how many young men have to lay down their life and their love of their woman for some sick promise of a heaven.  
> Lies go back now to the garden.  
> Even the four horses say all bets are off (“Dark Side of the Sun”, *American Doll Posse* 2007).

She has taken political feminist stances to address the competition created between women with albums like *Under The Pink* (1994) and with songs like “Cornflake Girl” or “Waitress”, both featured on *Under The Pink*. In “Waitress” Amos sings,
I want to kill this waitress.
She’s worked here a year longer than I.
And is her power all in her club sandwich?
But I believe in peace.

Further, viewing gendered expectations through a feminist lens is present in the ways that
Amos relates patriarchy and male domination. She examined relationships between men
and women specifically through the album Boys for Pele (1996). About this album,
Amos has noted,

In my relationships with men, I was always musician enough, but not woman
enough. I always met men in my life as a musician, and there would be magic,
adoration. But then it would wear off. All of us want to be adored, even for five
minutes a day, and nothing these men gave me was ever enough (Kot 1996:1).

This theme was present in much of the lyrical content of the album and particularly with
a song called “Caught a Lite Sneeze”:

Boys on my left side.
Boys on my right side.
Boys in the middle and you’re not here.
I need a big loan from the girl zone.
Building tumbling down,
Didn’t know our love was so small (“Caught a Lite Sneeze”, Boys for Pele 1996).

The theme of violence against women was most evident in Amos’ album Strange
Little Girls. The concept of the album was to do a series of cover songs written by men
and translate them into a woman’s perspective (Amos and Powers 2005). Perhaps the
best example of this was Amos’ re-telling of the song “97 Bonnie and Clyde,” originally
written by the rapper Eminem. Eminem’s version of the song is marked with a hip hop
beat and celebrates the rapper murdering his wife and disposing the body with his toddler
daughter as his accomplice. Amos’ vocally contrasts this by speaking softly into the
microphone over a slow symphony. Amos says, “This is not about the person called
Eminem. I’m seeing a woman in a victim situation for whom the last thing she’s hearing is the person she had a child with weaving in that child as an accomplice to her murder. I’m seeing it as a mother” (Hermes 2001). Amos took on the character of the wife in the trunk hearing the father speaking to her daughter and whispered the lyrics,

Where's mama? She's takin' a little nap in the trunk. 
Oh that smell da-da musta runned over a skunk. 
Now I know what you're thinkin' - it's kind of late to go swimmin'. 
But you know your mama, she's one of those type of women that do crazy things, and if she don't get her way, she'll throw a fit. 

Adding to the CD of Strangle Little Girls, Amos also worked with novelist Neil Gaiman to create stories for each of the songs (also referred to as “girls”) on the album. For “97 Bonnie and Clyde” Gaiman created a story titled Bonnie’s Mother. Part of the story reads,

Now that she is dead, she tries to remember only the love. She imagines every blow is a kiss, the make-up that inexpertly covers the bruises, the cigarette burn on her thigh—all those things she decides were gestures of love. She wonders what her daughter will do (2001:4).

The purpose of this marriage of music and fiction allows one to conclude that Amos wanted to express the ways in which violence against women in popular culture is either ignored or accepted. Indeed Amos said of the album, “I really felt, as I was nursing my little girl child in my arms right before Christmas in the year 2000, that a generalized image of the anti-woman, anti-gay, heterosexual man had hijacked Western male heterosexuality and brought it to the mediocrity of the moment” (Amos and Powers 2005:286).
Finally, Amos addresses the experience of having a miscarriage through the lens of the expectations of women's bodies. Her album *From the Choirgirl Hotel* (1998) was conceptualized and written following Amos' experience with multiple miscarriages, at least three that she will speak of publically (Amos and Powers 2005). She has said that miscarriage leaves women in vulnerable positions, never allowing them to go back to being the persons they were before they carried a life inside them (Amos and Powers 2005). This is perhaps most notably addressed in the song “Spark”:

She's convinced she could hold back a glacier,  
But she couldn't keep baby alive.  
Doubting if there's a woman in there somewhere.  
Here. Here. Here.  
You say you don't want it, again and again,  
But you don't really mean it (“Spark”, *From the Choirgirl Hotel* 1998).

While albums like *From the Choirgirl Hotel* and *Boys for Pele* represented songs written about Amos' personal relationships and experiences, she broke from these themes for *Scarlet's Walk* (2002) which addressed the oppression of women via the treatment of Native people in the United States. Drawing on her Cherokee ancestry, Amos built this album, and her subsequent concert tour, around the ideas of Mother Earth, using the character of “Scarlet” as a metaphor for America (Amos and Powers 2005). In *Scarlet's Walk* Scarlet traverses the United States and begins to see the country as a woman who has been objectified and used for the gain of people in power, thus presenting America as an oppressed woman attempting to overcome patriarchal oppression. This theme was reflected in the conception of the album which was written prior to the invasion of Iraq, while Amos was out touring in the immediate days following September 11th. Amos said that the songs for the album starting coming to her, each with the intention of reminding
Americans that “The drums of war raged louder and louder” (Amos and Powers 2005:218). Amos writes, “Scarlet’s Walk was a tour that brought all of us a little bit closer to the realization that the land has a spirit and She is alive” (Amos and Powers 2005:218). This is most evident in the song “Wampum Prayer” where Amos presents the voice of an old Apache woman who she said came to her in visions with the song as a result of their conversations (Amos and Powers 2005),

In our hand an old, old, old thread.
Trail of blood and Amen’s.
Greed is the gift for the sons of sons.
Hear this prayer of the wampum.
This is the tie that will bind us (“Wampum Prayer”, Scarlet’s Walk 2002).

Because her live performances, albums and persona are (for the most part) focused on her experiences as a woman, they translate to her female audience. Themes such as sexuality, violence against women, religious oppression or oppression based on gender resonate with Amos’ fans as they see these themes as foundational for their healing process. I discuss the ways that these themes have translated into healing in the next section.

Music as a Catalyst for Healing

General Sense of Healing and Support

A theme with each woman was that Amos’ music simply helped them feel better. That Amos’ music, and sometimes Amos herself, was articulating the feelings or emotions they were having. This was evident in Veronica’s statement, “The songs, they are almost like teachers to me”. Many of the women noted that Amos’ songwriting was part of this general sense of healing as was addressed by Libby and Alba,
The messages aren’t always available to you at the onset, or whatever. I thought she spoke to my soul. That she said what my soul said. That kind of typical feminine identification stuff that she was saying what I was to say, she was singing for me (Libby).

I always say that for some reason, every time an album is released has somehow figured out exactly what I am going through in my life at that moment (Alba).

Many women expressed that there was not a specific event in their lives that made them feel inferior or bad about themselves, rather, in general they had many small instances which would make them feel disempowered. When Amos’ music is played this feeling is lifted. As Emma and Becky noted,

Sometimes it’s the way she plays. The way her voice sounds when she’s singing. That, you don’t connect necessarily with the story that is written and lyrics but you connect with the story that your heart feels when you hear this, this sound and your just like, “That’s what I’ve been trying to scream!”... But when I’m listening to it, sometimes it will help me find my voice. You know, and it helps me figure out what it is I’m trying to say and what it is that I need (Emma).

It’s been healing that have been healing to hear her talk about those things and to you know and those songs I think in her music she makes you feel like gee I’m not the only one that has ever felt that way and I’m not the crazy one for feeling that way in society it’s um pressures from religion and I’m not crazy I went through a crazy thing. Like a lot of people you know a lot of her fans had been through trauma and um I personally have been through something like that and I think you know maybe that’s why some of us she touches as deeper because it’s like she’s reaching out and saying you know you can be strong and you’re not a broken person. A lot of her messages in some of the songs are about being strong in about realizing that there’s nothing wrong with you (Becky).

Cassandra agreed that Amos’ music was healing in many ways but that she can’t always explain why she benefits from it. Rather, the music seems to allow her to figure out what might be bothering her. In this sense she could not articulate how Amos’ music was helpful, just that it was.

Having seen her go through as much as she went through and as the years have gone on she’s gotten stronger and it feels like she has more confidence in herself, that she has worked through a lot of things and so for me that was kind of a role
model also to say okay this one has went through some really hideous things with the abusive relationship, the sexual assault, and she made it through and not only made it through but made it through enough that she is talking about it to everybody. And um, I really admired that because nobody wanted to talk to me about pulling out of anything. And so to see somebody who is just standing out there basically saying here it is! Here I am! Here is what I went through! It was just wow.

For many women, viewing Amos’ music as helpful was also connected to an ownership of both Amos the person as well as Amos’ music. As Peggy said, “Like you can mess with me on anything but Tori. Leave that alone. Leave it alone. My most significant relationship has been with Tori Amos who I don’t really know”. Or as Anne said, “I guess something that’s really close and personal to me kind of like I’ve had a relationship with it for eleven years”. This was also exemplified through Amos' performance style. “Even though she was up on stage she, it was a big concert, it still seemed like she was right there playing it in your living room” (Alex). Or, as Lily said, “She’s a very intimate performer. Like you feel like she’s singing to you and you feel like um, like she has a really great way of making you feel like you’re the only person in the room with her”. Further, many of the women immediately spoke of their first interaction with Amos’ music and how it felt like she was introducing them to new ways of thinking about music. Alva translated her first response to Amos’ music to her experience growing up in a small, conservative town.

Especially living where we lived, there aren’t any clubs where you could see local or underground music. Whatever was Top 40 was it. So to hear something like that after the steady mainstream brain-numbing crap that is on the radio, and then to hear Tori Amos. It was like somebody turned on a light and said “This is the world!” and you’re like “Holy shit!”.
Emma was more specific in her analysis of why Amos’ music has helped her heal when she talked about the suicide of her sister. Listening to Amos’ music allowed her to work through the grief she had felt.

At the time I was going through, um, grieving a family member who had committed suicide and I, and I used to just listen to that over and over again. And I kept thinking to myself, “I have no idea why this is connecting with me so well but it does”.

Ashre also echoed Emma in that she views Amos’ music as a way to find the words to express her thoughts,

I guess I just never really heard anybody say out loud the things that she was saying. And it was just really, you know, it was one of those things where like, “Wow. I’ve been thinking those things”. And maybe I’m not the only person in the world that thinks those things”. And it just felt really personal to me.

Blumer (1969) helps to explain these reactions as part of an interpretive process which people must go through in order to find meaning. He writes, “The actor selects, checks, suspends, regroups, and transforms the meanings in the light of the situation in which he is placed and the direction of his action… It is necessary to see that meanings play their part in action through a process of self-interaction” (Blumer 1969:5). He is asserting that once meaning is attached to something a person will then forge a relationship with the object. This is further described by the sense of empowerment Jackie had felt,

It let me come to the realization that it was okay for me to be myself. Instead of, I think before then I was really discontent with the person that I was turning out to be. And Tori is so confident and she’s so, I mean she doesn’t really come out and say it but to me the message that I usually got was, “I’m going to be who I want to be and I don’t care what you think”. And after a while listening to that I, I sort of started to believe it for myself and I started to realize that it is not such a bad thing that I insist on doing my own thing instead of doing what everybody else thought I should be doing… So it was healing a little bit in that way.
Consistent with Blumer’s assertion that people will transform the meanings to their benefit, many of the women mentioned that the song “Silent All These Years” as a pivotal song for emotional support. This is perhaps most evident in the chorus of the song,

But what if I’m a mermaid?  
In these jeans of his with her name still on it.  
Hey but I don’t care cause sometimes, I said sometimes I hear my voice and it’s been here silent all these years (“Silent All These Years”, 1991 Little Earthquakes).

Judy expressed that the song relates to her self-value and connected the lyrics to interpersonal relationships where she has felt slighted.

“Silent All These Years”. I just liked, I love the idea that there’s this person whose the one whose doing all the talking! And she’s like let me be you for a while. I know what you think of me. You know she’s, she’s the most dominant one but she’s kind of finding this snarky kind of person in herself. I love that! I love that just because I’m not the loudest, just because I’m not the most imposing, it doesn’t mean that I don’t have power. It doesn’t mean that I don’t have a voice. It doesn’t mean that I’m not valuable.

Haven takes a similar approach and discusses the song as an agent of positive reinforcement for her identity. “Silent All These Years’ is great because it’s like, now stand where I stand and you’re like, not judging me and all this. You deal with it to try and be in my shoes”. Ashre approached “Silent All These Years” through representing the power of the song in the image of a tattoo. Indeed, over the course of our interview Ashre indicated that she had several Amos’ inspired tattoos.

The mermaid one, I really relate to the song “Silent All These Years”, even though I don’t listen to it that much. But this was when she said, “What if I’m a mermaid” and to me that means, “What if I’m this amazing beautiful thing that you just have not idea about. Like you never even thought about. Like you may just think I’m one thing, but what if I’m this totally amazing person and you have no idea”. And so I was going through a time where I just felt like, um, I was really down on myself and I kept trying to think about, I probably had this
amazing person inside of me that I just have to find. What if I’m a mermaid? What if I’m really cool? So I’ve just gotta find it. So I got that tattoo to kind of capture my inner mermaid.

Another common song associated with healing was the song “Girl”, the chorus for which is “Everybody else’s girl/Maybe one day she’ll be her own” (“Girl”, Little Earthquakes 1991).

Many of the women felt that “Girl” was the song which addressed their need to please everyone in their life before they please themselves which is cited as a distinctly feminine attitude. Athena defined this attitude during our discussion.

The song I responded to the most growing up and initially was “Girl”. [Q: Why?] I was a classically trained ballet dancer. And I was number 11 at the time in New York State for classical flute playing. And it was a lot of pressure on me to perform and to perform well. I really, I struggled with that because you know, with the abuse on my body, and then all the pressure that follows. It was really like I didn't even know how to be my own person. The only person I knew how to be was the person that other people thought I had to be. Do you understand? From when I was three I was playing the flute and I just I knew how to be what every one else wanted and I was good at it. But unfortunately I wasn’t being who I wanted to be (Athena).

The healing relationships that the women formed with these songs relates to sociological approaches to studying music and shows how the study of music can be gendered. Indeed, to study music is to study a phenomenon based in social life (Shuker 2001). By connecting the experiences in their lives to Amos’ music, these women are articulating how a social phenomenon impacted the ways they defined themselves. This relates to Bennett’s (2008) assertion that music serves as a descriptor for everyday life. She says everyday life “[i]s often interpreted as an arena for repression and social determinism, while popular music is regarded as a possible means through which the oppressed and disempowered can resist the everyday circumstances in which they find
themselves” (2008:421). In engaging Amos’ music with their current circumstances the women are weaving together their own feelings with Amos’ descriptions of life. This relationship forms a healing connection which allows the women to express themselves, even if they cannot articulate how the music is helping. As Bennett goes on to say “Popular music is often quite literally read off by popular music theorists as a mirror of reality…” (2008:421). Through using Amos’ music as a means to heal from their experiences the women are articulating how art mirrors reality by connecting their individual self to a song which expresses how they feel in a specific moment.

The means by which the women articulate Amos’ music as a healing force is also a foundation of music as an artistic practice. As Leavy writes “Songs and musical scores are conceived for many purposes… Music is able to connect people through emotional evocation that in certain contexts may transcend language, economic and other social barriers” (2009:102). In noting songs like “Silent All These Years” or “Girl” the women were describing a need to understand themselves while also finding a way to move beyond negative feelings or experiences. By saying “I don’t know why it helps, it just does” the women are articulating Leavy’s (2009) premise that music, in general, transcends beyond having a catchy beat or universal lyrics which instantly articulate a feeling. I would expand on Leavy’s premise by noting that these women are connecting their identity to a musical selection which challenges them to look beyond their initial reactions to feelings or emotions. They are finding healing through relating themselves to Amos’ songs.

This connection is foundational to understanding how music can juxtapose with gender and contribute to sociological interpretations of music. Kotarba and Vannini
write “We mind our self into being by, for example, engaging in internal conversations (e.g. thinking about oneself)...” (2009:114). They relate the self to music by exploring how music becomes the soundtrack to a person’s life. An expression of the self, or how we approach ourselves, becomes present through the music we relate to. In Athena’s case, connected the song “Girl” with the expectations placed on her to be the best dancer in New York. These expectations, or “Everybody else’s girl” as the song says, lead Athena to feel like her body and her identity was no longer exclusively hers. An experience that is based in her placing her understanding of what a woman should be and look like through the lens of what other people have presented as feminine. This realization factored into how Athena performed and navigated relationships. When she heard “Girl” she began to understand, and to heal, from the defined self that was placed on her. Athena’s experience is also indicative of Frith’s assertion that music is used as personal construction. Frith (1987) asserts that when a person listens to music they begin to feel a form of self identity which helps us form relationships between our public and private lives (1987). For the women in my study, identity and empowerment seemed to be constructed through Amos’ performance of gender.

Connecting Gender with Amos’ Music

Most of the women acknowledged that an emotional appeal to Amos’ music was that it was presented from a female point of view. As Madeline and Sera suggested,

I’d rather have another woman’s voice in my head than a man’s voice. Because growing up all my favorite bands were male artists. Maybe it’s just that now I see that their message is from their point of view. I internalize that and maybe that’s why I made all the shitty choices that I made. So, I mean growing up I went to U2 and REM concerts and before that I was going to Guns and Roses and Bon Jovi and Skid Row and all that crap. So I’m think that maybe the reason that I
only listen to female artists is because I just would rather have their messages in my head (Madeline).

It was just the strong girl musician, I hadn’t had a lot of real strong female idols. I was in love with Led Zeppelin but they are not chicks. It wasn’t until much later that I was exposed to other contemporary strong females like Liz Phair and The Breeders and a lot of the stuff I still listen to now. Tori Amos was the first woman musician I really got exposed to. There are not that many, or weren’t that many, in-your-face women for music I mean she’s, the first album is so confessional. I was just, I guess going through my whole coming of age thing made me kind of, I just felt really connected to her and her music. Her being a woman mattered because I was looking for somebody to identify with (Sera).

Hartsock’s assertion that approaching experiences from a feminist standpoint first means that we place the “[w]orld-view constructed by female activity” (2004:46) at the center of understanding women’s experiences. For the women interviewed, the connection they feel with music is gendered. Their response to Amos as a performer is not disassociated from Amos’ gender. In fact, and in line with Harding’s explanation of a feminist standpoint, the women interviewed often articulated that it was easier to use a woman’s music as a catalyst for healing. Or, as Harding (1987) writes, the purpose of a feminist standpoint is “[t]o provide for women explanations of social phenomena that they want and need... The questions about women that men have wanted answers have all too often arisen from desire to pacify, control, exploit or manipulate women” (1987: 8). This is most pertinent when considering how the women expressed their identity as women through Amos’ music. Specifically when I would ask the initial questions about why they like Amos’ music, many women would state that they found comfort in another woman expressing their feelings. Alva mentioned that seeing Amos perform live helped her to clarify with the multiple meanings that “being a woman” has,

[Q: Why do you think women respond to her performances so much?] I think because she says and does things that a lot of women feel but can’t express... 

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think it boils down to the basic dilemma of women in our culture. With the Top 40 stuff you’re supposed to be this, and this, and this. And Tori kind of throughs that out the window and says, you know crumples up that little paper and says “We’re gonna start over now”. You don’t have to be hopping on somebody’s disco stick as Lady Gaga would have you, with your 1980’s leotard. In order to be a woman you don’t have to be a porn star wearing a chastity belt. And I think that’s so refreshing. Especially for a lot of young girls to hear. It’s like you don’t have to fit into this stupid mold that everybody wants you to fit into. You can be your own person.

Further, many women mentioned the song “Crucify” as a song which allowed them to question the expectations placed on women. The chorus of the song says,

Why do we crucify ourselves?  
Every day I crucify myself. 
And nothing I do is good enough for you. 
I crucify myself. 
My heart is sick of being in, said my heart is sick of being in chains (“Crucify”, Little Earthquakes 1991).

Haven provides an example of the connection she made to this song by explaining how the song allowed her to address the self-hate she was feeling which was leading her to cut herself and also to develop an eating disorder. She details how women are expected to achieve perfection, physically, and the ways in which we destroy our bodies if perfection is not achieved.

[Q: How did it help you deal with your eating disorder?] It’s so much about self hate. You know? And I was also a huge cutter so it really applied to that as well. Like chains, crucify ourselves, “Why do we crucify ourselves?” I mean we such, well hopefully you don’t, but women, especially young girls think, we do such a good job of crucifying ourselves, like hating ourselves more than any society, societal, you know, you know rules or restrictions could ever do. Like, shrinking ourselves down to the point where you can’t even think and cutting yourself up to the point where you’re bleeding out. And we do such a good job crucifying ourselves and we hate ourselves so much and we’re so hard on ourselves. And just to listen to that, you know, is like “Yeah” and I’m really like crying because it clicked! When you’re in the midst of an eating disorder, like I don’t know if you have been when your like “Oh God, what am I doing?” “This is bad!” “This isn’t working anymore”.

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Alba also notes how Amos’ music has served as her primary source for healing from her eating disorder, something she had battled for over a decade.

I think that it has been more healing than anything else that I have ever, I mean I said, and I don’t know, you can use this is if you want. I’ve been bulimic since I was just 15 and I have just gotten to the last few years where I can actually say that out loud. And I really truly think that even if I have not been healed and recovered, I’m not really in recovery or anything I, I’ve been in a lot of therapy and I don’t think that any expensive therapy that I’ve paid for has helped or has been as influential or soothing and comforting as knowing that I always have this. It’s always gonna be there.

As a teenager Laura battled an eating disorder and the consequences of the damage she had done to her body were starting to surface through various health scares. She mentions lines from the Amos song “Me and a Gun” as a helpful mantras as she goes through various tests to determine what kind of damage she has done to her body. She also detailed how seeing Amos live a few weeks before our conversation had helped her find a comfortable balance between her past and the medical tests she was about to go through.

The one that I think of most is from “Me and a Gun”, it’s the me and Jesus part. “It’s your choice babe, just remember I don’t think I’ll be in back in three days time so you choose well”. Just because of all the stuff I’ve done to my body over the years. So um, I, I just feel like, you know. It’s gonna be alright... But I mean like right now, I’m probably at the scariest place I could ever be. I have two doctor’s appointments in the next two days that could go really, really badly. And I’m not scared because I had my D.C. experience and I feel like, it’s just like that leveling calm that kind of bleeds moments in my life together. And no matter what, things will work out somehow because they always have. It sounds kind of crazy I know. I feel like everything happens for a reason. It’s just funny. For me it’s all my little Tori moments that hold me together.

Expectations of what it means to be a woman was best exemplified by Madeline who expressed that finding a female artist who steps away from more traditional approaches to pop music is a rarity. Amos does not fit into the music industry cliché of a
young woman performing songs written by men and Madeline was quick to point this out,

I think it's because she takes women seriously and she respects women. I really think that's what it is. I mean I think that so much of pop culture does not respect women and doesn't take women seriously and so when people are fans of other kinds of stuff it's like you're trying to wear something that doesn't quite fit and I think for people who are attracted to Tori's music it's like, it really fits.

Further, many of the women also tapped into, what they described as, Amos’ rebellious attitude that gender should not dictate how powerful a woman can be. Athena said,

Like it's the great oppression of American women and she's just like “Well fuck that I'm gonna say what I wanna say and if you don't like it don't listen to it or whatever but I'm gonna say it”. And I think that men say what they want anyway. And it's women who are quiet, me not necessarily quiet, but who are more reserved and think more about those things. So there's more of an admiration there.

Consistent with literature surrounding the experiences of women in popular music (e.g. Leondar 2007; Bessett 2006; McCarthy 2006; Whiteley 2000) a general consensus was that Amos is moving beyond Frith and McRobbie’s “cock rock and teeny bop” (1979) characterization of music by creating her own space which allows women to explore their identity.

Whiteley (2000) views gender and Amos’ music as something which is fostered through the composition of her songs. She asserts that Amos uses metaphor to evoke specific moods, as she explains through an analysis of the song “China”, “The effect is to create a feeling of confinement (the repetitive, narrow ranged motif) and distance (the slow tempo, the use of tied notes and rests which impact on the spacing of the syllables, and hence, the sensibility of the words) which together provide a musical synonym for estrangement” (Whiteley 2000: 200). Whiteley asserts that through dissecting Amos’
music one can begin to see a picture of how the music is composed. This composition is intentional and is produced as a means to provide the listener with an experience, in the case of "China" feeling distant from another person. Thus, the women I interviewed are responding to another woman's musical painting of feelings and emotion and translating it to fit their own interpretation of self. This was articulated by Jody who discussed the initial response she had to the album *Little Earthquakes* as a passionate connection to another women who seemed to understand what it meant to be a woman in contemporary society.

[Q: What do you think it was about Little Earthquakes that drew you in?] I think it was because so much of the music at that time was the grunge and I couldn't really relate to that. And it was just songs on a CD I can identify with and I just felt a connection.

Ida made the connection between gender and performance through expressing the ways in which Amos' music allowed her to feel more comfortable using music as a means to heal. "You can let your guard down with female performers. I'd be curious to hear what a man would have to say about that, but I know as a woman that's how I feel".

A major finding with these themes is that women are seeking out music which is written and performed by other women to form a relationship, based on gender, with the songs they listen to. Many women are viewing Amos as a challenge to the gaze through constructing her identity, her music and her songs from the perspective of an assertive woman. The women interviewed articulated that they use Amos' identity as a means to assert their own identity. Further this finding contributes to sociological approaches to music because it counters hegemonic presentations in music by placing the experiences of women at the center of the performance. Because Amos places her life and her
experience at the center of her music, she is drawing in an audience of women who are interested in seeing their lives and experiences reflected in the music they listen to.

**Amos' Concerts as Performances of Gender**

Through both interviews and my observations at Amos' concerts it became clear to me that the women especially responded to Amos when she was performing live.

Elizabeth said,

The other night I actually cried at a couple of songs as I was listening and I had, I feel like I was sort of taken back to where I was again. Like sort of a religious experience for me or something. So I think, so part of it has been healing from like having someone who has had similar experiences as I have like in the church and having felt hurt by the church and like the oppressive nature of Christianity and having her more like voice that publically, that for me has been a really healing thing. It's the thing that I can't do for myself, I felt like she did.

In the next few paragraphs I detail my initial responses to the women I observed at Amos' shows and the ways in which Amos evoked feminine or gendered reactions from the crowd through her performance style and her comments to the audience. I first note how Amos presents a celebration of women before her concerts even begin and move into the observations I made during the concerts. At the Indianapolis show I observed the following,

I am sitting in my seat watching people have pre-show conversations. As I look to my right I see a woman in a peasant skirt and tank top dancing in the aisle. I strain my ears to hear what music is playing and I realize that it is Blondie's "Rapture". This song is incredibly apropos considering the artist is Debbie Harry. As I look around I begin to notice many women (and a few men) dancing in the aisles to the song. Immediately after the song ends the lights go down and Tori takes the stage.

I further noticed gender at the Chicago show:

As I take my seat and look around I begin to notice that most of the women here have come in groups. The theater here is huge, I am not sure how many people
are seated here, but it feels like thousands. (Note: I later discovered that this theater holds 3,600 people). It is painted gold with gold plated statues and murals everywhere. My seat is located in the center section about thirty rows back and three seats off the aisle. It is very cramped in this area and I am suddenly thankful that I came to this show with my husband and cousin as there is little elbow room. I sit between them and feel like I can take notes freely. (See “Bracketing” in Appendix I for my experiences taking notes). The cramped feeling does begin to work to my advantage as I begin to notice that everyone around me has no choice but to sit and converse before the show starts. This lends to a thrilling feeling of excitement in the air. As the pre-show music plays most women around me are talking, laughing and dancing in the aisle.

Being meshed together and surrounded by strangers, I begin to become hyper-aware of expressions of gender all around me. In front of me is a heavy-set woman with very short black hair and a black dove tattooed on her shoulder. My cousin has multiple tattoos and she asks the woman about the dove tattoo. With a little bit of shock on her face she replies “It is after the song Black Dove”. My cousin asks “Why do you like that song?” and the woman replies “It just expressed how I felt at a certain time”. She is wearing, what I would consider to be, “boi” inspired clothes, a plaid shirt, oversize Capri shorts and has very large silver piercings in her ear, nose and lip. She is not wearing any make-up and is holding hands with another woman whom, from their body language, I assume to be her girlfriend. Her appearance is in stark contrast to the two women seated behind me. They are thin blondes with highlights, and appear to be in their early twenties and have on generous amounts of make-up. Their attire is pastel tank tops and sort shorts with heels on their feet. They giggle a lot and I overhear them wondering if any straight men are at the show.

When the lights go down and the band begins to play people rise to their feet in anticipation of Amos’ arrival to the stage.

Tori⁷ has taken the stage and I instantly feel a switch in the energy of the room. People are standing, attention rapped and focused on the stage and are cheering. Women around me are bouncing up and down and yelling. Tori is wearing a gold dress with gold leggings and I wonder if she intended to look like a super hero? The dress has a high collar and when she sits down at the piano I see that it is short in front and long in back and takes on a cape-like quality. As Tori sits down at the piano bench I see the first gendered aspect of her performance. She straddles the piano bench between both legs and vibrates it back and forth while she is singing and playing pianos positioned both in front and behind her.

⁷ I have purposely chosen to use “Tori” when discussing the observations I made, mainly because this is how she is addressed and talked about at concerts among fans.
As the evening goes on I note how Amos’ hand gestures while singing take on a distinctly gendered tone.

I can see her arms and upper body pretty well from here. As she sings she often gestures toward her vagina and her stomach. I think this is due to the nature of the songs. When she is singing lines which address motherhood or women’s bodies she gestures to these two places. But she also, at some moments, grabs her breasts. I just saw her do this during “Josephine,” and I wonder if this is her, perhaps unconscious way of connecting sexuality with prose while she performs?

Gender was even expressed as the core theme of the evening. When addressing the audience at the Chicago show Tori gestured to her male band mates and welcomed everyone to the show. She then said, “Well I guess you can say that this is the boys’ show because almost all the songs we are playing are the boys’ favorite songs to play. And I believe we all have a little “boy” inside us”.

Amos’ use of gender as a focal point in her performances is often structured around a song called “Precious Things”. “Precious Things” details a young girl attempting to come of age among a group of kids who are cruel.


During the three concerts I attended, and at virtually every concert Amos has ever played, the song “Precious Things” has been used in her set list. At each show I attended for this

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8 “Josephine”, 1999 To Venus and Back. Amos has said that Josephine is written about Napoleon’s wife, Josephine.
study, this song marked the end of Amos’ set and served as the point where fans “rushed” the stage. My observation in Milwaukee was no exception.

She just began the opening piano riff of “Precious Things” and people have rushed the stage. I am staying in my seat because (a) I am in the forth row and can see just fine and (b) I cannot write and stage rush at the same time. This song brought such a huge roar from the crowd, I don’t know how to describe it. The stage lights are flashing very fast and you can just see the silhouette of Tori standing over the piano as she is pounding the piano keys while the drums and guitar fill the theater. She does that a lot, pounds the keys. All I can see is a flash of red hair and fingers which seem to fly across the piano as she plays. As she starts to sing I notice a line of women with their hands in the air doing something that reminds me of parishioners in church. What I mean by that is that they have their hands in the air with their palms facing Tori almost like they are pulling her energy into their bodies. While earlier in the show I noticed some women crying or sitting quietly just taking in the music, now women are on their feet and almost angrily engaged with the song. At the line “He said you’re really an ugly girl, but I like the way you play and I died” a group of women next to me scream and pump their firsts in the air. As she sings “So you can make me cum, that doesn’t make you Jesus” the screaming which ensued after that line was deafening. Tori, still seated at the piano bench, spread her arms and legs open as enunciation when she sang that line. Women all around me begin jumping up and down, with their arms in the air, the lights flashing sporadically, drums pounding, piano pounding. I feel like I have just witnessed a mass cleansing. Tori faces the crowd and glares at some perhaps imaginary figure as she growls that line and shifts her weight on the piano bench as to vibrate it between her legs. On their feet and cheering, women’s shouts and cheering almost drown out the music. Next to me two women look at each other, smile and mouth “That was awesome!”.

“Precious Things” was mentioned by many women as the consummate empowering song for women who want to find their identity or validate their own womanhood. For Rose and Madeline, “Precious Things” is an anthem for overcoming the feelings of self consciousness that young girls go through when they are trying to negotiate relationships with young boys.

“Precious Things” when she when she sings about “He said you’re really an ugly girl but I like the way you play”… I think that’s where it’s just like somebody said she is ugly and she’s not. And it just makes me feel like someone knows
what I’m going through, like I’m not alone. And she understands and she’s
amazing so like maybe I’m okay (Rose).

Madeline had taken the song and used it to help empower her nine-year-old daughter who
was dealing with kids at her school who were bullying her,

She had an incident where she was being teased at school. And we were listening
to “Precious Things” and it occurred to me that she probably didn’t know what it
was about. So I said, “You know how Tori does this song at every show and
everybody goes crazy?” And she was like “Yeah”. I said, “Well do you know
what the song is about?” She said “No”. So I said, “Well it’s about that Tori was
teased when she was little”. She said “It is?” I said “Yeah, it is. It’s about that
she was teased and not only was she teased but the boy that she had a big crush on
called her ugly and embarrassed her in front of everyone”. She said, “She did?” I
said, “Do you know why everybody goes so crazy and they scream and shout and
thousands of people get on their feet when Tori does that song? Because the same
thing happened to them. Because everybody there who’s shouting and screaming
had an experience like that when they were growing up too, so they can relate to it
and what that song shows you is that Tori is not alone and you’re not alone.
Everybody’s had those experiences. And once you realize that you realize that
it’s not gonna be so bad because you’re not gonna have those experiences
forever”. It was really, really helpful because it is so hard when you’re a parent
and your child has a problem like that because you can’t tell the child it’s not
important, it doesn’t matter because to them it’s the most important thing that’s
happening in their life. And it’s very hard to say something that can actually help.

The lyrics to “Precious Things” was also utilized by Maggie to heal from the betrayal she
felt from a boyfriend.

There was a time after we had been dating for a while we’d retreat to an empty
room and fool around and you know within four or five minutes he’d be taking
clothes off and I just, I didn’t know how to feel about it all. I mean in the back of
my head I heard a voice that said what are you doing? It didn’t really connect. I
just kind of floated away from it and it was just like oh, this is what people do.
And it didn’t really scare me so much until a certain point where he said, he had
two older brothers and one of them was in college at this point. And he was like
I’d better go into my brother’s room because I have to get a condom. What would
you do if I did that? And you know, being 13 years old and having someone say
this to you is like “I don’t know?” In my head, “WHAT THE HELL?” You
know, in capital letters. And I went home and I said “Never again”. I can’t trust
myself with someone like this. Just because I don’t know to react, I don’t know
myself, I don’t have control and he’s got control because he can give me things
and he thinks he’s so great because he can do these things. And we actually
stopped dating and I had a friend who hung out with him for a while and I remember her coming up to me and just being like did you actually date him? Because he’s come up with some pretty crazy stories about you. And I was like son of a bitch! You know? And it was just one of those lines, there’s so many lines in “Precious Things” that just you know, the whole concept of getting dressed up and being called ugly. That wasn’t literally what happened to me but I think that was actually how it turned out. It was I don’t think much of you but I’ll take what I can get from you. And um, you know. Just because you can make me cum doesn’t make you Jesus. Sex makes people do crazy things. The expectation of sex makes people do crazy things.

Madeline also revealed to me that she and her daughter had attended eight of Amos’ concerts together. I asked Madeline why she felt that it was so important for her daughter to know Amos’ music. Her answer was that Amos’ music describes the experience of being a woman and that young girls can get messages of empowerment from Amos’ music, even if they are not clear on what every lyric means.

I think there’s no other artist that wishes to empower girls and women in their own lives the way that Tori does. And I really think she does that in her music. I just think it’s in song after song after song and there is this part of me that feels like if you listen to enough of it hopefully it will seep in and just become a part of the way that you see the world. I recently went to a Britney Spears concert. And no I am not a fan so do not print that I am. I’m really not. It was hard, but for my daughter’s birthday I got her front row center tickets to Britney Spears because she loves her and she’s always wanted to go to one of her shows. And the last tour I didn’t think she was old enough. So I literally, right after going to four Tori concerts, a few weeks later I went to a Britney Spears concert. And I’m telling you, everybody I talked to afterwards said it was a big spectacle so it was fun and we had amazing seats. But being there, the entire stadium on and off stage, was like to me an epic showing of low self-esteem. I mean honest to God. All I could think the entire night was that this was an epic showing of self-esteem. I mean, young, young girls walking around shouting at each other at the top of their lungs trying to get attention from people walking by. Walking in stilettos that they were falling over in. Little spandex things. Their hair sprayed as high up as you can imagine. Lots of makeup. Like looking on, it mean it was like such a male pornographic version of what’s attractive and what’s sexual. It was like, I mean, I am not an uptight person at all. I mean I’m just completely, completely not. So it’s not that it’s, it’s not that they’re curious or they want to be attractive or they want to be sexy. It’s none of that that gets me. It’s like what they think that means and their version of it. And to me it was just like an epic showing of low self-esteem. And then you look at the show and it’s the same thing. I mean there
was not a single number for that entire show that Britney was not wearing underwear. Literally. That’s it. I mean, fishnets, heals, and these sparkly underwear and bras. And I just found it unbelievable. I mean this is somebody who is supposedly powerful and wealthy and this is the only way in which she can capture the attention of this crowd. Like that’s the message to me. I mean you’d have to see it to believe it... I guess when I look at that and I think about like whose my daughter gonna be in five years when things get more difficult you know at those crazy ages and then in ten years and all that sort of stuff, I think you know, I want her to have a different version of what it means to be powerful and attractive and like, be in a relationship. And when she is sexual like what does that mean? And who is it for? Is it for somebody else or is it for you? And I just think there’s just a world of difference between someone like a Britney Spears on one end of the continuum and a Tori who is all the way on the other end of the continuum. And I really do feel like if you, it’s like, it’s like anything you watch on TV and movies. I think it all becomes a part of your consciousness. And so if there was any form of art I want my daughter to get it would be Tori’s music.

This distinction between Amos’ music and more traditional pop acts such as Britney Spears was also articulated by Sera. This distinction is important because one area of feminist fan studies which has not been fully explored is the difference fans articulate between female musicians and how their music is defined as healing and empowering for women

There are a lot of girl musicians out there and they don’t put the real genuine feminine self in the music. The music is all what society expects women to be. Like pop music and Britney Spears. It’s all what they think is gonna sell records. Or maybe that is what their limited life experience is, I don’t know. But Tori doesn’t pull any punches, she just puts it all out there, what it’s like to be a woman (Sera).

I address these themes of relating to gendered performances and women’s experiences because it relates to the existing cultural studies literature surrounding the place of women in music and symbolic interactionist approaches to studying music from a sociological perspective. Further, considering that finding one’s identity is often central to sociological and gender studies it is important to point out how the women interviewed
articulated their need to feel okay in their own skin. This is akin to Kotarba and Vannini (2009) who write that music has the potential to provide the listener with her identity. Further, Vannini and Waskul state "By visualizing symbolic interaction as music we hope to direct attention to components of meaning, as expressed and experienced in music, that are esthetic in a manner that is not entirely captured if limited to the purely symbolic" (Vannini and Waskul 2006:7). In other words, one of the reasons why women are finding a relationship between themselves and Amos' music is because of her gendered performance style. Vannini and Waskul (2006) exemplify this through expressing symbolic interaction through a musical metaphor. "Meaning is derived from, or arises out of, processes of musical interaction that one has with others" (Vannini and Waskul 2006:8).

These combinations serve as a basis for using third wave feminist approaches to gender and music to explore what women are healing from. As I previously mentioned, Heywood and Drake (1997) state that "[t]hird wave feminists might revalorize constituted female identity and its representation, whilst incorporating both a radical analysis of the signifying chain and a belief that the agent can somehow manipulate that which is signified" (1997:45). Amos' gendered performances were seen as empowering for the women interviewed and is a place where they can find their own agency. This is especially interesting considering, from a feminist standpoint, the role of communities and relationships women form with each other leads to a greater sense of agency (Hartsock 2004; Harding 1987). Further, Heywood and Drake (1997) assert that the agent can dictate and create her power. This idea has served as a fundamental foundation
for third wave feminist musicians (i.e. the Riot Grrrls) who re-claim music as something that can be used to dismantle the patriarchal system.

Agency could also be found through self-judgment. Alva and Alex both experienced miscarriages and both addressed the ways in which Amos’ music allowed them to question what it means to be a woman when their bodies had failed at pregnancy. The song “Spark”, which deals with Amos’ own miscarriages, was especially salient. After Alex was raped she had become pregnant and eventually miscarried. Listening to “Spark” served as a catalyst for her healing.

I guess one of the songs that kind of pops into my mind is with “Spark”. Um, which you know is about the miscarriage that she had which had been my experience after one of the assaults and I had kind of been questioning like what I would have done but my body was just under so much stress that I just ended up miscarrying anyway. I think part of me, even though I wasn’t sure what I would have done um, like I still kind of needed more time because it was so emotional. But part of me felt like my body kind of tricked me. Because, you know, wait a second. This is part of being a woman. Who am I? Like what’s my identity as a woman now? And I just kind of felt like once again my body kind of betrayed me... It’s nice to think “Okay, someone else has been there and been through that experience”. You know it’s one thing to kind of sit and talk with someone but to kind of have that artistic representation because I’m also really interested in art and how that can be used for healing purposes and know her music is the one that happened to provide that level of kind of emotional connection you know?

Alva echoes this sentiment by discussing the album From the Choirgirl Hotel, which featured the song “Spark”. Both the song and the album was influenced by Amos’ experience with miscarriage. For Alva, From the Choirgirl Hotel (or simply “Choirgirl” as it is called among Amos fans) took on a different meaning once she had experienced loosing a child. She talked about forming a new relationship with the songs, different than the one she had when listening to the album before her pregnancy.
I think it was Choirgirl, I think, she did that after she lost her baby. So after I had the miscarriage it had a whole different meaning for me. I understood it in a much different way. And it was pretty helpful actually.

When considering healing from a holistic perspective, Robinson and Carrier assert that holistic “[a]approaches don’t seek to just medicate suffering and disease away but to explore how these physical manifestations are connected to underlying social, emotional and spiritual pain” (2004:69). Healing therefore takes the form of seeking out ways in which the self connects with feelings and emotions present. For Alva and Alex, using Amos’ music as a means to heal following their miscarriages was exemplified through Robinson and Carrier’s definition. This can also help define sociological approaches to healing. Bloom (2009) writes that the sociological study of alternative medicine must include a component of “self-healing” in which sociologists attempt to understand how people heal themselves through means such as music. He writes that this attitude rests in the need for people to feel a sense of control, power and inner peace which leads to individuals feeling like they are in control of their healing.

Finding a means to control their healing was also exemplified with women who identified as “lesbian” or “queer”. These women expressed how Amos’ music helped them to heal during the coming out process. This is specifically important to address as 32% of the women in my sample identified as “lesbian”, “bi-sexual” or “queer”. Women who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or queer are often looking for a validation of their identity in the music they select and are interested in finding a performer who is more of a role model than a sexual object (O’Brien 2002; Bruzzi 1997; Valentine 1995). Blumer (1969) states that a central tenant of symbolic interaction is that people will use objects, in this case music, as a way of defining the self. I found this to be particularly true with
the lesbian, bi-sexual and queer women I spoke with. While Amber was in the process of coming out, she found that she related the most to Amos’ song “Pancake”, which critiques the Christian religion in general and the policies of the George W. Bush administration in particular.

You know I was in the coming out process. I didn’t love myself. I had issues with my father... I really liked Pancake. Um just because of the whole um, I really like her stance and where she’s, she’s always battling with the Christianity thing and um and trying to work through that and of course. I don’t know. I’ve had issues with Christianity and religion all together and of course coming out.

Similarly to Amber’s sentiment’s, Elizabeth expressed the need to feel like someone else understood what she was going through as she was in the process of coming out.

I mean I think at that point when I came out I already had a very, like a relationship with Tori’s music. After Little Earthquakes and Under the Pink also, you know I wouldn’t call it my favorite, but it was really crucial in my development I think. By the time Boys for Pele came out I don’t know, I just felt like it was like hearing from a really good friend again. And like hearing from a really good friend at a time when I felt like I really needed this really good friend.

Elizabeth also detailed an experience with Amos’ song “Icicle” and how the song gave her permission to come out and be a lesbian woman despite growing up in a religious household.

Like I said before, I grew up in a really religious home and my grandfather is Baptist minister and um my parents were really religious back then and my um but uh. So when Under the Pink came out the song “Icicle”, the beginning of that song, when you hear the piano, that’s a hymn. I don’t know if you know that. I can’t remember which hymn it is now. But I remember the first time I heard that song being like holy shit. Like this woman is doing something really amazing here. And um so at the time I hadn’t come out yet, as a lesbian, but I think I was really, I was struggling with Christianity but I was also just generally struggling with sexuality. I listened to the rest of the song and realized she is talking about masturbation. Like wow! Who talks about that? Like what woman is saying this kind of stuff? And then like I started juxtaposing it with religion and how those two are related or not related or whatever. And I remember then, like even then when I was first listening to her, feeling guilty about being a sexual person. My whole life just feeling so guilty about that. So the night that I was going to hear
her, I went to a religious college, that’s an important part of the story. I was at a religious school, a Christian university in Chicago and um, had tickets to go see Tori and I was walking across campus one night to, the night of the show I was getting ready to leave. I was getting ready to meet my friend John who I was going to the show with. I was walking across campus and um the bell tower on my campus starting playing that hymn. The beginning to “Icicle”. And I had never heard that song play on the bell tower never once before that and never once after it. And I was like, holy cow! That’s so crazy! That’s so weird! But it had this like instant thing somehow that like God was telling me it was all okay and like I felt really, like that was such a defining moment for me in my life and my spirituality and my sexuality and like, I just felt like it was really religious. Like a message from God that was like, it’s okay, you’re okay. Just the way that you are. Go to the show and listen and have fun. And like that was huge for me. So the feeling that that was sort of the beginning of like a healing process and getting over my old Christian guilt about sexuality and a lot of other things too.

I also observed a conversation between two women at the Chicago show which follows Elizabeth’s story of coming out.

I am standing at the top of the grand staircase, located in the lobby and across from the bar. I hear two women talking about the show and turn to look at them. They are both wearing tank tops, which was smart considering how hot the venue is. As they drink they are discussing how excited they are for the show. One women looks at the other and says, “You know, she led me to bi-sexuality”. The other woman responds, “Tori?” “Yup! I’m out!” And they clink their glasses and laugh.

As Macarther (2002) writes, “The term ‘feminist aesthetics’ invokes at least two different kinds of meaning. First, it refers specifically to cultural artifacts created by women, including the ways in which these are created as a means articulating a different voice within the fields of literature, art and music. Second, in some ways linked to the first meaning, it refers to the feminine or to the female body itself” (2002:15). The healing relationships with specific songs expressed by these women relates to a feminist aesthetic, a component of sociological approaches to music and aesthetic. Frith (1987) connects sociological approaches to aesthetics in music by asking the question “Can it really be the case that my pleasure in a song by the group Abba carries the same aesthetic
weight as someone else’s pleasure in Mozart?” (1987:134). When considering healing and Amos’ music it was important for each woman to conceptualize each song on her own terms, in her own way. The interpretation of the song “Icicle” for Elizabeth was that God was speaking to her through Amos’ music, telling her that being gay was okay. This may not be the meaning that other women find with the song which also speaks to feminist standpoint as each woman has found their own meaning with various lyrics.

Using Amos’ Music and Identity to Heal from Abuse

Perhaps the most common comment with women who have used Amos’ music to heal from physical and emotional violence is that her music was what first allowed them to admit that they had been victimized. This was most evident with Allison and Doreen. Doreen expressed how women who were abused used Amos’ music to heal,

I think that being a survivor of an abusive relationship at a really young age, I was with this guy from 14-17 and I’m 30 now, that you really start to think of yourself as flawed and different. I came from a small conservative town so I was the central point of gossip about whether or not I was telling the truth. And I felt like the only thing I had pulling me through it was my copy of Little Earthquakes. That somehow this person understood how horrible it was to be a girl who was misunderstood and laughed at. And the thing about abuse is that you are never free from it. I think I am much better and her music certainly helped me heal. But I am never free from that title. Which is why I revisit the songs I had to listen to then because I need to be reminded of how far I have come.

Allison also first became aware of Amos’ music through a CD of Little Earthquakes. Hearing the song “Me and a Gun”, written about Amos’ rape, allowed Allison to begin to heal from her own rape. She expressed that “Me and a Gun” was her trigger, the point where she realized that she was going to need help dealing with being raped.
"Me and a Gun" and I finally realized, you know, who sang that song and what I had heard it from. And I just couldn’t handle it anymore and I just went home and just listened to the song on repeat it was just sort of, it triggered a flood of emotion I guess and I felt incredibly overwhelmed but also incredibly grateful because I felt like maybe somebody understood and there are other people and I wasn’t so isolated. You know, maybe it was time. And so I do attribute the Tori song to being, I guess, my trigger... Tori is responsible for the first time I started healing from when I was raped. It’s her music that lead me there.

Considering Amos’ music as a catalyst for healing is also present through the relationship that the women seemed to form with Amos as a person. Beyond enjoying her music, many of the women expressed that meeting and interacting with Amos, through ‘meet and greets’ or through concert performances, was central to their healing. The association with Amos as an individual was what was driving their healing. I should note that, for some women, the need to meet Amos in a one-on-one situation was not necessary. They had built a relationship with her through her music and felt content with that interaction. However, for many, such as Allison, the experience of knowing that Amos is a survivor of rape lead to Allison meeting Amos before a 1998 concert and then continuing to build and maintain a personal relationship with Amos when she was on tour.

I think it was September of ’99 on the new tour I went to Chicago and with some friends and I just went to say “Hi” to her bodyguard. He’s like, “Oh, she’s gonna want to talk to you. Hang around.” And then he came back and he’s like “She’d like you to come back stage after the show.” And I thought that was bizarre because I hadn’t had any contact with her. I didn’t assume that she would know who I was. So and then I went backstage that night and since then I’ve seen her, usually, once a tour. I mean I don’t, don’t get the wrong impression, we’re not buddies. I don’t go stay at her house or anything like that. But, actually about once a tour have gone backstage. I talked to her at meet and greets a couple of time and I spent a year in India and when I was in India she was touring and I wasn’t at the tour and so my friends got little notes back and forth from her to me and me to her and so that was kind of cool.
Athena’s experience was similar to Allison’s. Athena had kept her rape a secret until she had the opportunity to meet Amos at a meet and greet before a concert.

She was the first person that I had told I was raped… For me the message I was getting, and I’m sure that everyone gets different messages, is that I wasn’t alone. And at that point I haven’t told anyone that I was raped. I had been raped over three years before that. I don’t think I actually thought about it all. To me that was a part of my life that was over and I was trying to continue on with my life. I mean I was falling apart in other ways that I didn’t realize were related to that but then I started hearing someone else say some of the things that I’ve been thinking and I was like, maybe there’s something to this you know maybe people can expect to grow and get better.

Athena continued on to say,

[Q: So was listening to her music healing for you?] I guess healing in crossing a bridge really from being a victim which is how I felt for very long time to being a survivor and being able to find the life that I wanted for myself and creative for myself.

Sandy found both Amos, the person, and Amos’ tours to be healing for her while she was attempting to overcome rape and miscarriage. During Amos’ summer tour in 2003 Amos became accustomed to Sandy’s meet and greet visits and seemed to invest herself in Sandy’s healing. Sandy said,

It was that there was always other people around and there was some safety in that because I was not, I wasn’t able to harm myself. And I really didn’t want to harm myself. But I’ve never been a cutter and I’ve never done those things and so I didn’t, but I was having these strong suicidal urges… She’d [Amos] asked me, uh, the past to give her notes everyday, on the stop in Columbus. It was like one of the first couple of shows I guess. She asked me to give her updates and so I was passing back a note everyday through Joel [Amos’ then bodyguard] with a song request. And sometimes it would get played and sometimes there were other things. But it was like a very, it was weird because it was very one sided and like I didn’t have her talking I had the songs talking back to me.

And goes on to talk about her discussions with Amos,

She just said, you know, “Thanks for writing.” So I knew, I knew that she was reading. I know other people backstage were probably reading them too. But
then she said, before she left, “Are there any requests?”, and I said, “Uh, whatever you want to do.”

During her concert that evening Amos played a song which began by singing Sandy’s name,

She looked at me and she started doing this improve that was like, “Take them with you. Take them out of Carolina. Take the girls with you.” Um, “You gotta care for yourself” and I still listen to now sometimes when I really need to like, when I think that things are dark and it’s kind of a touchstone.

As I previously mentioned, many of the women articulated that they did not need to form a personal relationship with Amos in order to feel like Amos understood them. Knowing that Amos was a survivor of rape was enough for many of the women to feel like Amos understood what they were going through. For Peggy, listening to Amos’ music allowed her to begin to heal from being molested by a family member.

I was molested when I was little by my mom’s best friend’s son. And I didn’t tell anyone. I didn’t want to tell anyone because it was my mom’s best friend. I guess I was like 6. At the time I knew it was not right but I didn’t know. I was 6 you know? And I kept it to myself... She [Tori] talks about how when you’re molested as a kid you have to kind of kill off that little girl part of yourself because otherwise you’ll go nuts and go crazy. And that’s why you’re that angry girl in your class at school... Um, it takes you a long time to really re-connect with that and like some kind of child in that way. And I have resounding... I don’t trust anybody. You know, I just, I don’t... But Tori, it’s definitely helped me um, just her music. Like listening to it when I feel like nothing else is, is gonna be right. You know I can listen to a Tori song.

Abuse by a family member was often discussed among the women when considering their relationships with their fathers. Many women discussed how Amos’ music gave them permission to examine an abusive or neglectful dynamic with their fathers, a theme I was not anticipating. As Lily says, “My dad is very, very violent and very sexually violent and it was, I don’t know how it helped me I just know that it did”.
Jasmine detailed how Amos’ music had served as a jumping off point for healing herself after her father’s abuse.

I mean growing up, my father was abusive. He was very abusive to my mother so, and I’m the oldest child. I have a younger brother who is two years younger than me. And a younger sister who is eight years younger than I. I was always the one to turn them away from that. And um, being a girl of course and the oldest, I wasn’t allowed to do very much and go anywhere. And so I would just lock myself in my room and Tori was the only thing that got me through those days... I’m Hispanic. And all my uncles, you know I come from this you know the men have to be macho and I hate that. And I guess growing up I never took to what it meant to be a girl.

Jasmine went on to talk about an instance with her father where he discovered that she had her boyfriend over to her house while he and her mother were out for the evening.

My parents came home early and I asked the boy to leave and he came into the room and that was the first time he ever really hit me. And he didn’t just hit me. It’s like he was hitting me and he was telling me I didn’t raise you to be like this. And to be a whore and be a slut and what are people going to think about you? And after he said all that stuff he just he had a, he kicked me in the vagina. And I thought at that moment, you know, okay I see how it is to be a girl. And I see what I’m gonna have to go through.

At the time of our interview Jasmine’s father was dying from cancer and she was, again, turning to her relationship with Amos is a large factor in dealing with her father at the end of his life.

You know with my dad, he’s terminally ill with cancer. It’s hard to, to kind of know how to feel about it all. I just don’t know if I forgive him for everything he’s done. But you know when she came out with Abnormally Attracted to Sin, Ophelia was one song that kind of reached out to me, when she says, “Some father’s will control from the grave”. It’s true! I always think, “What will my dad think of me doing this or that?”. Now I think he controlled a lot of my life and he still does. He’s a completely different man.

Ida explained that Amos’ music allowed her to examine her relationship with her father through locking herself in her room and singing Amos’ music.
You know you can understand personally. All of those things for me, you know, were and of course, of course, you know my alcoholic father, my dysfunctional family. Our poverty stricken lifestyle. It was, you know, I look back and I am glad for my family, you know I probably was full of angst because of that place.

Further, Marianne and Ida are friends and in both of their interviews each discussed how they bonded over the lack of relationship with their fathers through the song “Winter”.

They cite the lyrics to “Winter” which say,

Snow can wait, I forgot my mittens.  
Wipe my nose, get my new boots on.  
I get a little warm in my heart when I think of Winter.  
I put my hands in my father’s gloves.

And goes on to say,

He says, “When you gonna make up your mind?”  
“When you gonna love you as much as I do?  
When you gonna make up your mind?  
Cause things are gonna change so fast.  
All the white horses are still in bed.  
I tell you that I’ll always want you near.  

Marianne and Ida used “Winter” to build a friendship based in trying to understand their relationship with their fathers through their relationship with each other.

We have similar pasts with our situation with our fathers. And there was a song “Winter” where she talks about her father and um, we you know, we had a nice break down moment together when we were younger about it. [Q: Do you think you can put into words what that feeling was?] The feeling for us I think was a loss. Gosh I’d hate to put it incorrectly but I believe (in the song) she was walking hand in hand with her father and from just reading things and hearing her speak and stuff that she did have some, whatever, estranged relationship with her father, was Tori Amos. So I think we both felt that feeling of loss (Marianne).

Through associating Amos’ song “Winter” to the estranged relationship they have with their fathers, they are also associating the song to the connection they have with each other and using it to heal each other.
Understanding the emotional reactions women have to Amos' songs, particularly when they are used as a catalyst for healing, serves to further explain how women use music as a means to heal themselves. As I have mentioned, sociologists have relied on medical studies and literature to help explain how music can help a person who is battling an illness. However, one thing that sociologists did learn from the complimentary and alternative medicine model (CAM) was that it lent itself to helping patients first consider ways that they can heal themselves (Broom 2009). Further, because holistic approaches to healing define healing as something that combines both emotional and spiritual practices, combining healing and emotional responses serve to further explain the impact Amos’ music has. This was exemplified through Cassandra’s use of Amos’ music as a means first to heal from an abusive relationship and later while she was attempting to heal from having breast cancer.

The easiest thing I can say is having been a singer, I just, just singing a long and using my own imagination to channel it while I was listening to her trying not to think about if someone else is watching me now would I sound good or what. And so that was a good first way to start. But then a lot times what I would do is just listen to whatever song it was at the time that I felt like I needed to hear and I started off with first just copying down the lyrics in my journal and then as I got a little more open to talking about things in the journal I started to actually listen to the music and I was asking how does that apply to me, how does that make me feel um, what can I do to try to make myself stronger or to help myself to get through this. What can I draw from what I am hearing that might help. And I think a lot of it was just somebody who had been through a lot of it kind of offering me indirect advice. Or just say yeah I’ve been there. Um, and uh, I mean eventually I did end up seeing a psychiatrist and being put on anti-depressants but I really tend to think that the period of time that I was trying to figure things out for myself was very useful because it helped me to get in touch with a lot of emotions that maybe I didn’t want to because it was so negative. And um, it helped me to put a lot of things into perspective.
Further, Robinson and Carrier (2004), assert that holistic approaches to healing and emotion have distinct gendered status. Similar to the findings of Bloom (2009), who asserted that patients participate in holistic approaches to healing as a way to re-gain control of their bodies, retain a sense of power, find inner peace and relax, women who had been victimized were also looking to Amos’ music as a means to regain the control over their bodies and emotions.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have addressed how women are using Amos’ music to heal and what they are healing from. I began by identifying common themes in Amos’ performance style and albums. I have identified that women found Amos’ music to be generally healing in any situation they found themselves in. I have also identified specific areas which the women articulated they needed to heal from, such as abuse, rape, addiction, eating disorders, coming out and relationships with their fathers. I have demonstrated how symbolic interactionism and feminist standpoint can combine to form a sociological structure to the study of healing and have attempted to show that using music to heal the self is not only beneficial for many of the women, but in many cases it is necessary. In the next chapter I connect healing with the emotions women experienced while listening to Amos’ music or meeting Amos in person.
CHAPTER V- EMOTIONS AND EMOTIONAL CONNECTIONS

In this chapter I answer my second research question "What is the nature of the emotional connection(s) fans of Tori Amos make with her music?" This chapter serves to fill a gap in sociology of emotions literature by illustrating how the music of a feminist performer draws out, reflects or connects to female fans emotions, and discuss how this process challenges the gendered expectations of emotions. Thus, the juxtaposition of sociology of emotions with symbolic interactionist theory and sociology of music serves as a foundation for this chapter. Following Frith's statement that, "The question we should be asking is not what does popular music reveal about 'the people' but how does it construct them" (1987:137), I demonstrate how music and emotion combine with constructions of gender (e.g. Bessett 2006) and serve to help women interpret emotions which may be considered inappropriate or taboo for women (e.g. Aldrich and Tenenbaum 2006; Hochschild 1989). In order to achieve this, I address the specific emotions women detailed with Amos' music either via listening on their own or during a live performance, and discuss how these listening practices resonate with women's assertions that Amos' music is the only music they turn to when attempting to deal with their emotions.

Further, I explore the ways in which the women used Amos' music to access various emotions, and describe the songs and lyrics which were a source of emotional connection to the music, often leading to a feeling of empowerment. I base this section in exploring sociological approaches to music through symbolic interaction and contend that Blumer's (1969) statement that people find meaning in things based on the meaning they have applied to it stands true to interpreting women's emotions regarding Amos' music.

9 Author emphasis.
However, I also note that the women were cognizant that their use of Amos’ music was specifically for drawing out and acknowledging certain emotions. Finally, I discuss crying as a central expression of emotion for the women interviewed. While other expressions of emotions were present (i.e. striking something when angry), crying was revealed as a common theme during coding. Indeed most women mentioned it at some point in their interviews. Further, while crying may be seen as a behavior, it was often connected with the emotions of anger, happiness and sadness during interviews and thus I include it here, in the discussion of the emotions women expressed while listening to Amos’ music.

**Selecting Amos’ Music to Define Emotions**

When asked about their emotional response to Amos’ music, or to consider the emotions that Amos’ music stirs in them, a common response was that Amos’ music was used as a means to make sense of the emotions they were feeling. For example, Ashre described a ritual that she performed whenever she was attempting to work through a difficult time.

I guess just because it gives me a place to go to kind of work through things. I remember I used to always have, I used to have three songs that I would always listen to when I was really, really worked up and upset. I would listen to “Precious Things” and I’d get really mad and like really, like passionate angry. And then I would listen to “Here. In my Head” and that would like calm me down. And then I would listen to “Over It” and that would kind of, like, I had my catharsis and I had my relaxation at the end and it was my little routine when I got really upset. I would listen to those three songs and they’d make me feel better. I still do that. When I’m really upset I listen to Boys for Pele and it makes me feel better. There’s just, you know, sometimes I’ll have a certain feeling and I’ll be like “Oh, I have to listen to that song right now.” And then it makes me feel better.
This sentiment was similarly expressed by Sandy who mentioned that the song “Black Swan” served as a way for her to calm down. This was particularly important to Sandy as she suffers from Ehlers-Danlos syndrome, a joint disease that often leaves her bound to her house. She described the song as a way to talk to herself and assure herself that her feelings are temporary.

That song is, for me, always been kind of like an “It’s ok. She just has to check out right now. You know, part of you is strong. Just hang out. She’s gone. She’ll be back soon. It will all be ok.” It calms me down. Now it’s to the point where it’s Pavlovian. It’s kind of a Pavlovian thing.

When I asked Ashre why she selected to use Amos’ music, over other female musicians, to work through emotional moments she said,

Cause she’s better. [Q: What do you mean by “better”?] Um, I don’t know. I’ve been listening to her for so long that I just, I feel such a relationship with her music and I feel like you can find one of her songs for any mood that you’re in and her piano playing is so incredible. And I just think she’s better.

Ashre’s response to this question mirrored Madison’s comment regarding why she privileges Amos’ music over any other artist. In fact, Madison noted that, other than occasionally listening to the radio, she only listens to Amos’ music.

It’s like an unconditional love for her music and um, I don’t want to cheat on any other artists. I guess I don’t have room for another artist in there because she takes everything musically that I have that I want to give. You know? I don’t want to share that elsewhere. Um, and I think that’s why I, I make a conscious decision to not listen to anybody else. I don’t listen to anybody else. Even, even still.

Not only did most of the women articulate that Amos is their primary music of choice for exploring emotions, many women also articulated that Amos’ music is not necessarily helpful as back ground music played as they are going about daily activities because, in these moments, they are not dealing with their emotions. Indeed, many of the
women explained that they preferred to listen to Amos when they were alone in order to summon the reflective emotional state which allowed them to digest and interpret the meaning of Amos’ music. This mainly took place in their car or in their homes.

The place that I listen to her is in my car because I like to sing while I drive. I have a ton of the *Legs and Boots* disks, I burn them on my DVD burner and I listen to them in my living room sometimes and I just stay there and I’ll meditate... Sometimes the emotions just, or other times it’s just that comforting thing and I’m not sure why I prefer to be by myself. Maybe because I know what they mean to me and not necessarily everybody else around me feel the same (Charlotte).

Listening alone offered the women the ability to interpret and develop a relationship with the music without having to be concerned about the reactions of others.

I mean emotions can suck. They envelope you and you just can’t escape them and you know the alternative is to shut down and not feel anything which I’ve done which is not healthy and Tori kind of helps me feel them safely. There’s just something that I have a very difficult time doing. You know, the anger, sadness and even happiness. It just, I’ve never been as happy as I was my last Tori concert. It’s something that, she helps me with all that in a way that no one else in the world hasn’t. (Laura)

Other women, like Alva, found that accessing their emotion using Amos’ music was beneficial because they were able to explore what they were feeling without having to discuss or relay emotional experience to a live person.

They let you explore what’s happening to you with some distance. And it also lets you know that someone has gone through the same thing. Or even if it’s not exactly the same thing, um, it’s kind of equitable.

Alva’s sentiments were echoed by women who had survived violent encounters with men. For many of the women who are survivors of sexual violence, listening to Amos’ alone allowed them to tap into emotions they felt while attempting to heal from

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10 *Legs and Boots* is a series of live concerts recorded during Amos’ 2007 concert tour.
being assaulted. Particularly if they felt more comfortable healing themselves without the help of a therapist.

I am a sexual abuse survivor and, as I know many of Toriphiles\textsuperscript{11} are, and her album came out at a time when I was just really working hard on my own recovery work and the songs captured some of the feelings that I was having myself, some of the ways that I was coming to understand my own position in the world. And particularly “Winter”. You know I realize that Tori may not have meant exactly where I took all the songs but to me that’s all that matters. I knew what it felt like to be sexually involved was someone and to present yourself in a way that it is intended to appeal to them but the same time to feel very emotionally disconnected and so you’re winning kind of buying gauging them but the same time you’re not really getting what you want. And so she kind of connected to me there. She seems to understand some of the feelings that I was having and her songs were safe ways for me to contact those feelings within myself without necessarily having to cut myself open in the way that I would do in therapy and talking about sometimes expressing these things directly to people and hearing them through um Tori songs was kind of a way of approaching these feelings from a safe angle. (Gail)

Defining what a sociological approach to emotions would look like has been explored in the sociology of emotions literature through the work of Turner (2009), Kotarba and Vannini (2009) and Turner and Sets (2005), to name a few. In general, these works assert that individuals acquire the emotions of their culture through socialization and thus their emotions reflect what is appropriate for their culture. Further, as feminist theorists such as Butler (1999) will point out, combining gender with culture and socialization results in gendered expectations of men and women. Therefore, when considering why women choose to listen to music alone, it is not a stretch to assume that being alone helps resist cultural expectations of emotions. When I asked Madison why she chooses to listen to Amos alone she said,

Because I think she is like caviar. I think some people really don’t like it. And those who don’t understand the power that her music has don’t understand why

\textsuperscript{11}“Torophile” is a name fans of Amos use to describe each other.
you would ever listen to that in the first place. And so I think it becomes a very private kind of enjoyment. I mean it’s almost like I don’t want to share that with anybody else. Nobody else understands it and I don’t care. It’s okay because it’s, it’s my own personal experience.

As Bessett (2006) found, listening actions are distinctly gendered. Bessett’s study showed that women expected that the music they listen to will bridge a connection with their emotions. She established that women who listen to other women expect that there will be a bond formed and “[c]ultivate experiences with objects toward an intended outcome and, in the process, cultivate themselves” (2006:50). Further, as Sheilds notes, what complicates the study of gendered emotions is that many neglect to understand that emotions are explored in terms of “[w]hat they are about” (2002:141). Listening to the music alone allows women to figure out what their emotions are all about. This is especially salient considering the women articulated a certain vulnerability when listening to music which is especially meaningful to them. They do not want anyone else to comment on or disturb this relationship because it serves as a place where they can openly experience their emotions, without socially constructed standards being imposed on them.

A result of listening to music alone may be that, in this moment, the women feel they are allowed to practice emotional recall (see Leavy 2009, Ellis 2003; hooks 1999; Ellis 1991). Emotional recall becomes present in moments when women are using a song as a means to cajole and work through an emotion (Leavy 2009; Ellis 2003; Ellis 1991). Using music as a means to access emotions and feel in control of their emotion is a form of emotional recall. As Alex said, the practice of simply listening to Amos is private because her music is often used to bring an emotion to the surface.
I try to just listen to her music by myself and kind of just allow myself to kind of feel free to kind of but out and use her emotions that I feel at the time. And sometimes I’ll listen to her music to help kind of coax along emotional release.

Yet, emotional recall could become complicated when seeing Amos perform in person as this is not really private. I asked Allison how the practice of listening and experiencing Amos’ music by herself translates when she is at a concert and she replied,

Oh, you know it’s still a solitary experience I guess. I mean you can be in an audience with a ton of other people but what you’re experiencing I guess is still personal whereas you’re not, you know, doing housework while you’re listening to it or listening to it at the office or anything like that. You’re there for maybe one purpose. I guess you’re very focused.

Connecting Amos’ Music with Sadness, Anger and Happiness

Many of the women began to talk about the ways in which Amos’ music allowed them to identify the emotions they were feeling, most commonly described as sadness, anger and happiness. In some way, each woman used variations of these words within their interviews when describing their emotions. In keeping with sociology of emotions literature and the work of Turner (2009), it is important to note that looking at these emotions as social is dictated by culture (which emotions are appropriate for people to feel in certain situations). Fields et al. write, “In studies of emotions, interactionists explore how individuals use their capacity for agency to bring their feelings in line with what is expected of them… People can work out their feelings, trying to create within themselves the proper response to a situation” (2006:156). Thus, symbolic interactionists view emotions as not merely a natural impulse; rather they are shaped by culture and our capacity to react to our feelings.

An interesting aspect of the specific emotions of sadness, anger and happiness is that they are more extreme emotions. This suggests that when the women are
experiencing an intense emotion they turn to Amos’ music to help them understand what they are feeling. Considering the emotions which were named the most among the women interviewed, it becomes understandable that they would want to be alone when experiencing the emotion. This is particularly evident when considering sadness as an emotion which rises to the surface during Amos’ songs, mainly because sadness is not generally something that would be considered a positive emotion. As Lupton notes, “When people are experiencing sadness or depression they are often told to ‘pick themselves up’” (1998:62) and goes on to say “Maintaining control is understood to involve ‘holding on’ to an emotion, as in the common phrases ‘she held her temper’, ‘he held in his grief” (1998:63). Yet, for the women interviewed, being able to explore and address sadness was a welcome alternative to simply asserting that everything in their lives was fine.

Experiencing sadness as a social construct also linked to sadness as a gendered construct. When I asked why they were attracted to a song which makes them feel sad some would respond by saying that they felt like they could not otherwise express their feelings of sadness because to take the time to feel sad would mean that they reject the perception that women should “smile” or be happy regardless of their situation. Emma explained that she was attempting to deal with the suicide of her sister and that the sadness she was feeling was chronicled in Amos’ song “Maybe California”. In “Maybe California” Amos sings about a woman who is contemplating suicide and attempts to talk the woman down off of a physical and metaphorical ledge. The song begins with the lyrics,
Hey Mrs., see, please don’t jump.
When nothing is making sense anymore to me.
“I don’t know when I stopped making him smile.”
“Now the kids see me crying all the time” (“Maybe California, Abnormally Attracted To Sin 2009).

When describing how “Maybe California” allowed her to feel sadness for her sister’s death, Emma’s voice shook as she attempted to control her emotions.

I sat there and I thought two things. One I think I needed to hear it. I think that everybody needs a reminder sometimes to hold on. But just, you know, like I said my sister committed suicide, she did it in California, which is not where I live. She moved away and then did it in California. And here’s this, this artist that I just, I just love their music so much, doing this song called “Maybe California”… And I felt very thankful that somebody who had a song about so many issues that I think are powerful and important would write a song specifically to tell people “Don’t do it.” You know? That meant a lot to me on both the level of not for me, but for the other people. Because I don’t, I’m not in a position to be able to make statements to people about suicide and to help people across the world. And yet she is. And so for her to take and, and make a statement that can help people across the whole world by saying, “Just don’t do it. Hang on. Just hang on.” I was very thankful for that. I thought that was really something special.

Defining sadness often could be as simple as just looking for something to help recognize the feeling of being sad, a song which will help a woman feel the sadness and then be able to lift out of the sadness.

Sometimes I go to it [the music] when I’m really sad and it lifts my mood. Sometimes I go to it almost like a good book you know will make you escape something for a little while at least and make you reflect or make you go on a journey that you’d like to take. To get you out of reality for a little while (Donna).

By far the most mentioned album that the women reach for when they are feeling sad was Boys for Pele, perhaps this has something to do with the album being written at a time in Amos’ life when she was dealing with the end of a relationship with a man. The songs reflected this sentiment and many women addressed this in their comments about the album. “With [Boys for Pele] it’s just so raw and emotional and I, when I’m feeling
really sad I always listen to it cause it just kind of, it kind of lets you like take your sadness and turn it around and be more in control of it I guess?” (Ashre).

For Judy, to listen to Boys for Pele means that she was attempting to deal with a depressive state. She talked about putting the album on when she was “sick of smiling” and “just wanted to feel the sadness take over her” so that she could be in that moment or, what she called, “Feeling the rain.”

You don’t wanna be happy and cheerful. It makes me feel better. It’s not wanting to be sad or stay sad. Like songs like “Horses” just say all the right notes on that feeling where you’re, you may be disappointed in yourself, maybe you’re feeling hurt and depressed really… You know how like when you’re sad people try to make you feel better? Sometimes you just need to be sad. Explore those feelings. Be in those feelings. You know what’s wrong. It’s not that you’re confused about why you’re sad. You don’t need to be fixed. You just need to be there for a while… It helps me, through that and I think too it’s a place to go when you’re there. When you’re feeling that way. That’s one of the things I think I’ve learned from Tori Amos. I think that you can be sad and you can stay and be sad. She said “Sad has some really cute dresses.” You know? And you can just say there, listen to Pele, have glass of red wine and then when you’re feeling better you can put in something like The Beekeeper and be happy.

Judy’s description of feeling her sadness runs in contradiction with Lupton’s findings. Lupton found that women were apt to brush off sadness and attempt to ignore the emotion. Women she interviewed would say things like “Well, it’s no good thinking about bad things that might happen, think about the good side of things” (1998: 48). They would confess that holding in this emotion was often overwhelming and in these moments they would have to remind themselves to “not dwell on it” (1998:48). This speaks to a gendered norm of women being asked to be happy or to “smile” (e.g. Hochschild 1983) even when they do not feel happy. This emotional labor, or as Hochschild writes, “[t]he management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display” (1983:7), is distinctly gendered. Similar to the flight attendant in
Hochschild’s book is who told to “smile” by the male passenger, the women I interviewed are demonstrating the inequality placed on their emotions. They know they should present themselves as happy, yet they also realize that they need to experience sadness first. Hochschild calls this the “public” and “private” fronts and, indeed, most of the women said that they rarely listen to Amos music in a public setting, preferring instead to listen to it alone.

In Turner’s (2000) discussion of the origins of human emotion, he asserts that allowing ourselves to experience sadness directly relates to positive and negative social sanctions. Feeling sadness, Turner argues, allows individuals to be motivated to make amends with the source of their sadness while also enticing us to use sadness as a positive motivation to move past the sadness. Essentially, Judy’s example of allowing herself to feel sadness allows her to move past the gendered assertion that women should not be sad (e.g., Lupton 1998) and is based in a primal need to both address and explore sadness as a motivational emotion (e.g., Turner 2000).

The album Boys for Pele also was discussed as an outlet to express anger. For Cassandra anger and listening to Boys for Pele related to a time when she was in the process of leaving an abusive relationship.

I think a lot of times when I was first listening to her I heard what she was saying but it didn’t necessarily resonate with me as much until college. At that point that was the first time I ever got into a serious relationship with anybody and it was not a good one. I really started listening to unlimited amounts of her going through all these ups and downs in this relationship. And um, it took me a while to get inner strength... But initially I think just hearing some of the things that she says in her songs, of course I’m thinking Boys for Pele, you know the anger and all of that, that really intensified with me at that time.
Peggy’s reaction to *Boys for Pele* was similar to Cassandra’s in that she felt anger while listening to it. However, for Peggy, *Boys for Pele* served as a guide, written by Amos, on how to express anger.

When I listen to *Boys for Pele*, I remember what I felt listening to it as an eighth grader and it’s kind of scary how the more I still feel, and maybe it’s because I’m unhealthy, but um, I can relate to it as somebody who’s had some… Who’s gone. Who’s not there anymore but I still have a lot of the same reactions to it. [Q: Do you mean like a relationship?] Just in general uh, it’s not like, just like angry. Lots of anger. Just that people you know, why can’t people just not be terrible?

As Shields notes, “Anger involves some appraisal that one has been deprived of or denied what one is rightly due, whether that deprivation consists of the theft of one’s car, an attack on one’s name, or concerns about endangered species” (2002:142). Shields argues that anger is spurred by an event in which we feel slighted or underestimated. Further, anger, according to Turner is perhaps the most primal emotion. Turner writes, “Yet anger is a powerful emotion, and its release in very intense forms is highly disruptive to the normal flow of interaction… Even when individuals ‘lose it’ and emit very high-voltage anger, there is a stereotypical configuration of responses that, I hypothesize, are universal” (2000:129). Indeed, for many of the women interviewed, expressing anger meant that they were directing an emotion at a person or event. This was evident with Peggy who noted that she would play the song “Not David Bowie” when she wanted to express anger toward her co-workers,

It was just like “I hate you and you’re pissing me off.” But, I’m, that song has such a wonderful like, um, just a “Get over yourself and you’re a horrible person, actually. In case no one ever told you.” I had a situation at my job where I totally had this person’s back and we were in together and then it was a very quick turnaround. It became very clear to me that, that it was convenient for her to have my back and be my biggest fan and that pissed me off.
Shields writes, “Anger is always about something, but in order for it to be directed toward someone requires that the target of anger is presumed to be somehow responsible for the loss” (2002:142). Using Amos’ music to express anger at another person was central to the comments made by the women interviewed. For example, Doreen mentions that the song “Blood Roses” allowed her to address her anger at a family member,

That line, “When chickens get a taste of your meat”, I know she is talking about a relationship she was in. But for me that line relates to how I feel about my relationship with my in-laws. They are so combative with me and they refuse to listen to my point of view. They argue about everything. And when they are talking that song just plays over and over in my head because I am just so pissed!

Because many of the songs are rooted in railing against the oppressive forces women encounter, many women found the album to be indicative of their own feelings of anger or rage. The song “Professional Widow” on Boys for Pele is composed as a fast paced rock song which aggressively describes a woman who has declared that she does not want to just be the muse of a man. She wants to be honored as the creative force in the relationship. Alva saw the song as an opportunity to express her anger toward a partner or a person she was involved in an intimate relationship with. For Alva the song goes against gendered stereotypes of what women are expected to feel and how they are expected to express emotions such as anger,

I’ve always thought of Professional Widow as a song about owning the potentially destructive and manipulative power of sexuality. I think it also contains some commentary about popular culture. I see this song as saying, “Fuck You. You won't degrade me. This is what I am, this is my power, this is my choice.”

Feeling and expressing anger is distinctly socialized and gendered because anger is an acceptable emotion for men (Bessett 2006; Shields 2002; Lupton 1998; Crawford et
al. 1992). Crawford et al. contend that “[a]nger in women is expected to be restrained; if it is not then it is often represented as being ‘emotional’ or ‘hysterical’ rather than being aggressive or violent” (1992:171). A result of this suppression is based in patriarchal attitudes toward women. Shields writes, “Anger per se is not a masculine prerogative; rather a sense of entitlement is a masculine prerogative, and anger is the outcome of violations (or anticipated violations) of those entitlements... Where gender is concerned, what is at stake is the status quo of social arrangements that inequitably benefit one sex over the other” (2002:146). In other words, existing social structures allow men to experience and express anger because anger holds power. When men are angry they express the emotion through physical expressions such as hitting or through emotional expressions like yelling (Crawford 1991). This act becomes gendered because women are not expected to raise their voice or to resort to violent acts. For example, when studying the show “Roseanne”, Rowe (1995) presented a cultural feminist analysis of the anger presented by the title character. She asserts that much of the appeal women had to Roseanne was that the character expressed the ongoing struggle of women through yelling and being physically aggressive. Relating Roseanne to cultural feminist perceptions of emotions, Rowe writes “The cultural resistance to her could be explained by the fact that she usurped the male prerogative of making jokes and expressing aggression” (1995:53). This further relates to feminist standpoint theory as one of its purposes is to try to “[m]ake specific connections between certain modes of gendered subjectivity... How, standpoint theorists ask, are our practices both constituted by and constitutive of the structures that organize our experience” (Wreek 2004:184). Thus, by connecting their anger to Amos’ music, the women are placing their own experience and
identity in the foreground, challenging the patriarchal perception of women as passive and marginalized.

A common song associated with this challenge is “Precious Things”, a song that was attractive because of the musical composition. The song is the personification of a rock song because of its rapid beat and aggressive composition. Further, as I previously mentioned, the song is played at almost all of Amos’ live shows as either the opening or closing song which many women saw as a testament to the power of the song to fuel their emotions.

The first thing that really got me kind of like interested in her was “Precious Things”. That’s why I think I hear that song and I just, I, I was in my car listening to that song and I was punching my steering wheel. Cause I feel it! [Q: What, what about it makes you want to do that?] Her voice. You really, I mean you really hear what she’s saying. You understand what she’s saying. But when she screams, like I said, you can actually hear her emotion in her voice. And it’s just a really powerful song. (Nancy)

Nancy is articulated a connection between feeling anger and relating that anger to a sense of power. This was echoed by Dawn who saw “Precious Things” as an anthem for aggression, “‘Precious Things’, it had that um, anthem, Just the right amount of anger that I needed to feel and know that I could survive.”

This relationship, as Crawford et al. (1992) found, is formed as a way for women to reclaim the powerlessness they often feel. They write that anger is “[a] response to strong judgments about unfairness, injustice, which remains unresolved… It is this kind of anger, directed at trying to overcome some basic injustice or unfairness - not necessarily of a personal nature - that is frequently accompanied by ‘throwing a tantrum’ or ‘bursting into tears’” (1992:183). Indeed, throwing tantrums or crying uncontrollably are traits commonly associated with women, and is a reason why many women avoid
feeling angry because losing control would be looked down upon. However, during Amos’ live performances, women often scream and throw their fists in the air during songs which address this emotional repression. Haven sums up the line which, when performed live, ignites a massive response from the crowd through cheering and screaming.

What I love is “Precious Things”, you know, it’s the infamous line. “So you can make me cum that doesn’t make you Jesus.” I think guys get such a power trip. It’s like dude. Okay. I need you for sex. Well, I happen to because I’m not a lesbian unfortunately. I’ve given up so much power in my life because I had horrible role models for relationships and it’s like, no, it does not make you Jesus! I mean, I don’t believe in Jesus, but you know. It doesn’t make you more powerful. It just doesn’t.

In some cases, anger was connected to both gendered and religious institutions. For example, Jean connected anger with the religious oppression she faced from her school and her church.

I was very into church when I was in high school so there was a little bit of religion and, and my father had died the beginning of my sophomore year, so there was a little bit of that anger. And just remembering, even in high school, wanting to turn to the church for comfort and not getting it.

For Madeline, expressing anger also can mean expressing frustration and releasing the tension related with conflict. She described how the song “Siren” allows her to work through negative experiences with other people.

“Siren” is one of my all-time favorites and I finally got to hear it live which was amazing. I listen to that song when somebody’s mean to me. Truly whenever somebody is mean to me, somebody hurts my feelings, I know when you’re a grownup that’s not supposed to happen but it totally does. People just pretend it doesn’t. I can’t pretend. So when somebody hurts my feelings that song goes on repeat. So my family’s like “What’s up? What happened?”

Madeline is articulating one of Firth’s main arguments about music as a means to define the self. He writes, “And so it needs stressing that what people listen to is more
important for their sense of themselves than what they watch or read. Patterns of music use provide a better map of social life than viewing or reading habits” (2002:46).

Further, as Fields et al. note, “Our emotions help us locate ourselves in the often stratified worlds in which we live: we assess who we are in relation to others, and, if we are unsatisfied with that assessment, we struggle, in part through our emotions work, to reposition ourselves” (2006:158). Indeed, using an emotion such as anger to figure out the stratification present in interpersonal relationships is inflated when gender is added. If music provides the proverbial map which Firth is referencing, then women who associate their anger to songs of Amos are creating a map which stands in defiance of patriarchal expectations of emotion.

An outcome of feeling allowed to express sadness or anger is often happiness. When I asked Donna to describe the emotions she felt when she listened to Amos she replied,

Happiness. An overwhelming sense of joy and sorrow and all of these things mixed. The sorrow part is for some of the songs that are just so intense and you know that she’s experienced these things. The one’s the songs that she’s admitted are confessional, you know that she’s experienced these things.

Understanding happiness is the opposite end of the emotional spectrum from sadness and anger, but it is an emotion which many women described as central to their experiences listening to Amos’ music. Happiness is considered to be another primary emotion, one that all people have the ability to experience (Turner 2005 and 2000). Further, with women, happiness is often expressed as a feeling of being loved (Crawford et al. 1992). Specifically when considering love, an emotion or feeling which is often related to
feminine characteristics, Lupton (1998) found that love was described as being a surface emotion, one that is readily expressed.

What was interesting, and even surprising about the inclusion of this emotion, is that unlike sadness or anger, many of the women were not using Amos’ music to extract happiness from themselves. Rather they felt happy while listening to the music because they had found someone who understood what their emotional state was, linking these statements to Clore and Ortony (1988) who noted that feelings can be classified based on the definition the person is giving them. For Madison, listening to Amos made her feel happiness because her music brought her to a place where she felt satisfied by what she was listening to.

Nothing else satisfied my need for music and things like her music that I didn’t, I didn’t get the same kind of satisfaction from other music. [Q: What kind of satisfaction did you feel like you were getting?] It’s almost like, I don’t want to say it’s a sexual satisfaction. But it’s, really um, it you know this is so strange but, you know how you feel very satisfied after decent sex, you know? It’s kind of like that with music. With her music. Not with other music. But it’s just like I listen to an album for, or a song, or whatever it is and I feel totally satisfied when I get to the end of a song. Like it ends and, and, oh. You know it’s just this feeling of, you know, whether it’s exhaustion or, elation or something. There’s some kind of peak to having listened to her music.

Indeed, relating Amos’ mood as it is performed in a song often was described as a reason for feeling happy while listening to the song. “If I’m happy I might just listen to some of her music where she seems in a good state.” (Pandora) Using Amos’ music to define happiness, or tap into an elated state can be connected with women claiming power over their emotional experiences. As Fields et al. point out,

Emotions provide people with a sense of who and where they are in the world. As feminists challenge sexist understandings of family, work, and home, understandings of gendered and economic power change. With these changes
will also come changes in people’s sense of themselves and of their emotional possibilities (2006:160).

Connecting Emotions and Identity to Empowerment

To have a feminist approach to the study of emotion and gender means exploring how women connect their identities to Amos’ music. In this section I focus on how women were connecting the emotions they felt regarding their gendered and racial/ethnic identities to Amos’ music. This is particularly salient, as I previously mentioned, when considering the diversity of my sample. With regard to race, 78.6% of women interviewed identified as “White” or “Caucasian”, 2.4% identified as “Black” or “African American”, 4.8% identified as “Native American and Mexican” and 7.1% identified as “Native American and Caucasian/white”. Further, when considering ethnicity, 7.1% identified as “Jewish”.

Exploring these emotions through a feminist standpoint allows for a shift from understanding through an oppressive lens (i.e. which emotions are appropriate) to relating women’s emotions from the perspective of the women feeling them. When combining emotions and gender with the sociological approach to music we find that being able to express emotions typically assumed to be “negative” (e.g., sadness, anger) allows women to find a certain amount of elation or happiness. In doing this, women are granted the agency to define their own identity.

As Haraway writes, “Standpoint theories argue for ‘starting off thought’ from the lives of marginalized peoples; beginning in those determinate, objective locations in any social order will generate illuminating critical questions that do not arise in thought that begins from dominant groups lives” (2004:127). If the goal of the feminist standpoint
theorist, as Haraway suggests, is to create “[a]n epistemology and politics of engaged, accountable positioning” (2004:93) then a means to undercut emotion becomes a discussion of which emotions are “male” and which are “female”. Thus, a contribution of this study to the sociology of emotions literature can be to demonstrate one way in which to move away from characterizing emotions based on gender binary.

The women interviewed were very cognizant of the idea that women have been socialized by a patriarchal system to feel and express emotion specific to their gender. Yet, when listening to Amos’ music, generally in private, they found a place where they could express, or set aside, expectations of acceptable emotions and interpret their emotions honestly. Emma made some direct connections to feminist standpoint theory by noting that Amos’ music allows the emotions of women to be placed in the center of the music, allowing women to gain empowerment from other women.

The sense of something that women need... I know she is connected with me through the music because she’s able to take feelings that are universal and provide them to us in a way that allows us to see our own story. And that’s where I think she connects with people. There might be some of her own instances that make it, that’s how she gets that initial, you know, spark or connection, or whatever. But she has this way of writing music and playing music that conveys an emotion that goes beyond one person’s story and it goes into the common, what we’ve experienced to live, to be alive. And I think that’s why I think that women, there’s a lot of women out there that, that we can feel that and can tap into that and you feel, I guess the truth to it.

Gaining agency and empowerment often lead many women to feel that their emotions are validated.

Did you ever just hear something and it feels like, I guess it feels cheesy to say, like she’s not singing to me? It was like finally, someone who’s singing about stuff I care about and... I’ve always felt like weird. You know what I mean? So it made me feel not so weird... It makes me feel validated. Because I’m sure you’ve felt, I’m sure everyone else has felt too. Nobody has gotten me... it makes me feel validated and I guess it’s cheesy, but not so alone (Peggy).
Many women focused on the aspects of Amos’ music which described their emotions and identity because they could explore their identity safely. For the women who identified as women of color, emotions were often related to their racial identity. For Lily and Jasmine, connecting their gender with Amos’ music was part of a connection they felt to Amos based on their mutual racial identity. Lily identifies as a Native woman and has attributed her racial identity to Amos’ as Amos also identifies as part Cherokee. Knowing this about Amos helped Lily to understand and question other people’s perceptions of her racial identity.

I think it’s because she says what everybody’s thinking and no one wants to say. I think that’s a big part of it. I think Tori has a way of saying things that we all relate to but none of us really have the guts to say… I think that people are just encouraged, especially women and women of color. I’m gonna use the Native example. People of color and women are encouraged to be quiet. And when they get to explain it’s like “Oh, who asked you?” Don’t change your whole world because one “minority group” has a complaint. Like, women are offended? How incredibly amazing! Like we are supposed to do something because you’re offended. Instead of being like, “Oh, I’m sorry. Let me change this.” It’s seems like you’re whining. Like women they’re whining. Or they’re just too uptight. Or you know, they have no business whining. Or talking even because they’re just everything, you just deal with it.

Jasmine related to the music which detailed the importance of understanding her Native and Mexican identity.

My mom, she’s got a lot of Indian in her. My grandparents are all Indian. They are half Aztec, my grandfather’s Aztec and my grandmothers Apache so if you see a picture of my mom she looks like you know, I have Indian in me. I really took to Tori and a lot her songs about the Native American’s and all. And my mom and my grandmother would try to teach me a lot of values and a lot of little things that she has in her life that I can relate to.

Experiences like Lily and Jasmine were also echoed with women who, like Amos, could connect their bloodline to Native American communities, but who also were aware that they were perceived as white.
I think that one of the reasons I was attracted to her music, and probably to Scarlet's Walk the most, was because I know I have a Chippewa background. Like I know I am white, but I also know that I am part of a Chippewa community through my ancestors. And I am proud of that (Doreen).

Using Amos' music, and Amos' identification as a Native woman, served as emotional support for Judy who was attempting to find a way to express the frustration she felt at the combination of her gender and racial identity.

I'm a girl, I'm in the Christian church, I had a mean daddy. You know? I'm Black. There are a lot of situations in which I feel... And a lot of the times I was the only Black kid. Or um. I was feeling something and I didn’t know how to express it or, you know? Um, that you’re not on board with the majority and you, you’re not antagonistic towards them. But you’re not always, people don’t always give you the message that “You’re the only one that doesn’t like this and that’s great.”

In a similar vein, Josie found Amos' music to be an emotional catalyst while she traveled through Poland in search of her ethnicity as a Jewish woman.

*Under the Pink* was my first album. I don’t know if I can tell you this, I mean it’s quite personal. Well I’ll just give it a go. With this album I was whisked away on a trip, I went to Auschwitz, to the concentration camps and it was just, it was a trip where I was 17 years old and we went to the concentration camps in Poland. It was a historical trip with school and so I went there. And it was during the bus ride from one camp to another camp, from one Polish city to another Polish city that I would listen to "Pretty Good Year" and that’s when I discovered Tori Amos. I mean it was in Poland going from one concentration camp to another, which was very bizarre. It was extremely, extremely important moment in my life that affected a lot of my identity and actually I didn’t really touch that album much after that. I mean I would listen to it from time to time when I would come back but it was an intense album and I thought that I shouldn’t listen to it because I associated it is so much with my trip.

Using Amos’ music as a means to connect emotions with racial/ethnic identity was a theme I was not prepared to find. While Amos certainly has covered the experiences of Native people through her music (most notably with *Scarlet's Walk* in 2002), I was not expecting to find that there was a general feeling of emotional support,
or perhaps empowerment, among the women who had used Amos’ music as a means to discover their racial or ethnic identity. However, as Josie, Lily and Jasmine point out, part of the emotional appeal of Amos’ music was that she seemed to understand what they were feeling.

Expressing Emotions through Crying

A general result of feeling an emotion is expressing that emotion. While many of the women would define an emotional connection to a song or to Amos’ music in general, most described the emotional release they feel with Amos’ music through a description of how Amos’ music made them cry. Indeed crying served as the most common behavior related to the emotions the women detailed. This was especially interesting because, while it is generally common knowledge that women expressing emotion through tears is socially acceptable and men are expected to be more stoic, in general women crying is associated with weakness while men crying is associated with strength. Sheilds asserts that looking at prominent male figures (i.e., presidents, generals, etcetera) who have cried in public helps to challenge the notion that men should not cry as the acceptance of powerful men crying is hegemonic in nature, “It takes a real man to cry” (2002:161). Yet, powerful women crying is viewed as a weakness, that the woman is too emotional to handle any responsibility (Shields 2002). Shields provides the example of Representative Pat Schroeder announcing her decision to remove herself from the 1988 Presidential race. When Schroeder broke her composure in front of her supporters, many in the media declared that she was not fit to make decisions since she could not keep her composure. Schroeder responded by saying, “The good news for men
is: crying is still a badge of courage. The bad news is that for women it’s still a scarlet letter” (2002: 161).

For these reasons the act of crying is distinctly gendered and many of the women did note that Amos’ music was often played as a catalyst for crying, as Ida said, “Because most of the time when I’d be listening to her, like a full album, I was depressed. I was playing it to cry it out over something. Whatever that thing may be” (Ida). Yet, when talking about the song “Winter” Ida also recognizes that the act of crying was multilayered and was not as simply as just feeling sad.

I just love that song, it made me cry. [Q: Why did it make you cry?] My relationship with my father, just about you know, standing on your own and growing up and everything that she’s talking about in that song. I would think about death a lot when I listened to that song, you know, and things coming to an end. I guess windows of opportunity and, you know, it’s a really emotional tune.

Similarly, for Emily, listening to the songs “Putting the Damage On” and “Hey Jupiter” bring her back to a break-up she experienced. She articulated that hearing those songs makes her cry because of the emotions she previously related the songs to, while also reminding herself of how far she has come.

“Putting the Damage On” and “Hey Jupiter” are my favorite songs. Just because the two major break-ups that I went through in my life relate and those songs are just so touching for me. Even now when I listen to them, and I’m not in those places anymore, but even now I could still cry, you know? . . . With “Putting the Damage On”, there’s this one part towards the end where she says “There’s a light in platoon/I’ve never seen a light move quite like yours can do to me” and I don’t know what it was. It’s just the way that it’s phrased it just hit something in me and I could listen to it now and get teary eyed.

Veronica cried the first time she heard the song “Baker Baker” because she found the lyrics and music to be so beautiful. Her tears were not really indicative of simply sadness, she also found it compelling. “When ‘Baker Baker’ started I just started crying.
I was like, ‘Wow!’ This is, it was so beautiful and so sad and it just really, really touched me.” Veronica also associated the song “Bells for Her” with a previous friendship.

And the next one that did that for me was Bells for Her. It was like wow, this is exactly what I have been going through because I had a best friend at the time and she had moved away and went to live with her dad and I hardly got to see her anymore. And then I found out that she had gotten pregnant at 17 and I felt like Wow, you know, this isn’t the girl that I knew. That line “You have her face and her eyes but you are not her” I was just like, it was really powerful moment.

For other women, such as Athena, crying was a release of emotions that did not necessarily have labels, but that were being held in.

Well I think it for me it was like an outlet you know? Of the days and I was completely just overwhelmed with my life and I didn’t know really what to do and I was very self-abusive and it was an alternative to that you know? It was something that on really, really bad days I could go home and put on in cry or just lay there and stuff you know and I’m saying? Like a it was, it was an alternative for me to doing things that were unhealthy.

Overwhelmingly most women discussed crying as something that they associate with seeing Amos perform live. In general, crying was associated with hearing their favorite song performed live. “I was hanging in there pretty good and then when she played “Hotel”, she did play “Hotel” at the D.C. show where I saw her for American Doll Posse Tour and it was just incredible. I mean I did, like, weep because I was so happy to hear that live” (Donna).

Another common association with crying during a live performance was when women would ask Amos to play a specific song during a meet and greet. When the song was performed many of the women cried out of happiness for having their request fulfilled as well as feeling the emotional connection they had forged with the song.

Talula, whose favorite Amos song is “Talula” found that listening to the song live as well
as on *Boys for Pele* provided emotional support. During her interview she discussed her reaction when Amos performed “Talula”.

“Talula” is obviously my favorite and people know that is my favorite song... I talked to her at the meet and greet and gave her a letter and among other things discussed, asked her to read my letter before the show. She said she for sure would. I asked her for “Talula”, and she said they had been working on it, and that she was “Hoping that tonight was the night.” But when I heard the first words, the tears started. By the end of the song, when she kept saying [the improvisation] “I don’t want to lose her, now that I’ve found her” and then put her hands to her heart, I was sobbing. I knew she read my letter.

This experience was also echoed by Ashre,

[Q: What was it like for her to play “Alamo” for you?] Oh it was so incredible I bawled. (laughter). [Q: Okay. Do you think you can articulate that? What were your thoughts on this when she played it?] Well, you know. Like I said that song just is, it’s a little place that I go. It’s like a safe haven for me and to have her play it and hear it live was just... Cause her concert is such a moving experience anyway and then to hear her play this song that just means so much to me. So moving.

For Lily, having Amos play two songs for her served as a means to process the emotions she felt being a survivor of sexual and physical abuse as well as her identification as a Native woman. Amos played the song “Bells for Her” for Lily, a song commonly known among Amos fans to be about dealing with a friend who was sexually molested. Further, because Lily related to Amos as a fellow Native woman, she was especially grateful to hear Amos perform “Virginia” for her because the song explores how America in general, and Virginia in particular, were taken from Native Tribes.

But when she played “Bells for Her” live for me, and she played “Virginia” too, but when she played “Bells for Her” I was an absolute mess and my friend had to hold my hand and the person on the other side of me had to hold my hand. [Q: What made you feel so emotional about it?] It’s probably one of the most intimate and beautiful things that she’s written. It’s about her relationship with her friend because her friend was sexually molested by her father. And just Tori having to come to terms with being that friend and for me it gives me my friends perspective of what I went through. Because, you know, I couldn’t see how much
it affected them. And it really hurt them too because rape and incest and sexual violence it affects everybody. It is not mutually exclusive to the victim. Like, everybody is a victim. Like their friends don’t know how to help them and their family and “Bells for Her” speaks volumes to that.

Emma also articulated the ways in which live performances made her cry. She expressed how cognizant she was of the reactions of other people around her during live concerts.

Specifically, what I remember most about that concert was when she played Me and a Gun and I’m sitting there watching this person with no back-up, no music staring right out at the audience and singing this song about recovery and survival. And I just, I thought to myself, I was just bawling and I’m so like semi-embarrassed that I was. Like there was that part of me that thought, “Oh, gosh all these people sitting around me are probably thinking what a freak I am. But I don’t care. I just, I don’t care.”

The experiences of these women were reflected in the concerts I attended. At the Chicago show Amos performed the ballad “Northern Lad”. The song begins with,

Had a northern lad.
Well not exactly had but he moved like the sunset.
God who painted that?
First he loved my accent.
How his knees could bend.
I thought we’d be okay, me and my molasses.
But I feel something is wrong.
But I feel this cake just isn't done (“Northern Lad”, From the Choirgirl Hotel 1998).

The following is an observation I made as this song was played.

It is the middle of the concert and between songs. I just had to stand up to let someone get to the aisle and I happened to turn around and notice two women behind me. They have their arms around each other’s shoulders and are crying. While they cry they are mouthing the words to “Northern Lad”. As I sit back down and look around I notice a lot of hands wiping away tears. It is not like an overly emotional crying, I don’t see anyone weeping. But I see people sitting silently and wiping away tears as they fall down their cheeks. So far I only see women crying. Many women are hugging or holding hands as Tori sings and gestures toward the ceiling. As she ends the song you can see her bottom lip quivering. She takes a moment before starting the next song.
This observation is noted because of the multiple levels of comfort or emotional expression that crying took on while conducting interviews. I do not know why I saw women in the audience crying during this song. I can guess that the nature of the lyrics and the connection that they make with the song is what triggered tears. What I do know is that their crying did not necessarily constitute sadness; based on my interviews, it could have also connoted anger, grief or validation. This observation serves as an example of the agency and emotional support women receive from Amos' music. The music can draw out an emotion in a safe way.

Crying during interviews provided multiple layers to expressing emotion through crying. On the one hand the tears during the interview indicated that talking about Amos’ music was emotional. On the other, tears during the interview were often shed when talking about crying. This was best exemplified through my discussion with Dawn. We started the interview by talking about how she found out about Amos’ music.

I had remembered seeing an ad in one of the magazines that I read as a teen of a girl in a box and um I remember the name Tori Amos associated with that and I just really, I just had this like girl-crush on Ashley and so when I got home from the summer camp I made my mother take me to the store and buy the Tori Amos album. And I can remember listening to it... Sorry... (choked up). [ATB: It’s okay. Take your time]. I remember listening to it alone in my room and just thinking for the first time that somebody understood. [ATB: Somebody got you]. Somebody got me. That’s like hell for a 14 year old whose had to be a loner all the sudden have something out there. [ATB: So from that point on you were hooked]. Yeah, I was. There wasn’t an album at any point that I didn’t just crave, just wait for and have to be there with it and take the day off for that album.

Later in the interview Dawn cried while telling me about why the song “Black Dove” makes her cry.

I think that it really um, that song when she says “You’re not a helicopter. You’re not a cop-out either.” I try to be one or the other. I’m either the helicopter hovering trying to rescue or I am my own cop-out and I cop-out on myself and I
think that that is really resonates with it as well as um how a lion becomes a mouse and I wonder where my fierceness went to and I think that’s the point where it got me. That’s what I needed to hear. And then you wake up and you’re scared and trying to get over your fears or something. So it’s that idea of with it came living with myself. Whew! (Crying).

Expressing emotion through crying can be viewed as a healing effect (e.g., Fooladi 2005). Fooladi notes that, historically, tears were perceived as gifts from God and that “[o]ften, the cultural aspect of crying weaves into fascinating rituals, with elaborate traditional ceremonies” (2005:248). As the women interviewed noted, to cry is to express an emotion with the intention of releasing tears, especially when crying was described as weeping or uncontrollable. These tears are distinctly gendered because, as Shields (2002) notes, tears which are deemed manly are controlled, while weeping is designated uncontrollable, feminine and therefore weak. This is contradictory to existing literature which assumes that women cry to express distress. Rather, women find that crying is empowering because the release of the emotion allows them to move past the feeling and become more productive. This is especially noted with anger because “[t]ears of anger signal not only uncontrolled emotion but ineffective emotion” (Shields 2002: 162). Shields is signaling that women are not only weak if they cry but they are also out of control and irrational, stereotypes often connected with femininity. Further, these stereotypes are often used to explain why women cannot hold leadership positions, harbor stressful responsibility, etcetera.

For these reasons, rather than considering crying as a sign of distress, weakness or vulnerability, the women interviewed challenged social norms related to gender and emotion. The use of crying as a means to release an emotion in order to move beyond it shows a certain amount of strength and decisiveness, traits commonly associated with
masculinity. Using Amos’ music to extract an emotion means that the women interviewed were facing experiences which may have been traumatic or caused them pain. Dealing with these emotions takes strength.

Social Factors Connected to Emotions

As a way to connect the emotions women expressed with Blumer’s (1969) theory of symbolic interaction and Turner’s (2009) contention that emotions are socialized, I considered how the women’s social factors might have laid a foundation for their emotions. As I have previously mentioned, relationships with fathers was one social factor which stood out during interviews. This theme of family became illustrative of Turner’s contention that “[s]ociologists study how humans construct culture and social systems... Yet some go even further and argue that the biological underpinnings of emotions are so diffuse and vague that all emotions are socially constructed” (2009: 341). “Family” was foundational for many of the women, and certainly showed how their emotions are linked to their socialization.

A common way that many women related their emotions to social factors was through discussions of their grandmothers. This was best exemplified with Maggie’s discussion of her relationship with her grandmother and her grief after her grandmother’s death. She says,

It was... I don’t know how the timeline works. It was one week before, I think it was within a week of Thanksgiving. My boyfriend and I broke up... And within three days later my grandmother died and my dad came into my room at like 12:30am... My mom had flown down to Florida to be with my grandmother, my grandfather and her two sisters, my two aunts, so she wasn’t there. And my dad told me she had passed away. And immediately all I could think of was “I have to put on music. How could I go to sleep after this?” The guy that I thought I was going to marry, who I had pinned so much of my future on, had just left me for
his ex-girlfriend, who supposedly lied to him about being pregnant while they were together. You know? It was just so messed up. And so there was that. And on top of it I went blank, I had no feelings. And so I put on The Beekeeper because I had just bought it and I thought I hadn’t listened to the album very much and it strikes me as something I can listen to without getting too emotional about it. And then I heard the lyrics to “The Beekeeper” which Tori wrote while her mother was in the hospital and I just cried, I cried so long. You know it’s just. It was so, so similar. I had just talked to my grandmother on the phone about two weeks before she died and we didn’t really have a conversation. She just wanted to say hi.

The impact of a grandmother’s death was also described by Laura who connected the album Boys for Pele to her relationship with her mother and grandmother.

[Q:] What about Boys for Pele did you respond to?
It was… My grandmother died when I was four. And I just, I was not really in a good place because my mom was kind of, she didn’t do well when she died and I was the oldest child and basically she took everything out on me. I haven’t really known what to do with any of that. And I was just, Tori’s music was very cerebral and there was a lot of peace in that. Plus there was so much emotion and a lot of anger and I think just all of those intertwined is why it spoke to me. Like a lot of pain and a lot of depth and it just fascinated me in a way that nothing ever had before.

For Peggy, the connection between her family and her emotions was built around the conflicting ways that each of her parents raised her. She talked about how this led her to feel angry, at times, and generally unsure of herself. She used the example of the song “Girl”, a song about “being everyone else’s girl” in order to describe this dynamic.

My father’s side, they’re very about how things look and “You do this because you’re supposed to.” It doesn’t really matter, you know? It’s all about how things look even though that’s not how things are at all. And, my mom’s side of the family is very different. They are like, “This is how it is and if you don’t like it that sucks for you.” So I grew up with um, you know, those two opposing… I felt very conflicted just being me. I still feel that way.

These connections between social factors and emotions are illustrative of Turner (2009) and Hochschild’s (1979) connections between socialization and emotions. Hochschild asserts that there are two accounts of emotions, the “organismic” and
“interactive” account. The organismic account focuses on relationships between emotions and biology while the interactive account focuses on the socialization of emotions. This helps define Turner’s assertion that, when studying emotions, it is hasty to assume that emotions are only socially constructed. Yet, as Hochschild posits, social factors are often ignored and must be considered when understanding how emotions are suppressed or evoked. Thus, noting how social factors may have an effect on how women develop and categorize their emotions is beneficial to conversations about the biological and social aspects of emotions. The women were not necessarily articulating a kinship with their families; rather they were discussing how specific instances and experiences were influenced by their families and have shaped their response to their emotions. As Alex mentioned, Amos’ music connected her with her grandmother’s death and her relationship with her mother, while also allowing her to explore her anger about death. This connects Hochschild’s “organismic” and “interactive” approaches to their emotions, as well as links Blumer’s (year) assertion that meaning toward objects is assigned based on the meaning placed on them. In these examples the women’s families have helped shape their meaning.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have presented my findings which answer my second research question, “What is the nature of the emotional connection(s) fans of Tori Amos make with her music?” I defined the emotions women expressed when listening to Amos’ music, such as sadness, anger and happiness as well as crying, as an expression of emotions. I discussed what makes these emotions gendered and explained that further study is needed in order
to develop a larger understanding of what gendered emotions are and how women’s conceptions of their emotions is relevant, especially when listening to the music of a feminist performer. I provided examples from the concerts I attended as supplemental pieces to the data from interviews, as well as linked the emotional relationships women formed with Amos to specific songs and to Amos as a person. I ended with a discussion of how social factors influenced the women’s reactions to Amos’ songs and their emotions. One could assume that this research design could be replicated to examine other artists, specifically feminist artists, and the emotions their fans feel with their music. However, this study is unique because this is one of the first to examine feminist music and the emotional relationships women attach to this music. In general, as I have discussed, emotions and their categories are structured through patriarchal ideals of what is appropriate for men and women. That women are using music to define their emotions and challenge patriarchy is something that has gone unstudied. It is my intention to lay a framework for future studies to build off of these findings and data. Indeed, examining how emotions such as those mentioned in the chapter are gendered, socially constructed and connected with feminist music, means that further research is needed to continue to challenge hegemonic stereotypes of women’s emotions. In the next chapter I build more on feminist identity and the healing/emotional relationships women build with Amos’ music as a way to lay a foundation for future studies which connect feminism with sociological studies of emotions, symbolic interactionism and music.
CHAPTER VI- FEMINIST IDENTITY

In this chapter I will address my third research question, “In what ways do Tori Amos’ feminist beliefs, as illustrated in her lyrics and performances, facilitate this emotional support and/or healing?” By addressing how women conceptualized Amos’ appeal as a feminist singer/songwriter I will explore how Amos’ feminism inspired healing and empowerment for women. Using a combination of symbolic interactionist theory and feminist standpoint theory as a guide, I begin by defining how Amos was viewed as a feminist by her female fans. I then present songs and albums which the women defined as having feminist themes. From here I transition into focusing on how Amos’ feminism translated into healing and/or emotional support. I do this through discussing the feminist attitudes the women presented, as well as examining how Amos’ music, as a healing and emotional catalyst, has spurred feminist activism aimed at helping others heal.

Defining Feminism and Amos’ Feminist Identity

Situating Amos’ Music as Feminist

Because cultural feminism suggests that women and men occupy separate spheres within society and that they are part of two different, yet complimentary, aspects of cultural life (Gillis et al. 2004; Koskoff 1987), many of the women interviewed conceptualized Amos’ music as both feminist and feminine. As Maggie pointed out, there are many different approaches to being feminine, just as there are many different approaches to feminism.

I think it’s kind of a “She’s one of us” mentality. There are so many different experiences. I always think it’s amazing when people say, “Oh you’re a woman,
you’ll understand”, because there are so many factors of womanhood. But one woman’s experience isn’t the same as another. Um, you know, everyone goes through these different trials. Everyone has these different things going on and they can think of things differently. But I think Tori’s very good at projecting an example of these different aspects.

Further, as Mandy said,

Like a lot of her songs are feminist and I feel like a lot of her songs, something like “Winter” or the Little Earthquakes album in general, like “Girl”, I feel like that is really kind of like touching the hearts of women kind of album. I don’t know how a guy could relate to that song. Because it’s about a girl being shot down and like trying to rise up. I guess a guy could relate to it but it doesn’t surprise me that she has more female fans.

Mandy is asserting that Amos’ music is not only challenging to patriarchy, but that it is also distinctly female-centered. Certainly Amos has male fans who find a connection to her music, but Mandy’s assertion that women relate to her feminism demonstrates that the music is not only viewed as feminist but also written to appeal to women.

These statements can be attributed to both feminist standpoint theory as well as feminism’s third wave. While none of the women interviewed identified specifically as a “third wave feminist”, (they would say “I am a feminist”), the distinctions they made between men and women listening to Amos’ music can be placed in a third wave context. As Heywood and Drake (1997) write, “Third wave feminists might revalorize constituted female identity and its representation, whilst incorporating both a radical analysis of the signifying chain and a belief that the agent can somehow manipulate that which is signified” (p. 45). Amos (the agent) connects gender and feminist identity with empowerment and activism within her music, and this acknowledgement is key to understanding her art. As Jaggar (2004) writes regarding feminist standpoint theory, “Liberal political theory speaks of human rights; Marxist political theory speaks of class
conflict. Feminist theories have used the concept of women's standpoint as a way of criticizing the abstractness and over inclusiveness of such male generated categories that conceal the special nature of women's oppression" (p. 63). Thus, presenting knowledge or experience from a woman's point of view challenges the standard present in patriarchal institutions. Amos' fans recognize that, by situating women at the center of her songs (as well as drawing on her own experience as a woman in a male-dominated field), she goes against previous studies of culture which have focused on and used men as representatives for both gender's musical preference.

Defining Amos as a Feminist

One of the main discussions within third wave feminist literature centers on how feminism is defined (Aronson 2003). Aronson's research with young women's feminist identification found several categories of feminism beginning with "I am a feminist", which indicated that the participant agreed with feminist politics, assertions and standpoints. The second, "I am a feminist, but", indicated that the participant shared some feminist perspectives and ideology but would also qualify their stance by saying things like "But I am pro-life", demonstrating that she rejected parts of feminism which she deemed to be in contradiction to her own ideology. A third category was labeled "I am a fence sitter" which Aronson detailed as, "Most of these interviewees were, in the words of one woman, 'fence-sitters': They embraced a number of feminist principles yet rejected others and failed to classify themselves as either feminists or non-feminists" (2003:912). Finally, Aronson classified a woman as "I am not a feminist" when she
indicated that she did not believe in feminist perspectives. Aronson described her findings by saying,

When asked about their attitudes toward feminism, nearly half of these women’s responses could be categorized on the continuums developed in previous studies (e.g., Kamen 1991; Taylor 1996) including those who identified as feminists, those who called themselves feminists but qualified their support, and those who said they were not feminists but supported a range of feminist issues. However, suggesting ambiguity in the term feminism and its negative connotations, more than half of these women did not want to explicitly define themselves in relation to feminism at all (p. 912).

Yet, what makes my study different from Aronson’s is that 76% of the women I interviewed identified as feminist and 8% said they might be a feminist. While I was certainly not working off the same scale as Aronson, and I had a sample of people who were already attracted to a feminist musician, I also think that this speaks to Amos’ music as a phenomenon. Here is a performer who appeals to women who have a feminist consciousness and who might be looking for a way to express it. This was indicated by Madeline who said,

I absolutely believe she is not only writing about her own experiences and the experiences that other women have had. But she is doing it in a way, and she’s putting them out in whole packages with art and everything in a way that I think is meant to educate and empower women. And to give them a feminist consciousness. And she might not frame it that way. But I absolutely think that’s a part of her life work is to help foster feminist consciousness in her fans because that will lead to them making more empowering decisions. And I think she’s probably very conscious of that, in whatever her own way is. Um, the kinds of things she sings about and the messages she gives and you know the subtext of the songs I think it’s definitely, I think she’s absolutely feminist.

Aronson’s (2003) categories also help when considering how the women I interviewed conceptualized feminism as well as how they related their feminism to Amos. Understanding how a feminist is conceptualized becomes particularly relevant considering a goal of the third wave is to challenge the male gaze (e.g. Mulvey 2003;
Cowie 1997; Doane 1991) and Amos' musical persona is an example of this challenge. For the women who identified as feminists, all declared that Amos has influenced their own feminism. As Dawn said,

[Q: Has Tori’s music influenced your feminism?] Oh absolutely. Absolutely. I think she’s fed it. I think she kept the flame going. Before I was 14 I was already on the path of feminism. I was already on the path of questioning a lot centered around women and centered around the church, centered around our country and how it worked and the people who ran it and the justice of it and I was going in kind of questioning that and so I think that in a lot of ways Tori’s music said “Yeah, keep questioning. And here’s something else you should look at. And how do you feel about this? And how do you feel, how does your womanhood stand up to this and you know, did you look at your feminism over here.” Yeah, absolutely. I think she’s influenced it for years and will go on.

Further, when characterizing who a feminist is, Allison best sums up the common definition women posited, which carries many of the current ideologies of the third wave.

I guess the identity means that I can embrace the parts of me that are feminist and that are part of being a woman. Like I can bear children, I can feed children with my own body. I’m just as smart and just as capable as men and sometimes my capabilities lie in other areas than men in general. For me to be a feminist just means that I can do whatever I want. I can choose to get married, I can choose not to get married. When I have children I can stay home or I can choose to go to work. I have a lot of choices that, you know, weren’t there for my mother. And, I mean now I think that, now my identifying as a feminist and being okay with that is helping me to identify as someone who is for equality for everybody.

In general, feminist artists are attempting to reclaim what it means to be a female musician, a challenge that the third wave of feminism has taken on as one of its goals (Inglis et al. 2007; McCabe 2005; Gillis et al. 2004; Peltola, Milkie and Presser 2004; Baumgardner and Richards 2000; Heywood and Drake 1997). Amos is a part of these challenges because her music and her identity contest the hegemonic masculinity found in both male artists and men who write music for women. Amos’ female fans are aware that Amos’ music, performances and persona confronts the notion that female fans are
screaming, uncontrollable messes who cannot be tamed when their favorite performer is present (e.g. Ehrenreich et al. 2001). Indeed many of Amos’ fans know her music has a feminist agenda and is meant to entice them, make them think, and draw their own conclusions.

This attitude was best illustrated with Haven who, within the first minute or so of talking, began addressing Amos’ feminism and was one of a few women who brought up Amos’ feminist identity unprompted, “[Q: So what do you think it means to be a Tori fan?] I think it means, it definitely means that you are a feminist. I think it’s difficult to be a Tori Amos fan and not be a feminist.” Josie also brought up Amos’ feminism, unprompted, when I asked her why she thought Amos attracts women,

Maybe because she’s a feminist. [Q: What do you think about that?] Well I was very much a feminist when I was younger and you know to a certain degree I still am although I think about it less often then when I was younger. So you know the fact that Tori Amos was singing about the empowerment of women uh, and feminism, I mean that just corresponded perfectly to my state of reflecting upon these things. And as a student, and you know as a teenager, and as a university student. It just coincided, it just was my opinion that this music was not only emotional which was fantastic, but it’s really rare to have such music that triggers such raw emotion. Aside from that emotionality of it all, it was also intellectual. It was the best of both worlds. Um, something that is soothing to your mind and your soul at the same time.

Josie’s note that “It’s really rare to have such music that triggers such raw emotion” is indicative of how many of the women felt that Amos’ feminism resonated with them and it was illustrative of their own feminism. This also speaks to the need to feel like being a feminist was acceptable and acknowledged through Amos’ music, something that Alex exemplified. When I asked her if Amos’ feminism had an influence on her own she replied,
I think it’s great. I definitely, once I kind of became aware of what feminism was, during my college years, you know I definitely was like “Yes! That’s what I am!” Even though I was raised in a very kind of conservative Catholic household I, even in high school when I was still in with my parents’ ways and I was still involved in the ministry. I was part of a Catholic youth communications gospel in the state that I grew up in and I took some pretty liberal pro-woman stances on issues and I kind of found a lot of resistance. So I think even before I really identified as a feminist I really was.

Alex’s experience relates to many of the women’s acknowledgements that Amos helped shape their feminist ideas. When I asked Alba if she was a feminist she replied, “Absolutely. And I know that that [Tori’s feminism] has a lot to do with it because I would definitely call myself that… I sort of began my feminist opinions by listening to Tori and other people but I have come up with my own at this point.” In a similar sense, Lily found a connection with Amos’ feminism because she and Amos identify both as Native, and feminist, women.

[Q: Being a Native woman, do you find a connection with her through those sort of political feminist ideologies?] Absolutely. Because, Native’s traditionally, like I’m not going to overemphasize and say that all Natives were feminist. But there is, especially for her because she is matrilineal, she has those traditional values. Your blood line, you get it through property, you get your name, everything comes through the mother. And she has that. Even when she talks about, I’ve heard her talk about the Iroquois Confederacy and the clan mothers and stuff and how you know the grandmothers are the ones who rule the society. Like she has that knowledge.

Further, because the age of most of the women I interviewed, chronologically, fell in the third wave of feminism, many of them connected Amos (who is also generally considered third wave) with the struggles that third wave feminism has in defining itself. This was similar to the work of McCabe (2005), Peltola, Milkie and Presser (2004) and Aronson (2003) who each have stated that feminist identification within the current generation of women can be unclear based on the ever-evolving definition of who or
what a feminist is. This was explored in Allison’s interview when she described herself as a feminist and agreed that Amos is also a feminist.

A lot of what Tori sings about is sort of finding your own self... I think she sings about that a lot. And she certainly talks about it in interviews and different things like that. I don’t know why it’s still a common need in women, I mean because feminism is supposed to have brought us far but I think we still have sort of colliding ideals... We have these competing, you know, um, these competing needs of having, being a mother and having a family but also trying to be a career woman and, and um, so maybe women are looking for sort of a, the ability to fight for themselves so they, who they want to be.

Allison also addressed some areas of Amos’ feminism which she found to be confusing through discussing what she saw as Amos’ contradictory behavior. She suggested that Amos herself may not always fulfill some fans definition of feminism.

I think it’s great [that she is a feminist]... But I mean, what she speaks I think it might be different than what she does because I see these same struggles in her that I think she’s speaking out against. Like she wouldn’t do Lilith Fair. Uh, how often has she had a woman open for her? I can think of one. In 1999. Her band is made up of only men. Um, she’s talking now about how she moved to England for her husband and she’s living someplace she hates because that’s his home. So I don’t know. I think it’s been a little interesting there. Maybe she’s really having the same struggles that a lot of women are having.

While the majority of women did identify as feminists, I did have women who were not sure of their own feminism, or who Aronson (2003) would term “fence-sitters.”

Emma expressed her uncertainty with feminism by saying,

I think that that’s why the term is hard. I wouldn’t term myself a feminist, um, because I don’t. I don’t know what other people would perceive it be. You know? What is a feminist? Is it someone who hates men and thinks that they are all out to get them? Or is it someone who just wants to make sure that women are getting their fair shake? And I think there’s too many, too many misconceptions about that title possible. I don’t want to categorize myself as that. It kind of just, you know, I look at it, um, I’m never gonna bypass the chance to, to correct someone if I think they’re saying something. But um, you know, at the same time I like wearing pretty frilly things sometimes and I have a husband and kids and you know...
However, a few women expressed feminist sentiments during their interviews and expressed that they were comfortable with Amos’ feminism, yet had contradicting comments regarding who a feminist is. This was conflicting for me and I elaborate my response to this dichotomy further in Appendix B “Bracketing.” Becky’s first statement about accepting Amos’ feminism was an example of this dichotomy,

She speaks to women, specifically, saying don’t lose yourself because you think you need a man and don’t because you may be sexually attracted to men and don’t take on shame and don’t take on those feelings. It’s okay to have those feelings and you don’t have to make that person into a Jesus figure basically and feel like you’re not worthy if, if it’s unrequited. You don’t have to be you know married to have sex and all those things that society puts on us as women.

When I asked Becky what she thought about Amos claiming a feminist identification she said,

Well I don’t know because feminism, I think in some ways, has done some harm to society. I mean I’m not an expert but from what I’ve read you know the second wave of feminism with Gloria Steinem and everything um I think I think it’s unfortunate that a lot of women feel like they need to have it all. Like you can have it all, fine. But that being just a woman who doesn’t have a job that takes care of children if that is devalued because of feminism than I think that’s bad. But I think it’s cool if Tori identifies herself as a feminist…

Some women stated that Amos’ feminist identity was not something that they were interested in. However most of these women did not declare any issues with feminism per se; rather they would state that they “[a]re just not political” (Mandy).

On the other hand, Amos was seen as “not feminist enough” by Sandy who was part of the Riot Grrrl movement in the 1990s. As mentioned in Chapter Two as part of my literature review, Riot Grrrls asserted that young women should participate in the punk rock scene which was dominated by men (Whiteley 2000; Rosenberg and Garofalo 1998; Firth and McRobbie 1979). As Sandy said,
I think it’s useful but I also don’t consider it to be one of her primary things. I mean I don’t really consider her to be much of a feminist artist. And that, that could be because of, and it could be because of Riot Grrrl, it could be because of the more extreme things that I’m much more .... In my list of friends in high school she was also written off because she wasn’t feminist enough and she didn’t represent feminism particularly well. And she was, you know, doing things like posing kind of scantily clad at a time when you just didn’t do that. And if you were a feminist and stuff you just didn’t do that.

Perhaps the women who do not identify as feminists or find merit in Amos’ feminism are not at much apathetic as they are a result of the confusion regarding who a feminist can be, a debate many feminist scholars have addressed (e.g. McCabe 2005; Peltola, Milkie and Presser 2004; Aronson 2003). One common conclusion is the “feminism is like fluoride because it has always been in the water” effect posited by Baumgardner and Richards (2000). As Kinser writes, “Third-wavers came of age in a world where feminist language is part of the public dialogue, but authentic feminist struggles are not accounted for in that dialogue except in terms articulated by the mainstream, which still perpetuates a conservative and sexist status quo” (2004:135). For example, Talula noted that Amos “[m]ay not be a true feminist, but she embodies many feminist ideals.” However, Talula also stated, “I’m not a feminist. I like the idea of donning an apron and cooking and I know feminists would be like, ‘Hell no!’” While few women fell into Aronson’s (2003) “I am not a feminist category” they do further cement the necessity for the current push to research feminist identity in female fans. As Whiteley (2000) found, artists such as Amos “[p]rovide specific insights into the relationship between subjective experience and the meaning of women’s lived reality” (p. 196). Further, as Leonard (2009) points out, having a singular definition of a fan’s feminism or Amos’ feminism is similar to blanket statements like “women in rock”
which preclude any potential for women to be seen as individuals. Rather, by questioning and re-evaluating the definition of feminism and women in music the door opens for recognizing the myriad of women’s experiences and stories which detail how gender is constructed through music.

Describing a Feminist Identity through Song

Another perspective on constructing a feminist identity and relating it to healing and/or emotions is found in the ways that the women defined feminism within Amos’ songs. Indeed, the terms “feminism” and “empowerment” become synonymous when the women would talk about which songs had a feminist consciousness. When considering songs and lyrics which her fans identified as feminist or incorporated feminist activism, by far the most mentioned song was “Cornflake Girl” which is on the album Under the Pink (1994), an album which was written to address feminism and sisterhood among women as well as competition between women. In “Cornflake Girl” Amos describes a relationship between two “girls” -- one being the “cornflake girl” and the other being the “raisin girl.” (It is important to note that in this scenario the “raisin girl” is akin to the “nice” girl while the “cornflake girl” is the “mean” girl.) Amos has said that “Cornflake Girl” is about women betraying each other and was inspired by Alice Walker’s book Possessing the Secret of Joy (1992) in which Walker details the cutting of young women’s clitori, done by women in the Olinka tribe (Walker’s fictional tribe name) via the mother’s request. However, the lyrics are dense,

Never was a cornflake girl.
Thought that was a good solution hangin’ with the raisin girls.
She's gone to the other side givin' us a yo heave ho.
Things are getting kind of gross and I go at sleepy time.
This is not really happening. 
You bet your life it is ("Cornflake Girl", Under the Pink 1994).

Perhaps a good way to interpret the lyrics is to say that Amos never considered herself a cornflake girl and that she would rather spend time with raisin girls. Interpreting the song further could reveal that this decision was not enough to keep many of the raisin girls from being pulled to the cornflake girl’s side and that when horrible things would happen to other raisin girls (i.e. genital cutting and “things are getting kind of gross”) they would ignore it in favor of their new relationships (“I go at sleepy time”). The lyrics then transition to the raisin girls who are being violated and betrayed by other women (“This is not really happening/You bet your life it is”). Many women mentioned “Cornflake Girl” as a feminist song with an agenda of addressing how women should treat each other. As Pandora and Allison pointed out,

I think a song like “Cornflake Girl” perhaps can really capture the meaning of what a feminist should be. When she’s singing about when it’s not men and women against each other but... I love her quote, the one about women are meaner to each other, how the cruelty toward women is more than toward men. But I think “Cornflake Girl” really to me probably captures what a feminist is and should be. And I think that’s definitely Tori because she’s not afraid to support women... Really capture what it means to be feminist and supporting one another. (Pandora)

I mean, from what she’s said and from what the song is about, you know, women, it being difficult for there to be two powerful women or two women who uh, have desirable characteristics in one situation because, and maybe this is a result of the feminist movement, that we have to compete against each other as well as men. That we do push each other down. It doesn’t seem like there’s always room at the top for two women even in the same way that there might be room at the top for two men. I’m not sure men have the same sort of competitive edge. I see it in myself and Tori obviously saw it and wrote the song about it. (Allison)
“Cornflake Girl” gets played at nearly all of Amos’ concerts. Yet, some women mentioned that over the years the song has become less thought-provoking - something that people do not consider the meaning behind. As Donna explained,

Especially with the “Cornflake Girl” which I know is like a huge song for people who don’t know her well. But if they really listen to the message it is, you know, don’t do that. Don’t have infighting with women. You know? It’s such a waste of time and energy and resources.

Just like “Cornflake Girl”, “Waitress” is also a song on Under the Pink,

So I want to kill this waitress.  
She’s worked here a year longer than I. 
If I did it fast you know that's an act of kindness. 
But I believe in peace.  

Lily’s interpretation of “Waitress” was that the song was written as a call for women to support each other. But she was also cognizant of the ways that some may critique it and mentioned that feminists may have an “issue” with the song. When I asked “What do you think it is about ‘Waitress’ that some feminists would have an issue with?” she replied,

Just because they’re not getting along, that she wants to kill her, type of a thing. Like women on women violence. But I really agree with her in saying that women have a way of betraying each other that men cannot even begin to understand. Because men, they’ll betray each other politically or they will stab each other in the back. Women will stab you like right in the front. Like they’re not even, even gonna like, you know, play with that.

Another song which was mentioned as a feminist-based song was “Take To The Sky.”

Haven best summed up the feminist agenda by describing the lyrics in the song,

“Take to the Sky.” Oh God. That’s such a great manifesto. It’s like, “My father says you ain’t making any money. My preacher says you ain’t savin’ no souls. My doctor says you just took it to the limit. And here I stand with this sword in my hand. Have a seat while I take to the sky.” I mean Jesus. Duh. I mean
they’re all male opinions. And it’s like, dude f-you. I’ve had enough of people
telling me I’m messing up and I’m making this mistake and that mistake and I’m
out of here.

Doreen also found her feminism through Amos’ music. “I think I was born a
feminist, but I also think that Tori structured my feminism.” She mentioned many songs
that she attributed to her feminist identity,

I mean, my God where should I start. She moves between songs like “Silent All
These Years” where she says “Yes I know what you think of me you never shut
up” to songs like “Girl Disappearing” where she says “In my own war, blood in
the cherry zone when they pit woman against feminist.” And then there is
“Pancake” where she says “It seems in vogue to be a closet misogynist
homophobe.” I mean, it is all there. It is all so feminist and I think she does it on
purpose to make sure we are thinking while we listen to what she has to say.

One of the ways in which feminist standpoint theory and symbolic interaction
merge is through women singer/songwriters speaking to their audience through their
music, sharing their experiences, challenging patriarchal expectations of women and
developing a fan base of women who seek out their songs for feminist guidance. This
becomes especially potent when considering how agency connects to feminism. As
Blumer writes, “The capacity of the human being to make indications to himself gives a
distinctive character to human action. It means that the human individual confronts a
world that he must interpret in order to act instead of an environment to which he
responds because of his organization” (1969:15). Because the nature of symbolic
interactionism is to deconstruct how objects are assigned meaning, a by-product of these
interpretations is the agency and empowerment women create around their
interpretations. This relates to a feminist standpoint because, as Hartsock writes, “A
standpoint is not simply an interested position (interpreted as bias) but is interested in the
sense of being engaged” (2004:36). Hartsock identifies that having a feminist standpoint
goes beyond having a vested self-interest and moves into becoming engaged with women’s experiences. This becomes even more salient when attempting to understand how holding a feminist identity can relate to healing and emotional support, as well as connecting healing to feminist activism.

Feminism, Healing and Activism

In this section I examine how the women interviewed related Amos’ feminism with healing and/or emotional support. I then describe how many women were inspired to perform feminist based activism focused on providing emotional support and/or healing because of the healing and emotional support they had found in Amos’ lyrics or at her live shows. I provide examples of how both Amos and her fans have translated Amos’ music into activism through participation in non-profits, fundraising for sexual violence hotlines as well as in their day-to-day lives and careers in order to demonstrate how Amos’ music connects feminist activism with healing.

Feminist Healing and Emotional Support

As I analyzed how Amos’ feminism relates to healing and/or acts as an emotional catalyst, it became clear that women were not explicitly saying “her feminism is healing.” Rather they were expressing feminist sentiments which then related to their healing. For example, when I asked Haven “Are there any specific songs, or anything that she’s done, that has influenced your feminism?”, she replied,

Um, yes. Definitely. All of them. What I love is “Precious Things”, you know, it’s the infamous line [in the song] “So you can make me cum that doesn’t make you Jesus.” I think guys get such a power trip... But, you know, I’ve given up so much power in my life because I had horrible role models for relationships and
it's like, no. It does not make you Jesus! I mean, I don’t believe in Jesus, but you know. Like it doesn’t make you more powerful. It just doesn’t.

Haven related sexual empowerment combined with patriarchal attitudes toward sex with the song “Precious Things” and found a feminist song which allowed her to work through her feelings of helplessness with men. Her statement is illustrative of Robison and Carrier (2004) who state that health and healing have, historically, been based in patriarchal paradigms created to starve off emotions or feelings and base the notion of “health” or “healing” in positivist based science. Further, as Fields et al. write, “In studies of emotions, interactionists explore how individuals use their capacity for agency to bring their feelings in line with what is expected of them… People can work out their feelings, trying to create within themselves the proper response to a situation” (2006:156). In other words, allowing individuals to describe how something serves as emotional support on a personal level is more empowering than blanket statements about general needs. Haven addressed this when she asserted that a feminist challenge to constructions of healing rests in Amos’ songwriting and provided the example of “Precious Things” to demonstrate how it aided her in moving past feeling helpless in relationships. In a similar vein, Judy expressed how she found Amos’ challenge to patriarchy as something that helped her work through her anger toward and relationship with her father.

I grew up Christian and I still consider myself to be a Christian. But I never felt that that oppressed me. But I had an oppressive father. He just ran the household. We would tip-toe around his mood swings. So um and he was very bitter about his life. It’s sort of like “That Guy” [song off of Abnormally Attracted to Sin (2009)]I guess. [He was] like a lot of songs really.
Further, for Madison, Amos’ music rallied against the traditional expectations of women as wives and mothers. Emma saw Amos’ album *American Doll Posse*, and the multiple “dolls” Amos created, as an example of the multiple roles women are expected to play. In her interview she asserted that when women challenge these roles they are often viewed as inappropriate wives or mothers. Amos’ music has helped her to heal from feeling inadequate and angry about her life.

You know there was a part of me that was the wife and the part of me that was the mom, there was the worker, there was, you know, the part of me that, I guess, rallied against all that and thought, “Why can’t I just go do whatever I want whenever I want.” You know? Why do I have to go home at five every night? Why do I have to be responsible? Why can’t I just go out and do what I want. So I had all these constant feelings all the time and I was, I was going through a lot and I really wasn’t very in touch with my marriage and where that was going and it was all these different things going on. And that, I listened to that album and I’m looking at this concept that she put in front of me and I’m thinking, “Oh my God. I’m like this. I haven’t, I haven’t integrated. I’ve got all these little pieces of me you know that work together... I’m not even letting them see each other.

Broom’s (2009) study asserts that cancer patients often participated in holistic approaches to healing (generally referred to as “self-healing” in his article) as a way to re-gain control of their bodies, retain a sense of power over their disease and treatments and to find an inner peace and relaxation. While Bloom’s study focused on physical illness and alternative treatment, the fundamental concepts can be applied to my study by applying Blumer’s theories of symbolic interactionism and feminist standpoint theory. Bloom asserts that holistic health and the use of complementary and alternative treatments (or CAM as Bloom terms it) serves as a contribution to sociological studies of healing because “[w]ithin this body of work, as suggested earlier, it has been posited that CAMs may promote a number of things including; self-actualization, empowerment or active roles…” (2009:74). Many of the women interviewed addressed Amos’ music as a
means for them to find empowerment and they stressed that a foundation of this empowerment came from Amos presenting the experiences of women. Making these connections and using Amos’ music as a holistic means to heal can be one of the ways that the women developed feminist identities.

This combination is exemplified with Allison who noted that the healing and emotional support she received relates to Amos’ lyrics, which she sees as based in feminist ideals.

When I was younger and maybe less likely to stand up for myself or something like that, I mean I would probably, no I know I would get Tori lyrics in my head... I know that like lyrics would pop in my head like “Why do we crucify ourselves?” Why should I not stand up for myself in this situation. Why should my voice not matter? And so I definitely think that it helped me to get the strength to do it on my own. And um, and then you know, this probably isn’t the directly tied with Tori, but I, I always appreciate the chance to think critically about things and I think that can be part of sort of understanding what being a feminist means to you and has gotten me... Tori’s music has allowed me to think critically about it. Whereas I may not be able to think critically about Britney Spears. But, it, you know, I guess if you like thinking critically about things and you like there to be like something deeper there then, I can attribute that to Tori’s music but I think that it’s part of maybe why I like it in the first place that I can think critically about it and how it applies to my own life.

Merging healing, therapy and the self serves as an example of “emotional recall” (Ellis 1991) which is used to deconstruct experiences using introspection, or a dialogue with the self through narratives (Ellis 1991). Introspection and dialogue with the self is perhaps unique to music because “[m]usic is not merely a text or thing: it is performed and heard” (Leavy 2009:114). Specifically with women and music emotional recall is present in the moments when women use the narrative of the song as a catalyst for introspection (Leavy 2009; Holman Jones 2007).
Further, previous scholarly work on Amos has noted her ability to combine empowerment, feminism and healing within her musical songwriting and composition. As was noted by Burns and Lafrance, Amos' strengths line in her ability to “[y]ield a nuanced illustration of what one woman understands to be a most oppressive facet of her social existence” (2001:72). These relationships between feminist attitudes, resistance to patriarchy and musical healing are part of the resistance toward hegemonic ideals on which the second wave of feminist singer/songwriters built their careers (Leonard 2009; McCarthy 2006; Gillis, Howie and Munford 2004; Heywood and Drake 1997).

When considering how healing, emotions and feminist identity relate, there can also be a connection to Cooley’s (1902) theory of “The Looking Glass Self”, which is considered a foundational piece in symbolic interactionism. Essentially Cooley states that people will define themselves based on outside stimuli, generally other people’s perceptions of them. Here I have found that the women interviewed are not only defining their own feminism based off of Amos’ feminist beliefs, but are also connecting their feminism with Amos’ feminism through claiming empowerment and a source of emotional support. Further, as Shaffer (2005) acknowledges, relating the self to society is a social psychological concept rooted in understanding how the mind and body fuse to create an identity, and that these components should be key to forming an acknowledgement of why people relate themselves to things. Correlating a feminist identity to healing serves as a key piece in recognizing why Amos’ music is so special to the women who listen to it. Connecting Cooley to feminist standpoint theory would then posit that by placing the women as experts in their own lives, and by their own interpretation of their experiences and identities through this music, a combination of
mind, body, spirit and emotions form. As Robison and Carrier (2004) note, the definition of holistic health is to consider what people need in order to heal, and what is happening in their lives that is causing sickness, mental distress, trauma etcetera. Cooley’s theory acts as a metaphorical and physical mirror of the self, asking people to interpret how they are viewed. For the women interviewed, this interpretation comes from a feminist standpoint as I have asked women to be the authority on their own lives. Then, considering Robinson and Carrier’s approach and relating it to feminist music, a possible theoretical connection can be formed. Essentially, women know they need something that will help them to heal, but they also what their voice to be privileged. Turning to Amos’ music first acts as a healing guide, they see themselves reflected in her lyrics, performance etcetera. Then the feminist message of the music comes to the forefront, which bridges a connection between healing and having a feminist identity. Finally, women find that listening to this music not only helps them heal, but offers them a sense of empowerment and a chance to view the self in a new or different way. This improves their mind, body, spirit and connects to holistic approaches to healing.

*Relating Healing to Feminist Identity through Performance*

Placing women at the center of music has always been the keystone to Amos’ live performances. Amos’ feminism has been on display not only through her use of city-specific set-lists, costume, hair and make-up choices, but also through her use of live improvisation. Using improvisation has become a cornerstone of Amos’ concerts and often serves as one of the more feminist-activist moments in her performance. For example, in 2009 Amos performed at a venue in California and combined the Britney
Spears’ song “Baby One More Time” with her own song “Maybe California” while solo at the piano. While singing the last line in “Baby One More Time”, which is “Hit me baby one more time”, she improvised the line “You always do” and then moved into her song “Maybe California” which addresses a mother about to commit suicide. The combination of the two songs became a clear comment on domestic violence. Pandora was present at this concert and talked about the performance in her interview.

That was, it was so disturbing. A lot of the people, you could tell were really, really thinking “What the fuck is she doing?” “Why Britney Spears?”... My friend with me, she’s a huge musical person, she knows notes so well and keys, she can hear like one piano key and be able to tell me what Tori’s song is about to come. So she was like “Oh my gosh, this is “Baby One More Time.” I know of course it’s a female song, it sounded like it was something off [the album] Strange Little Girls, the way she was doing it. She was making it so haunting. Then at the end when she’s saying “Hit me baby one more time” [Tori added] “You always do” and from that she went into “Maybe California” it was so obvious she was trying to make it about domestic violence and go into a suicidal mother and it was just the most disturbing song.

This was not the first time that Amos mixed feminist performance art with improvisation at her concerts. As previously mentioned, in 2007 she performed “Me and a Gun”, a song detailing her rape, at a concert in Chicago with her band, as the aggressive “Doll”, “Pip”, from the album American Doll Posse. (As explained earlier, on American Doll Posse, Amos created five characters or “dolls”). While the song is normally sang without musical accompaniment, at this show Amos’ band improvised a score while Amos sang, adding emphasis to Amos’ lyrics.

In most performances Amos relies on improvisation as a means of activism and social commentary. In 2007 at a separate Chicago performance I attended, Amos infused the spiritual song “Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Seen” with contemporary lyrics focusing on the current presidential race. She sang,
After two stolen elections.
After the skies went quiet on 9/11.
Everyone knows even Jesus.
Everyone knows the troubles I’ve seen.
Everyone knows even Jesus.
Obama, everyone knows the trouble I’ve seen.
Hillary, everyone knows (“Everyone Knows”, *Legs and Boots-Chicago* 2007).

This was consistent with an observation I made at the 2009 Milwaukee concert where
Amos broke away from her song “Strong Black Vine” (a song composed to challenge
intolerance) to sing an improvisation. Below is my observation of the moment as well as
her improvisation.

Tori is playing both the piano and the keyboard at this point. The piano is in front
of her and the keyboard is behind her so she is stretched kind of like an octopus.
As she moves into “Strong Black Vine” the roar from the crowd comes in waves
around me, starting with the front row and moving its way back. She is getting
close to the end of the song now and signals to the band that she is going to
improv by raising her hand in the air. She sings,

Push that evil from you boys.
Push that evil from you.
Purge that evil from you.
Push just like your mother.
Push that evil from you.
No violence to your women.
Push that evil from you boys.
She is my great mother.
The earth is my mother.
I’m not your mother, fucker.

As I watch this improv take shape, I look at the people who have pushed their
way to the front row. I see them pump their fists in the air and I watch Tori react
to their energy. She holds her arms out and beckons with her hand for the crowd
to cheer. On “No violence to your women” the crowd breaks out into a roar that
echoes on all sides of me. A tall woman in the front row jumps up and down
holding her hands over her head and clapping.

One critique of this observation could be that I cannot say that the reactions
women had in this moment were because Amos is a feminist and she was declaring
feminist sentiments which, in turn, connected to empowerment, as I did not speak to every woman at the concert. However, based on the interviews conducted, and the founding principle of Blumer’s approach to symbolic interaction, I can say that what I did witness was a feminist performer expressing a sentiment which was distinctly based in feminist activism (“No violence to your women” and “Push that evil from you boys”) as well as connecting her lyrics to sources of femininity (“The earth is my great mother”). This, combined with the reaction from the women I observed, serves as an example of Blumer’s (1969) approach to symbolic interactionism. Here I saw a person react to something based on the meaning that it had for her. Further, this observation demonstrates that feminist music serves as a multi-layered experience for women. This moment could have been healing for the woman in the front row because it spoke to her need to feel empowered, it could have spoken to her desire to have a feminist mantra (as I witnessed during her reaction to Amos singing “Push that evil from you boys”) or it might have connected with her because she relates to Amos’ feminist agenda. The data I have collected each demonstrate that reactions such as this one, at Amos’ live shows, are probably connected to each of these possibilities.

Translating Feminism into Songs and Activism

Most feminist scholars address feminist activism and the links activism has with women’s lives when discussing the impact of the current wave of feminism (e.g. Gillis et al. 2004; Burns and LaFrance 2001; Richards and Baumgardner 2000; Heywood and Drake 1997). One aspect of Amos’ feminism, as well as her appeal to women’s emotions and healing, is her commitment to activism on behalf of women. As Sera noted,
I also think as a person she is open and friendly. She really cares about people, that’s what she does. Her job is to (a) yes to make music but also (b) is to make a difference in the world. And she does that one person at a time. And I think a lot of people are drawn to that aspect as well.

This also connects to feminist women in music as well as relating how female musicians have used their music and identity to promote organizations and non-profits that women can use find help and healing. In addition to Amos’ activism on stage, many of the women interviewed noted Amos’ work with the Rape Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN) as examples of Amos’ feminist activism, “I automatically associate her with RAINN” (Haven). Amos’ work with RAINN is perhaps the best example of how her music and feminist agenda has translated into healing and emotional support for her fans. As O’Brien writes, “In response to all the female fans who came up to her after shows talking about their experience of rape or abuse, Tori set up RAINN in the mid-1990s, a U.S. national helpline and counseling service for victims” (2002:409). For some women, such as Allison, knowing that Amos was a founder and supporter of RAINN was enough for them to reach out to talk to someone about their rape: “It was RAINN that helped me reach out in the beginning.” Most women admired the personal responsibility Amos has taken on with RAINN. As Anne noted, “People really put a lot on her especially with the whole RAINN thing, and all those people that you know who had a lot going on in their lives. I’m sure that’s really emotionally draining for her.”

Being a founder of RAINN lead to Amos performing benefit concerts for the organization, as well as her fans creating and selling their own work to benefit it. Lily created paintings for RAINN which were eventually featured as products on the organization’s website. Of her artwork, Lily said, “I want to create something that other
people are going to enjoy and look at and be like, like they feel something when they look at it. Like it's not just pretty.” Lily also had the opportunity to introduce herself to Amos before a concert at a meet and greet. While they were talking, Lily spoke about the opportunity to create something for RAINN. She said, “I just wanted to meet her to thank her for letting me work with RAINN.” Becky also created a piece which she asked Amos to sign and intends to one day auction off to benefit RAINN,

I sculpted a doll. It’s my interpretation of “The Beekeeper” from that song. I got to meet her and I was babbling and had a picture taken with her and had her sign the face of my doll. I have the intention to auction it off for RAINN. So right now it’s in a box in my house and someday I will auction it off and give the money to her charity, RAINN.

Rose, who works on a college campus, organizes her students to participate in “RAINN Day” a day for sexual assault awareness in which “[s]tudents and volunteers raised awareness through fundraising and educational events, volunteer drives, speakers, petitions, posters, and passing out RAINN Day cards and volunteer handouts” (RAINN 2010). Further, many of the women interviewed are currently involved in the RAINN Speaker’s Bureau which “[e]ducates and informs the public about sexual violence. Members will have the opportunity to share their personal stories with students, communities, victim service groups and/or the media” (RAINN 2010).

Yet, true to what Richards and Baumgardner term “recognizing opportunities for change in our own lives” (2005:xvii), many women found inspiration in Amos’ approach to helping women heal through activism and translated this inspiration into benefitting not only the Amos fan community, but their local communities as well. An Amos inspired fundraiser effort for RAINN occurred in the late 1990s to early 2000s called “ToriCon.” ToriCon took the form of various awareness raising festivals and was
promoted as a place for fans of Amos to meet and sell various Amos related products with the proceeds benefitting RAINN. Gail served as an organizer for ToriCon 2000 and said,

We had annual meetings to organize ToriCon2000 where we had people come and gather in the area. We liked the idea. The profits were all going to go to RAINN. The money that we managed to earn was gonna be donated to a good cause and we’re all pretty passionate about Tori’s fandom and pretty passionate about the community.

While many women felt inspired by Amos and wanted to find ways to contribute to her organization, others used Amos’ music as activism to promote healing in their day-to-day lives and careers. For instance, Haven and Charlotte both work as counselors for girls and women. They have found that using Amos’ music serves as a means for them to help their clients heal from trauma. This falls directly in line with holistic approaches to healing (e.g. Broom 2009; Robison and Carrier 2004) as it blends clinical methods with a holistic approach. Yet, Haven and Charlotte also assert that Amos’ feminist identity contributes to why they ask clients to listen to her music. This suggests that they see the music as not just beneficial in the sense that music is soothing (e.g. Loue et al. 2008) but that specifically Amos’ music also bridges healing with empowerment for women. As Haven said,

Well I currently have a fifteen year old female client whose gone through a lot of trauma and she really identifies with the song “Girl.” So a lot of times they just live their lives for other people. And they’re perfectionists and, you know, they lose themselves... I’m treating a bunch of Ophelia’s.

It should be noted that, in “Ophelia” Amos sings, “Ophelia you must break the chain/Pain waltzes in with her sister, Change, waiting for you to send her away./Wish her well/Break
the chain” (“Ophelia”, Abnormally Attracted to Sin 2009). The song is, presumably, based off the character “Ophelia” in Hamlet. As Haven went on to say,

That song completely captures what I am dealing with every day. You know? A bunch of beaten, bruised... They don’t have a voice at all. At all. So I mean I give Tori 101. I’m like “Immediately, before you go to a psychiatrist, you should listen to this.” And a lot of them already kind of know about her but they don’t understand why she’s so important and um, you know... Like “Girl” is a perfect example, “Everybody else’s girl, maybe one day she’ll be her own.” Like, “maybe one day.” And I know my little 15-year-old [client], she had no idea who Tori was and now she just listens to her religiously. It gives her strength.

Charlotte also uses Amos’ music in a nonprofit setting,

I think that’s important and I actually, I work for a nonprofit agency that helps children who’ve been sexually abused so I see this every day, that there’s a need for that sort of thing. And I think that having Tori as a role model for some of my clients... The children that I counseled that know who she is, listen to her music and absolutely just love her, kind of find solace and that sort of dynamic. [Q: Do you ever give her music to clients?] I recommend it.

Isabelle felt compelled to begin an Amos inspired project that has led to women who have been sexually assaulted being able to find each other and heal together. She mentioned that Amos influenced her activism because her music led her to critically examine herself.

When I was younger and maybe less likely to stand up for myself or something like that, I would probably, no I know I would get Tori lyrics in my head... I know that lyrics would pop in my head like “Why do we crucify ourselves?” Why should I not stand up for myself in this situation. Why should my voice not matter? And so I definitely think that it helped me to get the strength to do it on my own. I always appreciate the chance to think critically about things and I think that can be part of sort of understanding what being a feminist means... Tori’s music has allowed me to think critically about it, whereas I may not be able to think critically about Britney Spears. I guess if you like thinking critically about things and you like there to be something deeper there then I can attribute that to Tori’s music but I think that it’s part of maybe why I like it in the first place that I can think critically about it and how it applies to my own life.
Isabelle built an organization that has worked to benefit all women who have been victimized,

It started with Tori’s influence, now it’s so much bigger than Tori, which I think that we all recognize. It’s really not meant for Tori fans so much as it’s meant for any survivor of sexual violence. And so, I mean, that’s, it’s very cool that through her music it’s sort of started this, you know, this ripple that turned into a wave where now it affects so many people so I really appreciate that and another thing that I really appreciated is that she asks about it, you know, she refers people to it, and I think that’s really amazing. So, I’m just privileged to be able to, sort of, do this kind of work… I started this so that people could support each other.

Further, most women acknowledged that Amos’ feminism served as a source of empowerment and thus a source of healing regardless of the level of their activism, something that is also attributed to defining what or who an activist is (e.g. Richards and Baumgardner 2005). As Donna notes, Amos’ use of lyrics, performance and her work with RAINN have served as consciousness raising for her in her own life.

I like that she’s not afraid to say what she feels about women and women finding their voices and you know even starting RAINN, which is incredibly courageous and generous, so that all those things make me feel really um empowered and informed by her. You know I’ve looked into different things because of what she said…. I’m not ashamed to call myself a feminist. I think a lot of women are and that even that word has lost its power over the past few decades. It’s like having one friend who thinks it’s okay to dedicate a whole album to the pantheon of Greek goddesses because that is feminism in my mind. Or someone who’s not afraid to throw in a nice tid bit, like in “Talula”, and bash Henry the VIII for beheading Anne Boleyn. Like that’s great to me and if you really pay attention you can find tons of that kind of reference in her lyrics and it’s obviously very important to her and that really makes me happy that at least you know someone is finding it important to still talk about these things...

As Donna also notes, Amos’ songwriting also consciously is based in feminist activism, such as the song “Juarez”, which addressed the rape and murder of women in Juarez, Mexico. “Like the Juarez song I didn’t know about that until I realized what the song is about. I just feel like I’ve always learned something.”
Feminist activism has been conceptualized in a number of ways (Kinser 2004). Perhaps the most common approach has been to emphasize the willingness to speak out or act on behalf of women as well as asserting a challenge to patriarchal standards (Gillis et al. 2004; Kinser 2004; Richards and Baumgardner 2000). Amos’ willingness to both project her activism onstage, as well as help create a national organization founded to help women who have been raped, are examples of how a third wave feminist musician translates her feminism into activism with the intention of helping women to heal. Whiteley says that Amos arranges herself as a feminist activist and that “[i]n so doing, Amos positions herself within the continuing history of women who campaign against sexual violence and oppression, who recognize that rape is centrally involved in a woman’s sense of personal identity” (2000:198). Whiteley states that Amos’ use of her own rape as a rallying cry for women to speak out about their sexual assault serves as a means to challenge the notion of victims as quiet and disengaged. Amos is telling women that they should use their voice and tell their story (O’Brien 2002).

Because Amos’ activism influences her fans and serves as an inspiration for their own feminist activism, it becomes clear that female fans of Amos know she is a feminist and know that she is active on behalf of women. It can also be said that Amos’ activism influences her female fans to act. This is particularly important to recognize because one of the central concerns with third wave feminists is apathy (Aronson 2003). Indeed, new generations of feminist women have been criticized for not being as active as their foremothers (Kinser 2004; Aronson 2003; Bailey 1997). As Bailey writes,

The second wave is so named primarily as a means of emphasizing continuity with earlier feminist activities and ideas. By contrast, the third wave, at least the strands of it that this paper will consider, seems to identify itself as such largely as
a means of distancing itself from earlier feminism as a means of stressing what are perceived as discontinuities with earlier feminist thought and activity (1997:17).

And goes on to say, “The most important contribution of younger feminists, however, may be in providing new demands and suggestions about the very issues that have consumed older feminists” (1997:26). Further, as Leonard (2009) points out, women in rock music challenge the hegemonic norm. This challenge has asserted that women’s experiences are varied and that women should not be considered a homogenous group. Amos’ willingness to explore many different aspects of womanhood through her performances and albums serves as an example of her challenge to hegemonic masculinity.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have addressed how Amos’ music is a foundation for her feminism and how this translates into healing and/or emotional support with the women interviewed. I have asserted that because Amos’ music is an example of feminist standpoint, the women noted that their attraction is based on the empowering and female-centered themes of her work. I have addressed Amos’ feminist identity and presented various definitions of who/what a feminist is from the perspective of the women interviewed. I demonstrated how the women found feminism in her work through a discussion of several songs, including “Cornflake Girl”, “Waitress” and “Take to the Sky.” I then transitioned into an explanation of how the women connected Amos’ feminism to healing or emotional support. I found that, while the women would not say “Her feminism is healing”, they did express several feminist sentiments which related healing and/or emotional support to the empowering themes in Amos’ music. I also
discussed how Amos' live performances and improvisations are based in her feminist identity and explored how each serves to heal and empower women. Finally I discussed Amos' activism on behalf of women through her work with RAINN and connected feminist activism to a tangible way to help people heal. I also addressed how Amos' feminist agenda has motivated the women to participate in feminist-based activism in order to offer emotional support or healing in their own lives. In the next chapter I summarize my findings, describe the theoretical contributions of this project, offer suggestions for non-profits who work with women, and suggest avenues for future research.
CHAPTER VII- CONCLUSIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

The interviews conducted for this study provide a lot of insight into women’s experiences using music as emotional and healing catalysts as well as relationships between feminist music and feminist identity. While it is impossible to fully represent the lives and experiences of each woman, with what has been examined in the last several chapters there are many conclusions which can be drawn. The purpose of this final chapter is to (1) summarize the findings of this research; (2) discuss the ways in which these findings may illustrate and expand existing theories of gender, emotions and female fans; (3) offer recommendations for non-profits focused on offering emotional support or healing for women; and (4) suggest avenues of future research and scholarly inquiry.

Summary of Research

The purpose of this study was to examine the emotional and healing relationships between the feminist music of Tori Amos and the people who identify as her fans. This was important because, while the emotional relationships created between music and listener have been explored (e.g., Kotarba and Vannini 2008; Vannini 2006; Bessett 2006; Greig 1997; Becker 1990), little has focused on linking gender and emotions to music and healing, especially through the music of a feminist artist. I focused on answering three research questions consisting of;

1. In what ways do fans of Tori Amos identify her music as a source of emotional support and/or facilitative of healing?
2. What is the nature of the emotional connection(s) fans of Tori Amos make with her music?
3. In what ways do Tori Amos’ feminist beliefs, as illustrated in her lyrics and performances, facilitate this emotional support and/or healing?
Guided by these questions, I examined how women use Amos’ music to heal. I presented
the emotions women felt when listening to Amos such as anger, sadness and elation, as
well as the ways that the music allowed them to express these emotions through crying.
Finally, I found that most of the women interviewed identified as feminists, that their
feminist identity was influenced through Amos’ music and Amos’ feminist identity, and
that they attributed feminism to their ability to feel confident in themselves. This was
particularly salient when considering Amos’ concert performances are based in feminist
performance art and that the women were attending concerts to hear a feminist
musician’s perspective.

These data were collected through qualitative, semi-structured interviews with
forty-two women and through participant observation at three of Amos’ concerts during
her summer 2009 concert tour as well as by using a brief content analysis of her
performance style and album themes. Interviews were mainly conducted over the phone
and lasted between half an hour to an hour and a half, with the median amount of time
being one hour. I used a list of questions as a guide, but allowed the participants to direct
the interview by tailoring my questions to their responses. For example, if after
answering my first question a woman mentioned how Amos’ music was healing to her I
would move to the questions which focused on the ways Amos’ music had helped her
heal. For a list of the questions I asked please see Appendix F, “Interview Questions” in
the Appendices.

To answer the first question, “In what ways do fans of Tori Amos identify her
music as a source of emotional support and/or facilitative of healing?”, I focused on what
women felt they needed to heal from. Beginning with a discussion of the major themes
in Amos’ performance style and album composition, I laid a foundation for addressing which themes in Amos’ songs were attractive to her fans. I found that women were healing from abusive relationships (physically, mentally and sexually), as well as healing from an eating disorder or medical conditions. Many were also attempting to surmount religious oppression or trying to understand their relationships with their fathers, which were often defined as combative or dysfunctional. However, many women expressed a general feeling that they could not articulate what they needed to heal from; for them, Amos’ music provided a general source of comfort and healing.

Once I identified how the women thought about healing, and what they felt they needed to heal from, I then discussed with them what songs or albums have been helpful in their healing. “Silent All These Years” and “Precious Things” were mentioned consistently as songs which women related to, first on a lyrical level and then through the piano as the song’s instrument. I found that these relationships were consistent with literature focused on women and popular music because, in engaging Amos’ music, the women were weaving together their own feelings within Amos’ music, forming a healing connection which allowed them to express themselves.

One of the most common themes that women used Amos’ music to heal from was rape or abuse, as well as their relationship with their fathers. Those who used the music to heal from rape related especially to Amos’ admittance to being raped in her song “Me and a Gun”. The song and Amos’ survivor status served as both comfort and inspiration to them because it allowed them to identify another woman who had been assaulted and to follow her path to healing. Many women articulated that “Me and a Gun” helped them to feel less alone in their experience and allowed them to talk about their rape for the first
time. Further, healing from abusive relationships with partners or boyfriends emerged as was detailed with songs like “Precious Things”. Abuse also was a prominent theme with women who were attempting to heal from negative relationships with their fathers. Here the song “Winter” was mentioned as a healing song as many women were attracted to the relationship Amos described with her father. Thus, the song allowed them to examine the neglect or abuse that they suffered from their fathers.

Of course, healing is a multifaceted act. Therefore, combining studies of healing with studies of emotions becomes necessary in order to understand the relationships women form with Amos’ music. This was the purpose of my second research question, “What is the nature of the emotional connection(s) fans of Tori Amos make with her music?” I found that Amos’ music was being used as emotional support as well as to extract emotions that women wanted to deal with on their own (i.e. without the help of a therapist or counselor). Many of the women articulated that they were using Amos’ music to tap into emotions such as sadness, anger or happiness. While these may seem like emotions which are acceptable for women, sociological studies of emotions suggest otherwise and note that they are distinctly gendered. Women, in general, are encouraged to “smile” (Hochschild 1983) and ignore feelings of sadness while men who are sad are viewed as sensitive and endearing. Women who get angry are often classified as “out of control” or encouraged to suppress their anger. In contrast, anger with men is acceptable because it is associated with expressing masculinity. Many women mentioned that the song “Precious Things” allowed them to feel anger, especially when hearing it performed live. Further, many of the women noted that Amos’ music allowed them to express their emotions through crying which is also distinctly gendered. While common beliefs are
that it is acceptable for women to cry, in general women who are crying are viewed as
someone who needs to be comforted in order to stop crying. It is a sign of a delicate
person who needs support. My data challenges this idea.

What the women in my study articulated is that crying does not necessarily mean
that they want comfort. Rather, crying can mean happiness, sadness, frustration or a
range of other emotions and that expressing emotions through tears allows them to
articulate what they are feeling and work out the emotion. This runs in contrast to
stereotypes placed on women crying, and serves to show that stereotypes of women’s
emotions, or expression of emotions, are based in gendered socialization. Consider the
work of Sheilds who noted that “It takes a real man to cry” (2002:161) and suggested that
men crying is a sign of endurance. Yet, she also recognized that a women crying is
viewed as a weakness, that the woman is too emotional to handle any responsibility.
Thus, while it is clear that crying is gendered in nature, my study suggests that women
use crying in an assertive way. They are not necessarily crying in order to gain sympathy
or because they want to be comforted. Rather, crying is a means to sort out an emotion,
categorize it and assert control over it.

This contrast between the expectations of men and women was an impetus behind
my third research question, “In what ways do Tori Amos’ feminist beliefs, as illustrated
in her lyrics and performances, facilitate this emotional support and/or healing?” Here I
explored how Amos’ feminist identity is linked to her songwriting and performances,
how this identity is interpreted by her fans and how her feminism has been connected
with healing and/or emotional support. I found that most of the women I interviewed
identified as a feminist and that Amos’ feminism influenced their own identity. This
became clear as the women talked to me about who they consider a feminist to be (someone who stands up for the rights of women), and noted that their attraction to Amos lies in her willingness to address women’s experiences as well as have a feminist-based political agenda. They noted that Amos embodies this through songs like “Cornflake Girl” which addresses women being pitted against each other, and “Take to the Sky” which uses patriarchal figures, such as fathers, priests and doctors, to note that each may attempt to hold her back but that she will eventually take to the sky. Further, it was through Amos’ concert performances that many women identified her feminism, especially through her use of costumes, wigs, set decoration and on-stage personas, such as the “dolls” during the 2007 American Doll Posse Tour. Indeed it was in Amos’ mix of lyrics and performance that her feminism was best demonstrated. This was noted by Pandora who discussed Amos’ juxtaposition of Britney Spears’ “Baby One More Time” and her own song “Maybe California” which, combined, presented a commentary on domestic violence.

I found that Amos’ feminism translated into healing and/or emotional support in a more indirect route. While none of the women said “Her feminism is healing” they expressed feminist sentiments such as using Amos’ music to deal with their emotions surrounding becoming a mother, dealing with the patriarchal constraints of religion or to understand their sexuality. These experiences were connected to songs like “Me and a Gun”, “Precious Things” and “Mother”. Further, relating the music as healing to activism on behalf of women was a central component for the women. Amos’ creation of and her work with the Rape Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN) which serves as a national hotline for sexual violence victims and survivors to call and receive
anonymous counseling, was mentioned by many women as an example of how feminism and activism combine with healing and emotional support. Indeed, Amos’ work with RAINN inspired many of the participants to hold their own fundraisers for RAINN as well as participate in RAINN day on their college campus. Amos’ work with RAINN also inspired participants to use themes from her albums with clients as a means to help them heal. Further, one participant became motivated to begin her own organization aimed at helping women who have survived sexual violence.

The women in this study served as examples of a larger group of women who have used the music of Tori Amos to help them heal and connect emotionally with a feminist artist. Given the instances and traumatic experiences women shared, it leaves me to wonder why feminist music has never been linked to healing and emotions? While this study focused on Amos, I also asked women who else they listen to. I received many names of artists (Ani DiFranco, Fiona Apple, Regina Spektor to name a few) and while the women mainly focused on Amos for healing and emotional support, they also mentioned that they found comfort in many female musicians whose music is presented from a feminine and empowering feminist point of view. This speaks to a larger phenomenon surrounding the male dominance in the music industry, and the encouragement of women to perform songs written and produced by men. All things considered, it is not shocking that the women interviewed gravitated to a woman who is singing and writing her own music as they could identify with her point of view.
Theoretical Development

To analyze the women's narratives I used two theoretical frameworks. The first was Blumer's (1969) approach to symbolic interaction which has three main premises,

1. Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings they ascribe to those things;
2. The meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with others and the society;
4. These meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by
the person in dealing with the things he/she encounters (1969:2).

Blumer's work shows that the purpose of symbolic interaction is to “[h]ighlight individual accountability and agency and addresses structural, cultural, and material conditions as people experience and reproduce them in their day-to-day lives” (Fields et al. 2006:157). When considering gender, emotion and music, symbolic interactionist theory is generally used as a theoretical foundation for data analysis because it guides the researcher in understanding the meaning participants place on songs or albums. Vannini and Waskul relate Blumer’s theory to music, arguing that at its core, symbolic interaction is musical. “Symbolic interaction is harmonic in the sense that relationships with others yield more than instrumental value. Interactions with others are aesthetic, and we routinely gauge relations on the basis of such gratifications” (2006:6). Further, as Frith notes, “The question we should be asking is not what does popular music reveal about ‘the people’ but how does it construct them” (1987:137). Using symbolic interaction as a theoretical framework allowed me to consider how the songs woman attributed to healing, emotional support and/or feminist identity were based in their own interpretation

\[^{12}\text{Author emphasis.}\]
of the music. This spoke to how they interpreted Amos’ music based on the meaning that the music represents for them.

Further, when considering holistic health and symbolic interaction, Blumer’s theory becomes a central means to discuss how women have used Amos’ music as a means to connect the spiritual, mental and emotional self with healing. Because one of Blumer’s tenants is that meaning is “[h]andled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he/she encounters” (1969:5), symbolic interaction can help define a sociological approach to healing. I would argue that fusing symbolic interactionist theory with holistic studies of health would provide holistic health with a theoretical foundation for understanding how patients conduct their own healing outside of guided therapy. I would also posit that studies of female fans, which is currently underrepresented in cultural studies, could apply symbolic interactionist theory through Blumer’s statement that “The meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with others and the society” (1969:5). This would provide a framework for studying female fans who travel to concerts with feminist artists in order to use the concert setting, the gathering of fans, the music performed and the feminist identity of the performer as a means to heal themselves.

The second theory which was used to guide this research was feminist standpoint theory. Feminist standpoint theory emphasizes the importance of all women’s voices being brought to the forefront because women’s lives and experiences have (traditionally) been left out of research (Harding 2007; Smith 2007; Hartsock 2007; Naples 2003). Further, one of its purposes is to try to “[m]ake specific connections between certain
modes of gendered subjectivity... How, standpoint theorists ask, are our practices both constituted by and constitutive of the structures that organize our experience” (Weeks 2004: 184). Using feminist standpoint theory as a guide for the methodology and analysis of data meant that I took a reflexive approach to data collection, meaning that I compiled a researcher position and bracketed my response to being in the field. Both are found in the Appendices. I also used feminist standpoint theory as a means to analyze women’s experiences with emotional responses to Amos’ music, as well as Amos’ musical composition coming from the place of feminism and oppression of women. I found that, particularly with the emotion of anger, women were challenging patriarchal stereotypes of anger as an emotion women should not express. By using Amos’ music as a means to connect with their anger, the women were challenging the perception of women as passive. For example, many of the women attributed Amos’ “Precious Things” as a song which was written from a female-centered perspective and challenged patriarchal perceptions of women.

I selected and combined symbolic interactionism and feminist standpoint theory for two reasons. First, the use of symbolic interaction has been the theoretical foundation for most sociological research on music. In addition, research on female singer/songwriters has focused on how their music is written from their point of view, a tenant of feminist standpoint theory. Second, due to the lack of information on interactions between female fans and feminist music, I needed to find a way to explore both of these areas simultaneously and using symbolic interaction and feminist standpoint theory helped to achieve that. However I would also argue that a combination of the theories should be foundational for research on female fans and female musicians.
Simply attempting to understand this relationship with just symbolic interactionist theory leaves open many theoretical questions such as “Whose perspective on meaning?” or “Who determines what value is placed on an object?” As I have demonstrated, using feminist standpoint theory to define and guide emotions exposes gendered expectations placed on how we think and feel, which means that how women perceive music and what they are getting from the music is different than men (e.g. Bessett 2006). This difference means that feminist theories must be applied in order to provide a framework for a feminine point of view. Further, feminist standpoint theory, when combined with symbolic interaction, helps present narratives on music and emotion from the point of view of women, allowing for the combination of the introspective in symbolic interaction to mesh with the experiences of women interviewed.

Therefore, this study contributes to the existing literature by 1) presenting a theoretical framework for sociological perspectives on healing, especially regarding healing the self; 2) using music to illustrate gender; 3) studying female fans and the use of music as their primary means of emotional support; 4) furthering definitions of what makes music feminist as well as address the lack of studies which focus specifically on female solo-artists (e.g. Leonard 2009); and 5) considering how gender relates to music as an emotional catalyst.

Limitations of this Study

While I do feel that I have presented a fairly complete picture of Amos’ female fans, there are a few limitations to this study, which may result in critiques of my sampling and choice of literature reviewed. In this section I address these potential concerns and offer feedback on them. Specifically I will talk about the exclusion of men
from my study, the demographics of the participants, and the definition of what a “feminist” musician is.

A potential critique to arise from this study is that men were excluded from my sample, thus there is not a completely accurate portrayal of Amos’ fans and/or gender and music. The incorporation of men into my study certainly would have expanded the parameters of the research, and in the initial stages of planning I had intended to include men. However, after deciding on feminist standpoint as a theoretical perspective, and after becoming more versed in the ways in which the music industry systematically silences the work of female artists, I decided that a focus on women would better fit my research questions. Further, I found that a study on female fans of a feminist musician had never been done before. This cemented my conclusion that this study should focus on women. I think that, in the future, I would like to repeat the study with men as I have noticed that Amos does have a following of, particularly, gay men.

Another critique which may arise from this study is that, based on the demographics of my sample, Amos’ music only speaks to white-middle class women. This may come from 79% of my sample defining their racial/ethnic identity as “Caucasian” and 49% of participants holding either a bachelor’s or master’s degree. While my sample may seem homogenous in some areas, in others it was very diverse. For example, the age range of participants was twenty-one to forty-five, 33% of my sample identified as lesbian, bi-sexual or “queer”, 51% of the participants had less-than a college degree, the regional variation was disbursed throughout the U.S., and I also had 13% of women who identified, partly, as Native American. As I mentioned in the methods section, my intention was to approach this study with an eye toward having as
diverse a sample as possible, but that the nature of my recruitment could not guarantee
this. While some aspects of my sampling are similar, I feel that there are areas in which I
found diverse groups of women to include in my study.

Finally, I am aware that there are many definitions of who/what a feminist is and
how feminism is expressed in popular culture. One difficult aspect of this study was
categorizing and defining exactly what "feminist music" is or can be. While I feel that,
by including cultural feminism, feminist standpoint theory, literature on gender, women
and music, I was able to paint a picture of what feminist music is, I am also aware that a
specific definition of what feminist music is may be lacking in this study. While I do
think this speaks to the necessity for further research in feminist music, I would also note
that having one specific definition of feminist music is as difficult as having one
definition of feminism. As Aronson (2003) pointed out, contemporary perspectives on
feminism and feminist identity are difficult to define because the term has taken on so
many different definitions.

Recommendations

Given the results of this project I would like to make recommendations for
organizations which work to help women heal, or offer emotional support or services to
women. This is especially prudent when considering the number of women interviewed
who had experienced some form of trauma as well as the amount of women who drew
inspiration from Amos’ activism.

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of this research has been the effect
music has on healing the self. While some of the women did indicate that they sought
professional counseling at some point, many indicated that they preferred to use Amos’
music to heal in private. This was due, in part, to either not having health insurance or being able to afford mental health care, or because there was a lack of resources in their area. However, many women noted that they simply found solace in being able to listen to music on their own and work through their emotions. This holistic approach demonstrates that women who have experienced trauma have some understanding of what they need and what they want to do to heal. For example, many of the women spoke about writing or painting while listening to Amos or attending multiple concerts in order to be around other people who are attempting to heal. Because of this, I would assert that more emphasis be placed on holistic approaches to healing for women who are overcoming trauma.

As I noted in the literature review, Broom writes “Previously, sociologists have pointed towards the existence of highly restrictive discourses regarding cancer, including war and sport metaphors espousing the ‘fighting of cancer’ and ‘toughing it out’… What then of the increased prominence of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM)-related discourses of self-help, self-responsibility and self-healing in cancer care?” (2009:75). In doing research with cancer patients, Broom found that patients participated in “self-healing” as a way to re-gain control of their bodies, find some power over their disease and a sense of inner peace. My findings were similar in that women who were attempting to heal or find emotional support were interested in taking control of their bodies and minds.

Further, healing and emotions have larger gendered contexts in that emotions are generally gendered and based in patriarchal systems. This became increasingly clear when women would say that they listened to Amos’ music in order to feel sad or be
Encouraging women to feel their emotions without a gendered pretense is perhaps one of the greatest societal challenges to be faced when working with women who have experienced trauma. In general, women are expected to take on all the characteristics of their gender and be soft, gentle and feminine (e.g. Lucal 1999). When training those who are going to work with women who have experienced trauma, emphasis could be placed on encouraging them to consider the gendered conception they have of how women should express emotion and then challenge any gendered experiences associated with healing. For example, asserting that a woman should not curse and swear when she is upset is a gendered notion. Addressing this in a training setting could open the door for conversations regarding how gender affects the level of treatment someone will receive.

Further, with regard to feminism, I suggest that organizations and groups who work to achieve rights for women consider how third wave feminists have incorporated music into their activism. This study shows that feminist musicians inspire women to act on behalf of women. Further, this study lends itself to discussions many feminist organizations have regarding who is a feminist and how is feminism declared. Using studies such as this one to help answer this question contributes to continuing debate about the status of feminism in U.S. culture.

**Future Inquiry**

The benefits to this study can be found in its contributions to sociological studies of emotions and gender while also contributing to literature in holistic health (also called sociology of healing), third wave feminism and contemporary fan studies in sociology.
This study was the first to qualitatively address how women use the music of a feminist artist for emotional support and/or healing as well as to examine how women who are using music to heal define their fan status and their relationship with a musician. Thus, a purpose of this research was to be a catalyst for future research in this area.

Research on how women heal themselves is relatively non-existent. This could be due to studies of emotions being in their infancy as well as the gendered connotation within studies of emotions. My research has been unique in this area because sociological studies of emotions are focused on defining how gender and emotion connect. Incorporating feminist perspectives on music into understanding emotions and gender is an extension of these areas and can be further defined through the use of symbolic interaction coupled with feminist standpoint theory. Here we can try to understand how women are using music to heal themselves or to coax out emotions. My findings suggest that there are many more questions which could be addressed in this area, especially when considering self-healing.

One outcome of this study is to demonstrate the little sociological study that has focused on how women heal through music, particularly with female performers who have feminist identities. I also assert that feminist based music serves as a means to help women lure out emotions. As Alex noted, she would listen to Amos as a means to work out an emotion she was feeling and that Amos’ feminist identity helped peak her interest in Amos’ music. Because feminist music is centered on the experiences of women, it can help women make a connection between emotions and actions. This is central to Blumer’s (1969) assertion that we place meaning on things based on the meaning we have ascribed to them. Feminist music in general, and Amos’ music in particular, serve
as catalysts for emotions and healing because women can take meaning out of the music based on how they interpret it. Many of the women articulated this by saying that they enjoyed the layers and multiple meanings Amos’ songs have. They appreciated that they could continue to find meaning in songs that they may not have discovered on their first or second listen. In future research, understanding how people distinguish between feminist and non-feminist artists could help address concerns and questions regarding why one musician is considered more feminist than another.

This research also shows the necessity for further development in the area of sociology dedicated to healing. Relating sociological approaches to holistic healing to existing sociological studies in mental health, emotions or physical health can help further define how people conceptualize and deal with trauma, disease or day-to-day life. Using music as a catalyst for this area would help answer some questions, especially considering that music is such a part of our day-to-day life. Further studies which examine the more holistic and social uses of music (as opposed to music therapy used in clinical settings) and the ways that they guide healing provides an avenue for further understanding of how holism influences the mind and the self. Combining holistic healing with music could help further an understanding of how healing is gendered, especially when considering the ways that men and women use music to heal, and the epistemology behind this use.

Finally, I would assert that studies of female fans are limited in scope and distinctly gendered. It is sobering to consider that feminist studies of music remained largely untouched until 1988 when conferences at Dartmouth and Carlton University held sessions to discuss feminism and music (Whiteley 2000). This is especially salient
considering that popular culture is often considered a litmus test for gendered norms (Leonard 2009; Gillis et al. 2004). Focusing on female fans who do not fit into the stereotype of uncontrollable, hysterical girls and women presents a very different perspective on the status of women’s intellectual and emotional abilities. Understanding that female fans want to find meaning in the music they listen to and want to see female performers address women’s experiences challenges the patriarchal norm placed on women. This, in turn, challenges patriarchy in general because women are presented as thinking individuals who do not need to stare at attractive men on a stage. Further study in this area is needed in order to gain better understandings of female fans and feminist performers and further sociological studies of emotions, gender and culture.

Final Words

This study was constructed to accomplish many goals. Yet when I am asked for the ten-second version of what my research is about, I generally say “I am looking at women who have used female a musician’s music as a means to heal themselves or to receive emotional support.” The shocked “Wow!” followed by “You know what song/music style helps me…” I often receive from many women speaks to the importance of this study in general, and the importance of studying women’s experiences in particular. I would contend that feminist epistemology serves as a foundation for women to be able to share their stories. However, coupling this with music means that Blumer’s thoughts ring true; we assign meaning to things and we give meaning to them. Studying music and women’s experiences with music serve as a catalyst for women to share their stories because, in many ways, they have found a voice through a performer
who they perceive as relating to their experiences. The sharing of stories and experiences is illustrative of a feminist standpoint is, yet many scholar’s find that studies of women are only interesting if they consider the “wild” or “crazy” nature of their fandom. My study challenges this hegemony and asserts that women listen to music which defines their own lives, and that they feel is empowering. This attitude is distinctly feminist and illustrates why women are attracted to feminist musicians. Therefore, I reserve the final words of this project to a re-visiting of a comment Madeline made as well as lyrics from Amos.

I used to listen to U2 and REM a lot more, Morrissey those kinds of people. But I really only listen to female artists now. It’s just what I choose to put in. I think it’s, there’s something about I’d rather have another woman’s voice in my head than a man’s voice. Because growing, like all my favorite bands were male artists. Maybe it’s just that now I see that their message is from their point of view. And that I internalize that and maybe that’s why I made all the shitty choices that I made. So, I mean growing up I went to U2 and REM concerts and before that I was going to Guns and Roses and Bon Jovi and Skid Row and all that crap. So I’m think that maybe the reason that I only listen to female artists is because I just would rather have their messages in my head.

And from Amos,

I think there’re pieces of me, you’ve never seen. Maybe she’s just pieces of me, you’ve never seen. Well, all the world is all I am (“Tear in Your Hand”, Little Earthquakes 1991).
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APPENDIX A

Position of the Researcher (A Fan as the Researcher)

One potential critique which may arise from this study is that a fan of Amos should not be researching her work because it is impossible to remain objective. Because research is, generally, expected to come from an objective “unbiased” place, some scholars may feel that a fan as a researcher will not be able to set aside her own position while researching (Hills 2002; Stanley and Wise 1993). This critique is consistent with the traditional positivist paradigm within social science research. However, it is exactly what feminist approaches to research often value (Stanley and Wise 1993; Harding 1987). The body of literature which defines feminist approaches to research argues that strong objectivity gives way to a more in-depth and consistent study because of the obligation on the researcher to be reflexive and self-critical (Harding 2004; Hartsock 2004; Haraway 2004; Naples 2003; Finlay 2002; Stanley and Wise 1993; Harding 1987). Having a fan as the researcher provides an interesting contribution to the insider/outsider debate within feminist approaches to research (e.g. Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2007; Hill Collins 1990). Being a fan of Amos for thirteen years means that I have knowledge generally only present within Amos fan circles.

In keeping with the reflexive aspect of feminist research, in this section I present my position as a social researcher. I do so in a similar vein to McCorkel and Myers (2003) and Finlay (2002) because, particularly with feminist research, disclosure is necessary to unveil the researcher’s position. This is done in an effort to make myself more transparent in both my motivation for the research.
I was born in 1979, but it is fair to say that I am an honorary member of the children of the 1960’s music movement. This is probably due to my hippie-turned-social worker parents raising me with music always playing in the house. In utero they claimed to play Bob Segar, The Doors and Janis Joplin for me. (My mother told me that she cried the day that Janis Joplin died). As I grew up these standards were coupled with old school Aerosmith, Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, The Rolling Stones, Aretha Franklin, Tina Turner, George Thorogood and the “Good Morning Vietnam” soundtrack, which included Martha and the Vandellas, James Brown and Louis Armstrong. We also listened to a lot of Jimi Hendrix, Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band, Carly Simon and The Beatles. It is fair to say that the motto my father adopted from the main character Adrian Cronauer in the film “Good Morning Vietnam” rang true to the music theory in our household. The character says, “I don’t care what you play as long as you play it loud!” This music was always all around me, and often merged my parent’s politics with their musical selection. My dad is a Vietnam Veteran and would often sing along to the Edwin Starr song “War”, a song written as a protest to the Vietnam War, “War, what is it good for?! Absolutely nothing” (“War”, Edwin Starr, War and Peace 1969).

When I discovered Tori Amos’ music I was 17 and in the same place that a lot of the women I interviewed. I had just ended an abusive relationship with a boy whom I dated for three years. I had very few friends that I considered trustworthy and I had no clue who I was and what I stood for, save for one piece of my identity. I knew I was a feminist. I may not have had the vocabulary to define my feminism that I do now, but I knew that women were oppressed simply based on their gender and that the abuse I lived
through was common to many girls and women in my life. Wanting to empower other women was who I defined a feminist as. I had begun exploring this phenomenon through magazines like “Sassy” as well as books which told fictional and non-fictional stories of abused female characters and their journey to overcoming their past. Musically I was into Madonna, Garbage, TLC, Fiona Apple, Alanis Morissette and Sarah MacLauchlan and looking back my preference for strong female musicians was evident, regardless of if I was aware of it. For example, I would spend hours playing and rewinding the Queen Latifah song “U.N.I.T.Y” on my walkman.

You gotta let him know.
You go, come on here we go.
U.N.I.T.Y., Love a black woman from infinity to infinity.
You gotta let him know.
You ain't a bitch or a ho.

And goes on to say,

Instinct leads me to another flow every time I hear a brother call a girl a bitch or a ho.
Trying to make a sister feel low.

While it may seem odd that a white girl from rural Michigan would find so much of herself in the lyrics of an African American woman from New Jersey, I found a lot of comfort in the lyrics of this song. I was fascinated with a female voice rapping with such force and power! I knew this was rare.

It was on February 8, 1997 that I first heard Tori Amos’ music when a friend of mine suggested I listen to her play “I’m On Fire”, a cover of a Bruce Springsteen song. It was at a forensics meet (public speaking and acting competition in area high schools) and we were waiting for the awards ceremony to begin. I had not spoken to many people
about the relationship I had gotten out of, and I think that this friend knew that I was in need of something that would help me work through my emotions. He handed me the CD to listen to and I was hooked. Once I heard Tori and her piano I knew that my interest had been peaked and I wanted to know more about who she was and what music she had available.

Living in a small town where, seemingly, everyone knew everyone else, I had never been exposed to any music other than what the local radio station passed for “hits”. (Generally love songs and the latest dance songs). But I did have a friend whom I saw as deviant from the norms set by a conservative community. She had a nose ring, talked about sex, drugs and rock and roll, spent a lot of time asking questions and, most importantly, could be found telling our P.E. teacher that dodgeball was hardly a good form of exercise. It was in P.E. class one day when I asked her about Tori Amos. I said, “I want to buy some of Tori Amos’ music. Do you know who she is? What should I buy?” She replied, “Well, her albums that are out right now are Little Earthquakes, Under the Pink and Boys for Pele. But I would start with Little Earthquakes, it’s my favorite”. I took this as gospel and ran to the only real record store in our area to purchase it.

In Little Earthquakes I found myself reflected in each song. Much like the women I spoke with I have songs which I still listen to when I need to remind myself of where I was and how far I have come, such as “Girl”, “Crucify” and “Precious Things”. There are also many songs on that album that I choose to not listen to because the emotion I was feeling when I first heard them was too strong or painful to want to return to such as “Mother” and “Me and a Gun”. In a way I was one of the fans whom Tori has
described as “starving”. I needed to hear that I was not strange or weird and being myself was the best recourse against any person who made me feel bad about myself. What is more, *Little Earthquakes* made me appreciate myself and understand that I deserved to be loved by another person. In fact, four months after purchasing *Little Earthquakes* I met and began dating my husband.

As I began to add Tori’s albums to my collection of music I found myself not only connecting to her music on an emotional and healing level, I was also finding that her songs represented new perspectives on the world that I had never been exposed to. For example, in 1999 Tori released an album called *To Venus and Back* which contained a song called “Juarez”. In the song Tori detailed the rape and murder of women in Juarez, Mexico. I had never heard of this happening and instantly felt like I needed to know as much about this area of the world as possible. Later in my life, after graduating from college, I had the opportunity to participate in *The Vagina Monologues* and perform a monologue about the women who were raped and murdered in Juarez. I credit Tori’s music for influencing this activism.

As I have gotten older I have connected to Tori as a mentor of sorts. Perhaps this is because I was raised on the politically charged music of the 1960s, or perhaps it is because I have always felt a connection to strong women who are unapologetic for their actions, politics and activism. In many ways her albums have spoken to my feelings on violence, war, sexism, government, women’s rights, religion, the founding of America and being a woman in a patriarchal society. I have also found a connection to Tori through her identification of her race and her album *Scarlet’s Walk*. She is part Cherokee, on her mother’s side. I am part Chippewa on my father’s. This knowledge of
my Native background has been passed down through my grandmother but never really explored. Like many of Tori’s fans who also hold this knowledge of their racial identity I found some comfort in knowing that there was someone out there who looks white but knew that their genealogy can be traced back to the Native people, almost like having a secret identity.

When I was an undergraduate student at Grand Valley State University I began to acquire the vocabulary necessary to understand my feminism. For me being a feminist still began and ended with the decimation of violence against women. At about the time I was learning feminist theory and becoming an activist, Tori put out the album *Strange Little Girls*. Listening to a feminist woman tackle songs written by men blew me away. I have a very clear memory of purchasing the album and immediately sitting in my car and listening to it outside the store in the parking lot. I immediately flipped to the second song on the cd, “‘97 Bonnie and Clyde”, originally written and performed by Eminem and detailed Eminem’s murder of his wife. In the song Eminem enlists the help of his toddler daughter to dispose of the body,

    Oh where's mama? She's takin a little nap in the trunk.
    Oh that smell (whew!) da-da musta runned over a skunk.
    Now I know what you're thinkin’ - it's kind of late to go swimmin’.
    But you know your mama, she's one of those type of women that do crazy things,
    and if she don't get her way, she'll throw a fit.
    Don't play with da-da's toy knife, honey, let go of it ("97 Bonnie and Clyde"

Tori’s cover of the song received a lot of attention. While Eminem’s version was a dance track, Tori’s version was slow, backed by a symphony with the lyrics whispered from the point of view of the mother listening to Eminem from the trunk. I felt re-charged by
the song. I felt like my own approach to feminism was being justified through this music and that I had a feminist leader to look up to.

In a way I think that my connection to Tori as a mentor and feminist icon is no different from the way I connect to the scholarly women whose books I read and analyze with the same veracity. Tori’s songs are very much based in literature, visual art and mythology, to name a few. She has spoken of her albums as compositions found in researching each topic or theme of the album (Amos and Powers 2005). Perhaps because she is a woman, or perhaps because she writes songs which challenge so many patriarchal structures, many people will see a study of her fans as an exercise in foolishness. Or perhaps even a novelty. Yet what I have found as a part of the fan community for thirteen years is just the opposite. Tori’s fans have a connection with each other which can only be described as intense. The relationship people have formed with each other and with her music has not only helped them define who they are but also work through their experiences and challenges. I can honestly say I would never have healed and become the person I am if it were not for someone telling me to purchase Little Earthquakes.
APPENDIX B

Bracketing: Response to Data Collection

In keeping with the methodology I outlined in the “Methods” section of this dissertation I set up a separate section to discuss my reaction to the act of interviewing, data collection and observing people at concerts. I do this as both an exercise in strong objectivity (Harding 2004) as well as to position myself as not just a passive participant in the data collection. As Fields et al. (2006) write, “Researchers who explore emotions—particularly emotions that people experience as painful—will need to study not only respondents’ testimonies about their emotional experiences but also their emotional behavior and discourse” (Fields et al. 2006: 174). In keeping with this statement, I break this section down into three categories: 1) Interviewing; 2) Observation at Concerts; and 3) Methodological Challenges.

*Interviewing*

The logistics of, leading up to and during the interview, was an area that I ended up spending a lot of time thinking about and planning, especially with regard to the expectations that I had for numbers of participants, how to help participants who were in crisis (if this arose) and just general concern that I was representing this study and myself accurately. As Fields et al. write, “Symbolic interactionism, as we have argued, challenges micro/macro distinctions, positing the individual as neither an entity who stands apart from society nor a passive repository of culture. Social life—its organization, inequities, and history—cannot be understood without paying attention to group process and interaction, meaning and feelings” (Fields et al. 2006: 174). In many ways I considered myself to be hyper-sensitive to the expectations that may be placed on me.
from the women I interviewed. Amos’ fans are known for being versed in her music and her life, mainly because of the connection that they make with her music. Therefore, every time I called a participant I was nervous. These nerves generally went away in the first few minutes of an interview.

In conducting interviews I often realized how common my experiences were with the women I was speaking with. With this thought often came a question of whether or not to express that. While I was prepared to talk about my project, I realized in the first few interviews that I was not so sure I was ready to talk about my life. I would ask women “Is there anything you want to know about me?” and I would hold my breath wondering what they would want to know. In general they were curious about the dissertation and how I got into listening to Tori, but even this question gave me pause. Do I tell them I am an abuse survivor? Do I not tell them? Do I hint around it? These thoughts brought feelings of guilt as I realized the potential hypocrisy of my thinking. I was asking these women to share their lives with me. I should do the same. In general I spoke a little about my past, including the relationship I was in as a teenager. What became interesting about my sharing was that often many of the women would see this as a place to start a new conversation about Tori’s music. While I was at the end of my formal questions, through asking me questions about my life many of the women found areas to address that we did not get to in the formal part of the interview. These “after hours” discussions often became some of the most rich data collected. I attribute this to the power of feminist based research and the semi-structured interview because I was not only starting from where each woman was, from her point of view, I was also incorporating some of my own experiences which changed the way that many of the
women viewed me. As I got used to this exchange I began to have some conversations which went so well that I was hoping that the woman would ask me what I thought about a topic!

I was not prepared to deal with the feelings of responsibility I developed as women would tell me what they were healing from. When you hear someone tell you about the most traumatic, destructive or horrible moment of their life there is not a lot that can prepare you for how you will react. I had done crisis counseling before, in a professional setting, and I had done the reading and writing in my dissertation proposal regarding what I would do if I thought someone was in crisis. I also had the number for local crisis hotlines up on my laptop during the interview. But none of that prepared me for the role of the “researcher” and how to hold onto that role while still balancing the side of me that wanted to be compassionate.

I lost sleep over this aspect of interviewing because I began to feel a responsibility to “do right” by the women I had spoken to. I felt like a vessel for their stories and that it was up to me to make sure that they were represented properly. In a way, I put a lot of pressure on myself to speak for the women I had spoken to. However, as I was writing the analysis sections I began to realize that speaking for them was not my purpose. My purpose was to simply show how each woman’s words articulated an answer to the research questions I was posing. While I cannot shake the idea that I now have the private lives of forty-two women in me, I understand more of how to handle their stories. In a way I am glad I had this reaction as I felt like I was walking the talk of feminist research. I was privileging these women’s lives and stories above all other aspects of this project and making sure that their voices are what is constructing the interview.
I also was not prepared for the amount of participants I would recruit. Because of the large number of responses I received I had to eventually turn women down who were interested in participating in my study. While most women were understanding, I had one women ask to participate about a month after I had finished interviews. In her email she indicated that she was being treated for stage four cancer and that Amos’ music was what was helping her through. Because I was done recruiting I did have to turn down her offer to be interviewed, yet I was also aware of how much of a contribution her story might have made to my study. I justified this experience by telling myself that recruitment had to end at some time and that I was already in the coding and writing stages of data collection.

Finally, with regard to women discussing their healing process and fan status, I sometimes felt like some interviews derailed a bit. This mostly had to do with my being a new researcher, but I often felt like some interviews began getting so far off topic that I had to really work to get back to the original intent of my questions. This then affected the rest of the interview because I would feel frustrated and out of control. Which was interesting because I generally feel like the control in an interview setting should be given to the interviewee and I am there as a guide. However there were a lot of moments where I would feel like the person was just using the interview as an opportunity to share why they are a larger fan of Amos than I. For example, in a couple of interviews women wanted to make clear to me that they had been a fan of Amos longer than I have and therefore I cannot understand who a true fan is. In other interviews women wanted to spend the interview trash other Amos fans who follow Amos on tour. I experienced this also with recruitment. When I would email with someone to set up an interview I
had a few instances where participants would say variations of “Person X is going to ask you to be interviewed. Don’t do it!”.

Further, many of the women I interviewed would often test me at the beginning of our interviews to see how much I knew about Amos. Generally this would mean bringing up a popular fan website “A Dent in the Tori Amos Net Universe” or, as most fans refer to it, “The Dent”. They would reference “The Dent” and then ask me if I knew what it was. This was a key factor in our discussions because The Dent is no longer an active website as the administrator decided to stop updating it in 2006. This decision was well known in the Tori Amos fan community because the administrator wrote a formal goodbye letter to all the followers of the website and “passed the torch” to another Amos fan website called “Undented”. Thus, asking me if I knew of The Dent was almost like a rite of passage for some interviews. Had I not had that insider knowledge I may not have been able to build as strong a rapport with the women during interviews. This level of competition or status that some people were placing on themselves through participating in this project was something I did not expect.

The most difficult moments in an interview often came at the end when I would ask each woman if she knew Amos identified as a feminist. I have often thought of Amos’ feminist identity as very clear. In her book, *Piece by Piece* (Amos and Powers 2005), she details her feminism and her feminist approach to the record industry. Yet what was often the most difficult was when I would be going through an interview thinking “This woman is totally a feminist!” and then when I would ask my questions about their feminism they would state that they are not a feminist and that Amos is not a feminist. I was often shocked by this and, again, had to learn to check my response to
their answer. Perhaps it was my naïveté, but I had always assumed that to be a fan of Amos meant that you were a feminist.

**Observations**

In general, observing people at concerts was a lot less difficult than I anticipated. I initially thought that my presence writing and observing would cause people to ask me what I was doing while at concerts. But, in most occasions, I was unnoticed or ignored, save for a few instances. While at the Chicago venue I found myself feeling very self-conscious of my note taking. Perhaps this was because it was the first night of observations, although I am inclined to think that it was due to the large amount of people in the venue and the very little space that I had to take notes. There were few areas where I could observe and be out of the way of security, product sales, lines for the restrooms, lines for seating and ushers attempting to organize people. There were table set up around the bar, but because I do not drink, and was not about to start while collecting data, I did not have a seat and observe because I did not want to keep any of the wait staff from collecting real tips. At my seat was a similar story. The seats were small and mashed together to fit in as many people as possible. The air conditioning was not strong and so everyone was sweating and fanning themselves. Ordinarily this would be something I would not be concerned with. But attempting to write, stay out of people’s way, and be comfortable all at the same time was a challenge.

In the Milwaukee venue I had a similar experience with the venue being small and there being no place for me to stand and take notes without getting in the way. However, there was a different atmosphere here than in Chicago, perhaps because the town is smaller and less people were at the show. There were tables and booths set up for local
radio stations and crisis centers and people spent more time talking in the isles then at the bar or in the lobby. It was when I took my seat that I had some challenges to note taking. I had a great seat, forth-row-center on the isle. But the two men next to me were drunk before the show began and kept pushing me while I was writing and moving past me to get more beer in the middle of the show. However, this ended up being the concert which provided me with the most data because of Tori’s interaction with the crowd and my seating position. As I mentioned in the “Methodological Framework” section, it was also at this venue where I over-heard women saying that I must be a reporter, which meant that I was not as anonymous as I previously thought.

Methodological Challenges

During the course of data collection I had two experiences which were challenging to deal with methodologically as well as professionally. The first occurred during my initial recruitment stage. I had asked for, and received permission from, both message boards regarding contacting women on the boards to participate. Yet, in one instance I had replied to a “personal message” or “PM” to five potential participants on the message board who were interested in the study. Because I responded to more than one message with the same response I was flagged as “spam” by one of the potential participants and was reported to the moderator. The moderator messaged a terse and unprofessional private message to stop contacting people in bulk using the personal message system, which I did. Although I have to say I was shocked at how easily I was placed in the “spam” category as it was not my intention to cause any disruption of the message boards normal processes.
Further, my professional temperament was also tested during the time elapsed that my recruitment message was posted on message boards. Because anyone can respond to a post or asking there are few limits placed on how you will be received and general I was received very well among fans. But I did have the occasional person who would respond by saying that my study is sexist, that I should focus on men, as well as an individual who wrote “I call bullshit” on the thread discussing my study.

A second challenge came in protecting the identities of women who are somewhat well known in the Tori Amos fan community. During our interviews it became clear to me that they would need to have some say in proofing areas of the study which mention them as to make sure that their identities are protected. After our interview I emailed each woman and asked her how she felt about this. Each emailed back saying that proofing their sections sounded fine.

While it is clear that I came across some challenges which required me to adjust my research, I think that this section also serves as an example of the field work experience. While I could make plans, practice logistics and organize myself up until the minute of an interview or observation, nothing could change what would happen when I was in the moment. I hope this section serves as an example of how I handled these challenges.
APPENDIX C

Discography of Tori Amos and Copyright Permission

*Discography of Tori Amos*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Album</th>
<th>Year Released</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Little Earthquakes</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under The Pink</td>
<td>1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys for Pele</td>
<td>1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From The Choirgirl Hotel</td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Venus and Back</td>
<td>1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strange Little Girls</td>
<td>2001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scarlet’s Walk</td>
<td>2002</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Beekeeper</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Doll Posse</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abnormally Attracted to Sin</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwinter Graces</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Copyright Release from Sword and Stone Publishing

December 1, 2009

Sword and Stone Publishing
c/o Chelsea Laird
P.O. Box 880005
Port St. Lucie, FL 34988-0005

Dear Chelsea,

I am a doctoral candidate at Western Michigan University in the Department of Sociology. I am focusing my dissertation on women who have used Tori Amos’ music as a way to express emotion and as a source of healing. The Graduate College stipulates that I receive written permission from the copyright holder to include lyrics from Tori Amos’ songs in my dissertation. I would like to request your permission to include the following lyrics in my dissertation as part of my introductory and review of relevant literature sections. Please see the pages below where I have provided the lyrical content I have used thus far.

My reasons for using lyrics are to both familiarize the reader with Tori Amos’ songs as well as provide examples of which lyrics fans have commonly responded to. I provide full credit within both my manuscript and in my reference pages to Tori Amos as the writer and composer of her songs as well as acknowledge Sword and Stone as the publisher of her music. I would also be happy to provide you with a copy of these pages as well as the completed dissertation, which will be done in June 2010. I can also provide you with the name and contact information of my dissertation chair if a reference is needed.

Lyrical content I have included is as follows:

Look I’m standing naked before you
don’t you want more than my sex
I can scream as loud as your last one
but I can’t claim innocence

It was me and a gun
And a man on my back
And I sang “Holy Holy” as he buttoned down his pants.
You can laugh, it’s kind of funny
The things you think, at times like these
Like I haven’t seen Barbados
So I must get out of this. (“Me and a Gun”, Little Earthquakes 1991)

I want to kill this waitress.
She’s worked here a year longer than I.
And is her power all in her club sandwich?
But I believe in peace.
Copyright Release from Sword and Stone Publishing- Continued

Boysen v. N.L.R.B.
Boo on my right side.
Boo in the middle, and you're not here.
I need a hug to stave the guilt that
Holding on makes do with
Dont know your love was so small
(Contemporary S. A. 61, 93 (6th Cir. 1996))

She's not as child she wouldn't breed a glacier
But she couldn't keep baby alive.
Dont want her, sax sax somewhere.
Hey, leave us.
You're not what I want again and again
But yes for, I really mean it
(Atlantic City, 480 U.S. 12 (1986))

In one is not of old, old time
I take of old and Young
Great is the Lie. If it be the sort of song
Hear the voice of the woman
This is the story...

Hey Jahan.
Nothing's been the same. So you can?
Am not to
The time that both could use a friend to run to...
(Has 1 peer... (5th Cir. 1996))

Languages vary as do both the motherland
(Shanghai-Yangtze, American Bar Assn., 61, 93 (1986))

My dark went in the crowds, language does not need civilization.

I am including, a space for your signature on the bottom this page to indicate your permission for my use of the above mentioned materials. I am an Extracted final draft, and I retain the right to supply copies of it in a final edition as part of my doctoral dissertation. Please attach any other terms and conditions for the proposed use of it in the blank below.

If you do not wish all the copyright to this work please indicate so when I send it to me...

Name (Printed) -
Name (Signature) -

12/14/09

256
Dear John,

As I mentioned in my previous email this letter is to serve as a means to gather your permission to use the following songs in my doctoral dissertation focused on fans of Tori Amos. Please note that in my previous request, which was signed by Chelsea, my dissertation was titled "Inspired by Tori: Exploring Fan Culture, Gender and Healing through the Music of Tori Amos" and has since been changed to "'All I Am': Defining Music as an Emotional Catalyst through a Sociological Study of Emotions, Gender and Culture". My reasons for using lyrics are to both familiarize the reader with Tori Amos' songs as well as provide examples of which lyrics fans have commonly responded to. I provide full credit within both my manuscript and in my reference pages to Tori Amos as the writer and composer of her songs as well as acknowledge Sword and Stone as the publisher of her music. I would also be happy to provide you with a copy of these pages as well as the completed dissertation, which will be done in June 2010. I can also provide you with the name and contact information of my dissertation chair if a reference is needed.

Lyrical content I wish to include is as follows:

I've been looking for a savior in these dirty streets
Looking for a savior beneath these dirty sheets
I've been raising up my hands, drive another nail in
Got enough guilt to start my own religion ("Crucify", Little Earthquakes, 1991).

Why do we crucify ourselves?
Every day I crucify myself.
And nothing I do is good enough for you.
I crucify myself.
My heart is sick of being in, said my heart is sick of being in chains ("Crucify", 1991, Little Earthquakes).

But what if I'm a mermaid?
In these jeans of his with her name still on it.
Hey but I don't care cause sometimes, I said sometimes I hear my voice and it's been here,
Silent all these years ("Silent All Those Years", Little Earthquakes).

He said "You're really an ugly girl but I like the way you play".
Holding on to his picture. Dressing up everyday.
I wanna smack their faces of those beautiful boys.
Those Christian boys.
So you can make me cum, that doesn't make you Jesus.

Snow can wait, I forgot my mittens.
Wipe my nose, get my new boots on.
I get a little warm in my heart when I think of Winter.

He says, "When you gonna make up your mind?"
"When you gonna love you as much as I do?
When you gonna make up your mind?
Cause things are gonna change so fast.
All the white horses are still in bed.
I tell you that I'll always want you near.
You say that things change my dear" ("Winter" 1991, Little Earthquakes).

I know I've got some magic buried deep in my heart yeah.
But my priest says "You ain't savin' no souls".
My father says "You ain't makin' any money'.
My doctor says "You just took it to the limit".
And here I stand with this sword in my hand.
You can say it one more time.
What you don't like.
Let me hear it one more time then have a seat while I take to the sky ("Take to the Sky", 1991, Winter-Limited Edition Single).

Never was a cornflake girl.
Thought that was a good solution hangin with the raisin girls.
She's gone to the other side givin us a yo heave ho.
Things are getting kind of gross and I go at sleepy time.
This is not really happening.
You bet your life it is ("Cornflake Girl", 1994 Under the Pink).

Had a northern lad.
Well not exactly had but he moved like the sunset.
God who painted that?
First he loved my accent.
How his knees could bend.
I thought we'd be okay, me and my molasses.
But I feel something is wrong.
But I feel this cake just isn't done ("Northern Lad", 1998 From the Choirgirl Hotel).
So how many young men have to lay down their life and their love of their woman for some sick promise of a
heaven.
Lies go back now to the garden.
Even the four horses say all bets are off ("Dark Side of the Sun", American Doll Posse 2007).

After two stolen elections.
After the sky's went quiet on 9/11.
Everyone knows even Jesus.
Everyone knows the troubles I've seen.
Everyone knows even Jesus.
Obama, everyone knows the trouble I've seen.
Hillary, everyone knows ("Everyone Knows", 2007 Legs and Boots-Chicago).

Hey Mrs., see, please don't jump.
When nothing is making sense anymore to me.
"I don't know when I stopped making him smile".
"Now the kids see me crying all the time" ("Maybe California, 2009 Abnormally Attracted To Sin").

I am including a space for your signature on the bottom of this page to indicate your permission for my use of
the above-mentioned material. By signing below, you give ProQuest Information and Learning (formerly
University Microfilms) the right to supply copies of this material on demand as part of my doctoral
dissertation. Please attach any other terms and conditions for the proposed use of this item below. If you no
longer hold the copyright to this work, please indicate to whom I should direct my request on the bottom of
this page and return it to me.

[Signature]

Name (Printed) Date
APPENDIX D

Recruitment Using Websites and Message Boards

Fan websites used for recruitment
- www.hereinmyhead.com (fan created website)

Message boards utilized
- www.atforumz.com (the “tori tour and review” message board)
- www.yessaid.com/tori/forum/ (the “toriphorum” message board)
- www.facebook.com With the groups “I’m an Ear With Feet” and “Ears With Feet”
APPENDIX E

HSIRB Approval, Documentation and Correspondence

HSIRB Submission Materials- Request for approval
Western Michigan University-HSIRB Application

“All I Am”: Defining Music as an Emotional Catalyst Through a Sociological Study of Emotions, Gender and Culture. Adrienne Trier-Bienick-Doctoral Candidate-Sociology

I am submitting this study under the guidance of my dissertation committee chair: Dr. Angela M. Moe- Associate Professor of Sociology

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine relationships between the feminist music of Tori Amos and the people whom identify as her fans. This is important for two reasons. First, there is little known literature which takes a feminist approach to understanding the impact of music produced by a feminist artist on her female fans. Most literature covers the performers relationship with their own work. Second, there are many studies which explain the emotional connection made to music, but little is done on the relationship between explicitly feminist music and the emotional connection to the music made by female fans (Kotarba & Vannini 2008; Whitely 2000).

In this study I examine the relationship between the music of Tori Amos and her fans. Amos herself is a declared feminist which makes for music that centers around the experiences of women’s lives. Using semi-structured interviews with people who are fans of Amos as well as through observing female fans at Amos’ concerts I will attempt to find out why her fans listen to her music/attend concerts, as well as explore Amos’ identification as a feminist performer. This research is guided by feminist standpoint theory (Harding 1987; Hartsock 2004) as well as Blumer’s (1969) presentation of symbolic interactionism with the intention of filling a gap in the literature regarding the feminist performer’s audience.

Purpose/Background Information

Fans come in all shapes and sizes. Some are deemed deviant and obsessive (Jensen 2001) others are admirers of a person’s talent (Whitely 2000). Indeed, the word “fan” can encapsulate a sports fan, music fan, actor or actress fan, film fan, or fan of an author (Jenson 2001). Yet, from a feminist perspective, there is something particularly interesting and perhaps even impactful about a woman who identifies as a feminist, performing for groups of people, with the intention of placing the rights of women at the center of her performance.

Perhaps one of the main areas found within the third wave of feminism is to bring to light gender within culture. Cultural feminism explores the relationship between gender culture. Thus, it is necessary to consider Amos’ openly feminist identity
and body of music because she places the experiences of women at the center of her work (Amos & Powers 2005; O’Brien 2002). Amos is known to have a loyal, eclectic fan base due to her confessional and poetic song writing. Amos’ music explores, among other things, outrage at the patriarchy, oppression of women, and women’s voices being placed on the margins of society, and the political restrictions which have resulted from all of the above. Thus this study considers the impact that Amos’ political and ideological beliefs have on her fans by looking at potential emotional relationships formed between the fan and the performer/performer’s product. Considering that most literature on music and emotion centers around the medical benefits of music it is important to examine the sociological impact that music might have on individuals and groups.

Subject Recruitment
This project will be done qualitatively using semi-structured interviews as well as observing three concerts in Detroit, Chicago and Milwaukee (Please see “Field Notes-Observation in “Appendices”). I propose to conduct interviews with a maximum of thirty-five women with the goal of obtaining twenty-five participants (people who agree to an interview). Criteria for participation is that they be adult women who identify as fans of Tori Amos and her music. I am including adults as to avoid parental consent issues and to maintain a lower overall ethical risk to the study as I have no intention to interview minors. I am examining only women because my study is based in feminist standpoint theory which suggests that women’s experiences be placed at the center of research. I am restricting the sample to women who are fans of Amos because Amos’ music places the experiences of women at the core of its composition. Thus, exclusionary criteria for subjects include minors, non-females and women who would not identify as a fan of Amos’ music.

Potential interview subjects will be recruited either in-person and via publicly accessible websites and fan discussion/message boards related to Amos’ music. In person recruitment will occur with women I know within southwest Michigan who fit the inclusionary criteria.

Online recruitment will occur primarily for the purposes of expanding the sample beyond southwest Michigan. I will send an e-mail to the moderators of the appropriate message boards/websites letting them know I am a researcher and am interested in recruiting fans for my study. Further, I will post a message on the message boards explaining that I am a researcher and that I am present on the board. To gather participants individually on the message boards I will use purposive sampling with the intention of selecting participants from message boards whom are the most active on the message boards (i.e. people who post multiple times per day) and whose profile specifically states that they are an Amos fan. (Individuals who have no profile associated with their online identity will not be considered for interviews). I will send the recruitment message to them individually using the message board emailing system. The following script will be used in online, verbal and written recruitment efforts:
Hello. My name is Adrienne Trier-Bieniek and I am a doctoral candidate in the department of sociology at Western Michigan University. I am conducting a study for my dissertation on people who are fans of Tori Amos and I am looking for people to interview. I will be asking you some general questions about why you like Tori or what your first concert was like. Participation is voluntary and I am really hoping to get a lot of Toriphiles to participate! If you are interested in learning more about participating in this study, and you are 18 or older, please contact me at Adrienne.m.trier-bieniek@wmich.edu or through the sociology department at Western Michigan University by calling 269-387-5270 and leaving a message with your name and number. Thanks and I hope to hear from you!

If any person needs further confirmation of my status at the university I will provide them with the name of my dissertation chair, Dr. Angela Moe, as a proper reference.

With observing people at concert venues I am selecting venues which fit a certain convenience for me (generally within two to three hours driving distance from Kalamazoo, MI). I intend to observe women who attend her concerts in the following locations:

Chicago, IL-August 3, 2009 at The Chicago Theatre
Milwaukee, WI-August 4, 2009 at The Riverside Theatre
Detroit, MI-August 8th at The Detroit Opera House

My intention is not to talk to people about their experience at the concert. Rather I am interested in using these observations as supplemental contextual data to the interviews I will be conducting. This is consistent with phenomenological approaches to research, which encourage researcher’s intent to present the experience of being a part of a certain phenomenon (Creswell 2007). Similar to the inclusionary criteria for interviews, those whom I observe will be adult women present at Amos’ concerts. I do not intend to approach women for interviews, nor do I intend to take pictures or video from inside or outside the venue as this would not protect the identity of people present. I will purchase a ticket for each concert.

**Informed Consent Process**

If a potential participant contacts me in order to learn more about this study, the following script will be used for both verbal and written communication:

"Hello. Thank you for contacting me in order to learn more about my study of the fans of Tori Amos. You may already know that I am conducting interviews, either in person or over the phone (depending on the person’s preference and location). These will be semi-structured, meaning I have some preplanned questions but I am also very open to anything that you want to share. The interviews will last anywhere from 45 minutes to 1.5 hours, depending on how long it takes to get through my pre-planned questions and other points that are raised. These interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed by me. This will allow me to focus on the dialogue of the interview, rather than taking a lot of notes. The interview will be confidential, meaning any information that could identify you as a participant in this study will be kept entirely private. I will be the only person with knowledge that you participated in this study and I will not..."
divulge this information to anyone. Any records connecting you to this study will be destroyed after your interview. Any information that could lead to your identification will be edited out of the transcription of your interview. Once I have transcribed your interview, I will destroy the tapes with your voice on them. If you are interested in participating, I will provide you with an informed consent document, which I will ask you to read over, sign and return to me prior to the interview. This informed consent document will be kept in a file separate from your transcript. Prior to consenting to an interview you must acknowledge that you are 18 or older.”

If the person indicates that she would like to learn more, the following script will be used for both verbal and written communication:

“Thank you for expressing interest in participating in my study on the fans of Tori Amos. Here (or “Attached” in the case of an email-consent form will be scanned so as to retain letterhead and HSIRB approval stamp) is the informed consent document for this project. Please read over it and if you would like to discuss it with me, please let me know. If you are comfortable with it and would like to participate, please sign it and return it to me either in person, or via fax (269.387.2882), scanned email attachment (adrienne.m.trier-bieniek@wmich.edu) or postal mail (Adrienne Trier-Bieniek, Doctoral Candidate, Department of Sociology, Western Michigan University, 1903 W. Michigan Ave., Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5257). If you choose to sign and return the consent document, I will contact you as soon as I receive it in order to schedule an interview.”

If a person signs and returns the informed consent letter, the following script will be used for both verbal and written communication:

“Thank you for signing the informed consent document for my study on the fans of Tori Amos. I am contacting you to ask whether you would like to schedule an interview.

If within two hours of Kalamazoo: “Do you prefer an in-person interview or phone interview? What days and times work best for you? Remember that we may need up to 1.5 hours for this.”

If beyond two hours of Kalamazoo: “What days and times work best for you? Remember we may need up to 1.5 hours for this.”

After settling on a day and time, if in person: “Where would you like to meet for this interview? We could meet at a quiet restaurant or coffee shop or at my university office, or at your local library if you prefer this.”

After settling on a day and time, if over the phone: “I will call you at that time from my university office. What phone number would you like me to use?”

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At the time that an interview is scheduled, I will begin with the following script for both verbal and written communication:

"Hello, again. Is this still a good time for the interview for my study on fans of Tori Amos? If so, do you have any questions before we begin? If not, is it ok for me to turn on the audio recorder?"

The interview will then begin (see “Questionnaire” under “Appendices”).

**Research Procedures**

**Methods of Data Collection**
One interview session will occur between each participant and myself (see “Questionnaire” under “Appendices”). These semi-structured interviews will last between 45 minutes and 1.5 hours. They will be audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim. They will be conducted either in person, over the phone or via email depending on the person’s location (I am willing to travel within two hours of Kalamazoo) and preference.

Observational field notes will be compiled before, during and after each concert. Please see “Observation-Field Notes” in the “Appendices” for the guidelines I will be using. I expect that observation at each venue will last about three hours. Any identifying information of my observation will be changed to protect the person’s privacy.

**Instrumentation**
A semi-structured questionnaire will be used to guide the interviews (see “Questionnaire” under “Appendices”). I chose semi-structured because I would like to be able to ask probing questions on anything a person mentions that is not a part of my original questions, but may be relevant to the study. Therefore, the questionnaire will be a guide. Such a format is appropriate for qualitative research (Kvale 1996).

A field notes guide will be used for observation. (See “Observation-Field Notes” under “Appendices”). Any conversation I have with any individuals about my research, their experience as a fan or their thoughts on Tori Amos fans will be treated as field notes and will be handled with little to no prompting by me as it is not my intention to seek people out to be interviewed at the concerts. However, any discussions which do become part of my field notes will lead to the individual being assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity.

**Location of Data Collection**
Data collection will occur as interviews either in person or over the phone as well as through observational field notes. Observation will take place at The Chicago Theatre in Chicago, IL on August 3, 2009; The Riverside Theatre in Milwaukee, WI on August 4, 2009; The Detroit Opera House on August 8, 2009. Face-to-face interviews will take
place in locations agreed upon between the participant and myself. Possible options include a quiet restaurant or coffee shop, my university office (Sangren 2524) or a bookstore or library where quiet space is available. Phone interviews will be initiated by me from my university office. I will ask participants of phone interviews to try to find a quiet place to talk on the phone.

**Duration of the Study**
The amount of time each participant will require for this study is forty-five minutes to 1.5 hours. The overall time required, from obtaining informed consent to thanking them for their time, will probably be 60-120 minutes (allowing 30 minutes for reading, signing and returned the informed consent document). The overall time I expect to observe within each venue is about three hours per venue. The overall requested length for approval of the study is one year.

**Methodology**

**Design**
This study is guided by feminist standpoint theory and feminist epistemology (Harding 2007; Stanley and Wise 1993). My focus is on how women experience the phenomenon of Tori Amos’ music. I selected these theoretical approaches as they are a natural fit with semi-structured interviews. Further, semi-structured interviews allows for a rich dialogue between myself and participants in my study, which then produces a more in-depth narrative. I will conduct twenty-five to thirty-five interviews with women who are fans of the music of Tori Amos. I will also observe fans during three of Amos’ concerts. Because traditional generalizability is not the goal of this study, I instead focus on sociological approaches to music with the intent of contributing to a discussion of culture, music and symbolic interaction.

**Analysis**
When I complete each interview I will transcribe the audio-tapes into a word document. These transcriptions will be analyzed non-statistically focusing on “textual” and “structural” components of the data. The first stage of the coding will be open (Newman 2003) and done by hand of possible themes that address 1) How fans of Amos became interested in her music, 2) whether or not the fan has a feminist identity and 3) any ways in which the fan relates Amos’ music to an aspect of their own lives. Upon identification of these initial themes, a second round of coding will occur wherein each theme will be exhausted in terms of its breadth and depth within the transcript data.

Observational field notes will be typed up immediately following each concert with any identifying information changed to protect the people present. I will then do an opening coding to familiarize myself with the data followed by a second coding to find initial themes. The third pass at coding will occur wherein each theme will be exhausted in terms of its breadth and depth within the transcript data.

**Dissemination**
The results of this study will be disseminated as my dissertation, presented to the faculty in the department of sociology. They will also be disseminated as conference presentations, book chapters and peer-reviewed journals.

**Risks and Cost to and Protections for Subjects**

One possible risk associated with this study is the potential inconvenience associated with taking the time to be involved. This is due, in part, to pre-participation correspondence, signing and returning the consent form, and the actual interview. I have tried to build in as much flexibility as possible with the study so as to limit as much inconvenience as possible.

A second risk involves the possibility that participants may feel physically uncomfortable with talking about why they like Amos’ music either because they had never thought about it in depth, may not be sure how to respond to me as a researcher or because they consider the relationship with her music to be a personal one. If at any time I sense that the participant is uncomfortable with the questions, or is having trouble answering them, I will pause the interview or end it if necessary. At such point, I will make myself available and empathize with any emotions, thoughts or feelings expressed by the participant. If a participant admits that she experiences such emotional responses often, I will gently probe as to whether she has ever spoken to a professional about them, as they may be a sign of a larger problem. If such is the case while conducting a face-to-face interview I will ask the person if it would be ok for me to call the local help line (Kalamazoo 2-1-1) number or review a phone book in her presence to find an appropriate referral agency. If such is the case while conducting interviews either over the phone or via email I will plan in advance by having some appropriate phone numbers available for local counseling services. I will also have access to the internet while conducting phone interviews and can use it to help find information specific to her area. I will ask the participant if she would be ok with my looking online for further information on services available to her in her area while we continue to talk.

Costs associated with participating involve expenses associated with making a phone call or sending an email in order to learn more about my study as well as sending an email, fax or envelope via UPS of the signed consent document. For phone interviews, I will make phone calls from my university office. For face-to-face interviews I will cover the cost of minimal expenses related to providing refreshments for interviews occurring at coffee shops or restaurants (either through a grant from The Graduate College, or from the dollars allocated for graduate students in the sociology department). Participants will need to supply their own bus-fare or gas to meet me for face-to-face interviews.

**Benefits of Research**

This research study will not directly benefit the research participants, except for providing the opportunity for them to share experiences related to being a fan of Amos’ concerts and albums. While minimal, this potential benefit may be salient to women who are hoping to articulate their appreciation of Amos with regard to the impact her work has
had on them. This study may provide an important outlet for women to share their appreciation for Amos’ work.

In terms of benefits to the knowledge base, very little sociological research has been done in the area of women, emotion and music. Because of the popularity of Amos and the loyalty of her fans, as well as Amos’ feminist songwriting/performing, further empirical research is needed. While literature on the social and personal impact of music and emotion has been addressed, no work has addressed the juxtaposition between the activity of listening to music/attending concerts and feminist identity/feminist approaches to healing.

Confidentiality of Data

The cassettes of audio-recordings, and transcripts thereof, will be identified solely by the pseudonym selected by or assigned to each participant during the interviews (see last question of “Questionnaire” under “Appendices”). Any additional information within the interview that may lead to the identification of a participant or anyone else (e.g., proper names, specific descriptions or a person within a particular locale) will be deleted during the transcription process.

A master list linking pseudonyms with the actual participants names will be retained by me and stored on a password protected computer and within a locked file drawer (separate from consent forms and transcripts) in my university office (2524 Sangren). Other materials related to this study, including transcripts and consent forms, will also be kept within a locked file drawer (consent forms will be stored separate from transcripts and cassettes) in my home office for at least three years. Transcripts will also be retained electronically on a password protected computer for at least three years. Audio-cassettes will be destroyed once transcribed.

Verbal and Written Recruitment Script

Hello. My name is Adrienne Trier-Bieniek and I am a doctoral candidate in the department of sociology at Western Michigan University. I am conducting a study for my dissertation on people who are fans of Tori Amos and I am looking for people to interview. I will be asking you some general questions about why you like Tori or what your first concert was like. Participation is voluntary and I am really hoping to get a lot of Toriphiles to participate! If you are interested in learning more about this study, and you are 18 or older, please contact me at Adrienne.m.trier-bieniek@wmich.edu or through the sociology department at Western Michigan University by calling 269-387-5270 and leaving a message with your name and number. Thanks and I hope to hear from you!

HSIRB Application for Project Review
Date: July 29, 2009

To: Angela Moe, Principal Investigator  
Adrienne Trier-Bieniek, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number: 09-05-27

This letter will serve as confirmation that the change to your research project entitled “Inspired by Tori: Exploring Fan Culture, Gender, and Healing through the Music of Tori Amos” requested in your memo dated 7/28/2009 (increase total number of participants to 45) has been approved by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board.

The conditions and the duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: June 2, 2010
Date: June 2, 2009

To: Angela Moe, Principal Investigator
Adrienne Trier-Bieniek, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number: 09-05-27

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled “Inspired by Tori”: Exploring Fan Culture, Gender and Healing through the Music of Tori Amos” has been approved under the expedited category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: June 2, 2010
Hi Vicki,
I spoke with you previously about my dissertation on fans of the musician Tori Amos and my submission to HSIRB. I have a question about participant observation. If my intention is to attend concerts (by paying for a ticket) to observe fans of Amos, without attempting to interact with them, do I need to get permission from the venue to be there as part of my HSIRB submission? Any help would be great.
Thanks!
Adrienne

No. The theory is that observing people when they are in a place where they cannot expect privacy (on the street; at a concert; etc.) does not require permission from the venue.
Vicki

Victoria Janson
Research Compliance Coordinator
Office of the Vice President for Research
Western Michigan University
251W Walwood Hall
Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5456
Phone: 269 387-8293
FAX: 269 387-8276
APPENDIX F

Interview Questions

1. When you hear someone mention the phrase “Tori Amos’ music” what are some words that immediately come to mind?

2. How many (approximate is fine) Tori Amos albums do you own?
   ~What are your favorite albums?

3. Do you have a favorite song?
   ~Why?
   ~Have you heard her play this song live?
   ~If so, what is your memory of this?
   ~How did that make you feel?
   ~What emotions/or events come to mind when you hear this song?

4. When did you begin listening to Tori?
   ~How did you learn of Tori?
   ~Why – what drew you to this music?
   ~What is your first memory of Tori and/or her music?
   ~How did you feel at this time?
   ~What comes to mind when you think of Tori and/or her music?
   ~Have your reasons for listening to Tori changed since you first heard her?
   ~When did you start identifying as a Tori fan?
   ~What does it mean to be a fan (how define “fan”)?

5. Is there a special place you go to listen to her music?

6. How many Tori Amos concerts have you attended, if any? (A range here would be fine).
   ~Have you ever followed her on tour?
   ~What was your first concert experience like? Is there a specific concert which stands out to you?
   ~Why?
   ~Have you seen her in concert every year since you became a fan?
   ~Do you have a favorite tour?
   ~What has it meant to go to concerts and see her perform live?
   ~Have you met friends at concerts?
   ~How has this impacted your concert going experience?

7. Have you ever met Tori personally?
   ~If so, when? What was the experience like?
   ~If not, would you want to?
8. Did you know that Tori identifies as a feminist?
   ~If yes, how do you know this?
   ~What do you think about Tori identifying as a feminist?

9. Do you identify as a feminist?
   ~What does this identity mean to you? (What does being a feminist mean to you?)
   ~Has Tori influenced your feminist beliefs?

10. Would you say that you are drawn to Tori's music and/or performances in any way?
    ~Does it (do they) speak to you?
    ~Do you feel a connection to it/them?
    ~Why do you think women connect with Tori's music?

11. Has listening to her music (or watching her performances) helped you deal with anything that has happened in your life?
    ~If so, can you say more about what exactly?
    ~Would you say Tori's music and/or performances have helpful in your healing from these situations?
    ~Has Tori's music and/or performances been helpful to you in any other ways?

12. Why do you choose to listen to Tori over other women singer-songwriters?

13. Would you say Tori is your favorite musician? Performer?
    ~Why, why not, ranking if not #1?

14. Who else do you listen to? Why do you listen to them (what draws you to them)?
    ~What other artists do you consider comparable to Tori?

15. Anything else you would like to share?

16. Anything you would like to ask me?

Demographic Questions

1. What is your age?
2. What is your racial and/or ethnic identity?
3. What is your sexual orientation?
4. Are you married/in a relationship? Kids?
5. What is your occupation?
6. What is your educational level?
7. Where do you currently reside?
8. How long have you lived here?
APPENDIX G

Observation Guide

I took notes before the concert based on the following criteria:

- Observation of the venue
  - What does each room in the venue look like?
    - Color, layout, furniture, décor, etcetera.
  - What do I hear prior to the concert?
  - What do I see people doing prior to the concert?
    - Purchasing tickets, paraphernalia, or food/drinks, conversing, etc.

- What kinds of people do I see?
  - Age, race, gender, etc.
  - Are people alone, in pairs, small groups, or large groups?
  - Dress
    - Are people wearing concert t-shirts or other Tori Amos related clothing?
    - Do I notice any Tori Amos tattoos?

- What is the rhythm of the setting?
  - Do most people show up right before the concert begins?
  - Do they show up early and mingle?
  - Is there any obvious excitement?
  - Does there seem to be a shared terminology, decorum, rituals or symbols among the fans?

During the concert I will look for:
  - What songs (or during which lines in songs) get people to dance, sing a long, cheer, cry?
  - Does the audience participate in the concert at Amos’ request?
  - What happens when Amos comes on stage?
  - How many encores does she perform and how does the audience prompt these encores?
  - Are there any comments made by Amos or audience members in between songs?
  - Is there any emotional reactions happening to certain songs by multiple women? If so, what?
  - How does Amos interact with the audience?
  - How does she announce or lead into her songs?
  - Does Amos make an comments or perform any improvisations relevant to gender or women?
  - Does Amos make any political comments or statements? If so, what are the reactions to this by the audience?
After the concert I will find a place to observe people as they leave the venue. I will look for:

- How long do people stay after the show?
- What conversations are happening immediately after the show?
- Similar to entering the venue, how are women responding to the show via their body language?
- Does Amos sign autographs after the concert is done?
- Do people purchase memorabilia?
# APPENDIX H

## Demographics of Participants

### What is your age?

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<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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### What is your sexual orientation?

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### What is your racial/ethnic identity?

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### What is your educational level?

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**Where are you located?**

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**Are you married or with a partner?**

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**What is your age?**

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**Do you identify as a feminist?**

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<td>Total</td>
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<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Is Tori a feminist?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>81.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX I

Coding Themes and Break Down

Table 1-Interview Coding

*Initial codes in the Tori Amos fan study were changed as follows*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From</th>
<th>To</th>
<th>Color</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using Tori’s music to heal from low self-esteem, rape, violent</td>
<td>What women are healing from</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relationship, eating disorder, death, cancer, illness of a child,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suicide of friend/family member, feeling like a misfit.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stating which lyrics made her feel like someone understands, someone</td>
<td>Connection to lyrics Dark Red</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“gets” her, she is not alone in her thoughts. Direct relationship to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>using the lyrics to heal or explaining how an emotion relates to the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lyric (i.e. “calm”, “angry” etcetera).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build a friendship with other fans, form a relationship with Tori</td>
<td>Relationships Turquoise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>via meet and greets, having a relationship with the music, building</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a community through message board, support system through other fans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>support system through attending concerts.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music made her feel emotion (sad, happy, relaxed, etcetera)</td>
<td>Description of emotion Pink</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music allowed her to release an emotion (cry, expressing anger</td>
<td>Expression of emotion Red</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>through hitting, laugh, shout, etcetera)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am/not/might be a feminist, Tori is a feminist, her feminism</td>
<td>Feminist identity Yellow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>impacts my own feminist beliefs, her feminist identity is important</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### APPENDIX I

**Coding Themes and Break Down**

Table 1-Interview Coding

*Initial codes in the Tori Amos fan study were changed as follows*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From</th>
<th>To</th>
<th>Color</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using Tori’s music to heal from low self-esteem, rape, violent relationship, eating disorder, death, cancer, illness of a child, suicide of friend/family member, feeling like a misfit.</td>
<td>What women are healing from</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stating which lyrics made her feel like someone understands, someone “gets” her, she is not alone in her thoughts. Direct relationship to using the lyrics to heal or explaining how an emotion relates to the lyric (i.e. “calm”, “angry” etcetera).</td>
<td>Connection to lyrics</td>
<td>Dark Red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build a friendship with other fans, form a relationship with Tori via meet and greets, having a relationship with the music, building a community through message board, support system through other fans, support system through attending concerts.</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Turquoise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music made her feel emotion (sad, happy, relaxed, etcetera)</td>
<td>Description of emotion</td>
<td>Pink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music allowed her to release an emotion (cry, expressing anger through hitting, laugh, shout, etcetera)</td>
<td>Expression of emotion</td>
<td>Red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am/not/might be a feminist, Tori is a feminist, her feminism impacts my own feminist beliefs, her feminist identity is important to me.</td>
<td>Feminist identity</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Chart B-Observation Coding

*Initial codes were changed as follows:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From</th>
<th>To</th>
<th>Color</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women laughing, crying, dancing, celebrating, putting hands in the air “church style”.</td>
<td>Expression of Emotion</td>
<td>Red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standing in line for t-shirts, discussing which size to get,</td>
<td>Relationships/Bonding</td>
<td>Teal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trying on t-shirts, looking through programs and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressing excitement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While Tori performs, screaming, shouting, mass cheering,</td>
<td>Reaction to Tori’s performance</td>
<td>Pink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiness/sadness when a song is performed, hugging</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During songs, laughing during Tori’s discussion with Audience,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>holding hands, kissing, rushing the stage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tori’s body and facial expressions, what Kinds of response this gets from women, improvisation In songs which are gender related.</td>
<td>Tori performing</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>