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For Girls who want to Rock (We Exclude You):
Experiences of Discrimination in Indonesian Alternative Music Scenes

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Introduction

1. Let's admit it. We all went through a goth phase. Perhaps it was a venture into punk, or an emo moment, but, I would hazard a guess, that the vast majority of us have made our fair share of DIY fashion blunders, have had more than a few questionable home haircuts and may or may not have used safety pins as jewellery. Navigating my own punk period in a small town in Australia was certainly an experience. Most of the musicians at my high school were male and the majority of the 'alternative' music I listened to was made by men. I remember a group of young men from my school throwing rocks at me and my (female) bandmates, taunting us as we walked home from the bus stop one afternoon. As a young woman attempting to find my creative outlet (and trying to work out how to play the guitar), navigating the punk scene was a challenge. Unbeknownst to me, I was filled to the eyeballs with internalised homophobia and sexism, just trying to fit in with the guys and not be 'like other girls.' I remember the moment when I realised that not one of the musicians I idolised was a woman, and that all the music I revered as being anti-authoritarian and rebellious was made by white men. Suddenly, punk seemed unappealing and exclusionary to me, no longer a raucous fight against the status quo, but a snivelling boys club whose elitism kept its members in positions of power. Since beginning my studies of Bahasa Indonesia, I have developed a deep curiosity about what it is like being a woman involved in Indonesian alternative music. If it was difficult for someone like me (whose parents are both musicians, atheists and left wing), what must it be like growing up and finding your place in a country where everybody is legally required to nominate a religion and the government tells you how women should behave?

2. In this article I explore the ways in which women in Indonesian alternative music scenes experience this same elitism and exclusion that is found in countercultures the world over. Being a female punk,[1] metalhead, [2] or goth[3] in the most populous Muslim nation in the world is accompanied by a unique set of challenges.[4] To examine these challenges, I draw on interviews conducted with a number of Javanese musicians in mid-2018. I will also discuss and deconstruct six participants' experiences of sexism within alternative music scenes.[5] To begin with, I take a brief look at the historical and socio-cultural background of gender politics and counterculture in Indonesia, followed by an introduction to my participants and myself. The second half of this article is a thematic analysis of these interviews on the topic of sexism, through which three core themes emerged: gender-based discrimination, contradictory attitudes within music scenes, and women's solidarity. The article will explore ties between state-sponsored gender ideologies and increasing Islamisation and the impact these have on women's lives to this day. I conclude that despite being active in their music scenes, women are not given the platform these alternative music communities claim to offer. Instead, these scenes reinforce oppressions from a conservative, patriarchal society where Islamisation is on the rise. As a result, women's aspirations for greater autonomy through involvement in a counterculture are still muted by the same conservatism these scenes claim to oppose.

Background

3. This section discusses some of the key historical points of gender politics in Indonesia and will also briefly explore contemporary Indonesian counterculture. This background will contextualise the experiences and responses of the participants as discussed later in the article.

Gender politics

4. Contemporary gender politics in Indonesia involve a complex interplay and contestation of state-sponsored gender ideologies, contemporary gender norms, and religious influences. To contextualise the themes raised by my participants, here I briefly sketch the more recent origins of contemporary Indonesian gender ideologies, particularly those promulgated during the military New Order regime (1966–98), as these ideologies continue to have a strong influence over gender norms today. Under the New Order, gender ideology was an important aspect of state policy and control.[6] The New Order's ideal image of a woman was as a wife, mother and household manager.[7] This discourse defined expectations of women's behaviour and was the foundation of the New Order state's attitude towards women which, in turn, informed the policies and programs which were aimed at women.[8]

5. The concept of *kodrat wanita* (women's biological destiny), for example, was used by the regime to emphasise women's domestic roles. *Kodrat wanita* is a set of values that evolved in response to different ethnic beliefs and which became a source of power for the official regulation of gendered social relations.[9] The concept of *kodrat* is sanctioned by Islam and is considered to be 'God given.'[10] This domestic subordination of women was a key element in the conceptualisation of the state as a family, under the 'family principle' or *azas kekeluargaan.*[11] This 'family' was pervasively paternalistic, with President Suharto as the ultimate *Bapak* (father) and the nation's women subject to this *State Ibuism* (*ibu* is Indonesian for mother) that assigned them the roles of mother, wife and household manager.[12]

6. In 1999, President Habibie implemented a policy of regional decentralisation[13] which led to the creation of hundreds of bylaws, many of which imposed conservative values on women including behavioural codes and dress regulations. Some bylaws also criminalised homosexuality.[14] It was during this period that many Indonesians questioned what it meant to be a 'true' Muslim.[15] This led to a heightened sense of piety and an increase in the monitoring of moral and religious practices, by both the government and society as a whole. For this reason, the *Reformasi* Period (1998–today) made space for an increased Islamisation, which has informed debates on gender, sexuality and morality.[16] Abortion is illegal in Indonesia due to pressure from conservative groups and the increased rhetoric of reproductive morality—that a woman is being 'unfaithful' to her husband if she uses contraception or seeks an abortion.[17] One of the most contentious pieces of *Reformasi* legislation is the 2008 anti-pornography bill, which gives a vague and generalistic definition of pornography as:

> Pictures, sketches, illustrations, photos, writings, vocal expressions, sounds, moving pictures, animations, cartoons, conversations, bodily movements, or other forms of communication through various forms of mass media and/or public displays, which contain indecency or sexual exploitation that violates the norms of morality in society.[18]

According to the definition of pornography in the bill, some of the participants in this study could be seen as producers of pornography. Tika's videoclip for *Tubuhku Otoritasku* (My body, my authority), or some of the content in Hera's film, *Ini Scene Kami Juga* (It's our scene too), could be

considered as 'violating the norms of societal morality' and therefore illegal.

7. The preoccupation with morality during *Reformasi*, however, is in keeping with the concept of *keluarga sakinah* or a happy, peaceful family. The discourse of *keluarga sakinah* sidelines women's and LGBTIQ+ rights and promotes heteronormativity.[19] *Keluarga sakinah* is sponsored by conservative religious groups and some state organisations. Saskia Wieringa argues that the ideology could evolve into 'a neoconservative return to the ideology of *kodrat wanita.*'[20] Modern Indonesian society is strongly steeped in this state-sponsored ideology which dictates conservative gender expectations. Indeed, as recent research has shown, the legacy of the New Order's state-sponsored gender ideologies has, if anything, intensified, such that 'defining and disciplining gender and sexuality have become more intensive and more visible in the public domain than they were during the New Order period.'[21] Thus the New Order's gender norms have a powerful legacy in contemporary Indonesia, apparent in the unwritten rules for women that can be internalised from an early age[22] and, indeed, were reflected in my discussions with young women in Java's alternative music scene.

Counterculture in Indonesia

8. Indonesian counterculture is in a state of constant flux and evolution. As has been previously documented throughout the archipelago's history,[23] meaning and creativity continue to evolve through syncretism and the combination of traditional and modern forms of expression. The results are countercultures and communities which are undeniably and uniquely Indonesian.[24]

9. The countercultures discussed in this article are primarily the punk[25] and metal[26] music scenes. Both of these subcultures embody a strong ethos of anti-authoritarianism, equality and autonomy which has been explored alongside the syncretism of western and Indonesian musical and cultural elements by a great deal of the current literature.[27] Some of these texts only briefly discuss experiences that are unique to women participating in these scenes.[28] I argue that while these music scenes have dynamics that enable the dominance of men, in an Indonesian context, because women have historically been marginalised by conservatism, law and problematic interpretations of Islam, their experiences differ from those of men, and indeed women living elsewhere in the world. Accordingly, Indonesian women's protest becomes two-fold: women in underground music not only engage in the protest ethos of their scene, they also engage in activism arising from gender discrimination. While young, alternative people are oppressed by older generations, women are also oppressed by men, regardless of age and these men often make up their so-called 'progressive' communities. As I explore in the second half of this article, these issues of oppression of women and sexism were prominent themes raised by the musicians whom I interviewed.

People

10. This project was carried out with the participation of six musicians, all based in Java, and all of whom have chosen to be identified.[29] My first interview was with Kartika Jahja, or Tika as she prefers to be known. Tika is a singer and feminist from Jakarta. Tika is a musician, writer and activist. She is the co-founder of *The Bersama Project* (an initiative promoting gender equality in Indonesian music) and was included in the BBC's 2016 *100 Women*, a list of inspiring and influential women worldwide, with the theme 'defiance.' Tika is a regular contributor to *Rolling Stone Indonesia* and has also participated in TEDxUbud, giving a rousing speech on gender and bodily autonomy. Tika is the singer and front person of the multi award-winning jazz/punk band, *Tika and the Dissidents.* Tika is an active presence both on and off line and has recently opened a new restaurant in Jakarta, which includes an exhibition, community performance and workshop space.

Her 2016 song, *Tubuhku Otoritasku* (My body, my authority), has become an anthem of bodily autonomy and gender empowerment worldwide and in the same year she was also named one of ten 'Boundary Breaking Women' by TEMPO magazine. At the time of the fieldwork, Tika was in the final week of preparation for the opening of her restaurant in South Jakarta, and so it followed that I met her there. The interview took place, over a green smoothie, amongst construction dust, drop sheets and decorating.

11. I also interviewed Tika's partner, Charlie Evan, a musician and former lawyer who now works as a tattoo artist in South Jakarta, about his experiences with homophobia and sexism in the metal scene. Charlie left his successful band (which he chose not to name) as a result of these experiences. Charlie and I met during my initial interview with Tika. When she revealed his profession as a tattoo artist, my interest was immediately piqued. Whilst I was under the needle at the tattoo appointment that followed, through the buzzing of the gun we discussed his history as a musician. Our recorded interview took place the following week, over a deconstructed iced latte, at a trendy cafe around the corner from his studio amongst young hipsters and families whose playing children ran underfoot

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12. My third interview took place in Bandung with Hera, an activist filmmaker and musician whose debut film, *Ini Scene Kami Juga* (It's our scene too) (2016), helped to inspire this project. In her documentary film she interviews 14 women who are involved with the punk/hardcore[30] scene in Java about their experiences with sexism, exclusion from the scene, and how these experiences affect their daily lives. Hera is a member of and contributor to *WOO!! Kolektif* (WOO!! Collective, a Bandung based punk and metal DIY group) and the women's activist and events' management group, *Kolektif Betina* (Slut collective). She is also the vocalist of a sludge crustcore[31] band *Oath* and is currently fundraising for *Ini Scene Kami Juga 2* (It's our scene too 2) in which she hopes to interview women from all over Indonesia. Our talk took place, over nasi goreng and hot lemon tea, in a Bandung restaurant at dinner time.

13. Finally, I met with the members of nu-metal band,[32] Voice of Baceprot (VoB) from West Java, who were in the capital for the annual Jakarta Fair Festival. The members of VoB—Firrda, Widi and Siti—found fame when a video of them wearing *jilbab* (headscarves) and performing a Rage Against the Machine song went viral in 2017. Firrda, Siti and Widi formed VoB in 2014 whilst still at school. After going viral in 2017, the band has gone on to perform at such events as Jakarta Fair, on national television programs such as *Opini,* and has gained a large online following. The day of our interview also happened to be singer Firrda's eighteenth birthday. The success and fame the band has achieved so early in their career are quite substantial. I met the members of VOB at a rented apartment in North Jakarta shortly before their performance at Jakarta Fair. Our interview took place, over a strawberry *ultra milk,* on the couch in their living room, amongst their tour managers, bodyguard and the low haze of cigarette smoke.

14. As for myself, I came to this project as a musician, feminist and erstwhile riot grrl, complete with the tattoos and compulsory nose rings to prove it. Through these interviews I hoped to connect with, learn from, and share stories with fellow musicians. When interviewing Tika, Hera, Firrda, Widi, Siti and even Charlie, I was coming from a place of some similar experiences. The music industry is a tough one for women and it's similar throughout the world. Underground music scenes generally adopt anti-capitalist, anti-authoritarian ideologies.[33] Despite this general rhetoric of resistance, inclusion does not always come easily. From my own personal experience as a musician, the industry as a whole is still negotiating its acceptance of women as performers, no matter the genre. I have had the delightful experience of being asked, 'Which band is your boyfriend in?' at shows I am billed on and have received the dubious compliment, 'You're a great bass player for a chick'

more times than I would care to remember. It seems to me that when women are audience members, fawning over men performing music written for men,[34] they are welcomed into the scene with open arms. As soon as we are on the stage or offer a critique of the sexism we experience, it's, 'Can I just make a suggestion?' 'Ya need a hand there, love?' or a male sound engineer offering an unsolicited amp knob twiddle.[35] I acknowledge my privilege as a white, middle class, cisgender woman and recognise that my struggles do not have the same cultural, colonial and religious elements as those of my interviewees. I admire their patience with my Bahasa Indonesia, their tenacity in being a part of incredibly male-dominated musical environments, and their bravery to speak out against hate.

Experiences of Sexism

15. In this section I focus on the participants' responses about their experiences of sexism and gender-based discrimination in their alternative music scenes. The sexism experienced by the musicians I interviewed is often linked with the expectation that women should be submissive wives and mothers, and sometimes informed by Islamism. The interview data gathered revealed three distinct themes under the umbrella of 'sexism,' which I discuss in turn: gender based discrimination, contradictory attitudes within music scenes, and women's solidarity.

16. VoB, Hera and Tika have all experienced alienation from scenes and resistance to their involvement in counterculture because of their gender. The participants have reported that this resistance came from several different sources: within their scenes; families; and the general public. Charlie also described the sexist and homophobic behaviours of his male former band personnel, both towards women and himself.

17. The exclusivity of alternative music communities was discussed to varying degrees in each interview. Charlie, Tika and Hera all described the exclusion of women they have witnessed in punk and metal scenes. It is important to emphasise here that the band members of VoB have had different experiences of exclusion. I argue that this is for two reasons: first, the scene they move in, although alternative, is much more mainstream and commercial than the musical circles described by any of the other participants. Second, as young musicians, Firrda, Widi and Siti found fame when a performance video went viral in 2017. Since then they have been signed by booking agency Amity Asia Agency (AAA), however, they are the only female band on their roster at the time of writing. AAA represents three other women who are solo artists but all of the other bands on their roster are entirely male.[36] VoB is extremely well marketed, with emphasis placed on their gender and religion as selling points. In my view, because they are *marketed* as a female (and Muslim) metal band, they may experience less discrimination because their gender is what makes the band a drawcard. I suggest that being represented by a large, commercial agency provides a different experience from that of an independent, self-managed band. While VoB have experienced resistance to their involvement in metal music, it came from outside the scene (as discussed later in this article) and the band found that the metal scene was where they were finally able to express themselves fully. Hera also plays in a sludge-metal[37] band called Oath. In her work as an activist filmmaker, she has worked with women in both the punk and metal scenes. Charlie and Tika both 'grew up' in the Jakarta punk scene, however, neither of them are currently affiliated with the genre.

Discrimination

18. Each of the women interviewed for this project explained that they had been treated differently as musicians because of their gender. Firrda, Widi and Siti from VoB explained that when they first formed the band, they felt some pressure to conform to more conservative gender roles: 'Initially,

yes. From our families and also our surrounding environment.' These days, however, their families are much more accepting, 'But now … our families, they support us. Support, yes!' All three further emphasised that although their parents prefer more traditional forms of music, they were quick to support their daughters' dreams. VoB still faces some opposition from their community and some from online 'haters,' or as their manager Dina calls them, 'people they don't care about.' These have included death threats, phone calls pressuring their manager to break the band break up and even obstruction from religious leaders—which included one occasion where the power was cut.[38] Despite explicitly drawing a distinction between their music and their religion, the members of VoB have been subjected to the policing of their piety. Firrda, Widi and Siti all choose to wear *jilbab*, an outward symbol of their devoutness. I wonder whether any religious leaders would pull the plug on a VoB gig if the band members were men, or dressed differently.

19. Tika told me that until her mid-twenties, the identity of being a Muslim girl had stuck with her. She said that although her 'family is becoming more and more religious as my parents get older,' they were not always very religious. They did, however, '[decide] that I am a Muslim the day I was born and that's what happens with most people … you either get baptised, become a Muslim or whatever, depending on what your family believes in.'

20. Hera felt the same way about her own piety; she says she was born into her parents' religion, as was her husband and even though her mother insisted she be a devout Muslim, she 'didn't really pray' and even pretended to get up for *Fajr* (the dawn prayer). 'I dunno, maybe I'm lazy!?' Jokes aside, Hera's experiences of trying to be true to herself within the constraints of a faith chosen on her behalf were not easy. She told me that she feared being 'cut off from the family' if she remained unmarried and that if she decided to choose a religion other than Islam, there 'would be a war.'

> It's really hard when you are open about not following religion in the family … that's the reason why I'm married too, because in Indonesia it's really hard to stay together in one house and we have been together [for] like 5 years. [We] decide[d] to marry because our parents and our neighbour[s] [asked], 'Why you stay … together if you're not married yet?' Ok we had to marry just in case we wanted to stay together in one house. After we were married it … really [does] not impact … us because we are separated from parents … [We] can do what [we] want.

21. Hera has also experienced resistance to her involvement in music. She explained how when she lived at home with her parents, she was expected to clean the house, 'while my brother watched TV—and my Mum was okay with that,' an attitude that is deeply reminiscent of internalised, *ibuism* and New Order-esque gender expectations. Hera also observed that when they first started *pacaran* (dating), her husband also did

> not really know about this issue, about women's issues … [it] really sucks … because he's from [a] conservative family and that's why I think [his attitude is] like that, but with time he's learn[t] with me about this. [We] work[ed] together [and] *semua menjadi* [we became] OK.

22. Tika's family, she explained, have not stood in the way of her music career. Although her parents are not creative, she was raised in a family of many cousins, whom she describes as 'basically my siblings' and who expressed themselves as singers and dance instructors. Her parents, Tika speculates,

> Suppress what they love because they lived through a time where, if you were expressive, you were taking a risk … I'm not sure if this is just me speculating—a time that was right postcolonial, my grandfather was a policeman and a lot of the men in my mother's generation were in the military because in the early 50s or 60s I think politically we were going through an era where there was a lot of unrest and so to be safe I think they chose to be very, very pro-government at the time.

23. Tika's journey began at 15 or 16 years of age, when she sang in a top 40 band in a Mexican

restaurant. She was asked to sing 'I will survive' three times a night whilst sporting a padlock around her neck and preferring to listen to the Sex Pistols and underground hip hop.[39] As she achieved more and more success with her singing, at age 24, Tika found herself on the brink of a major label record deal. It was at this point that she was asked to gain 10–15 kilograms because she 'could either be marketed as a "hot singer" or a "fat singer".'[40] Needless to say, she turned the deal down and chose to 'be true to myself, but it took a long process.'[41] Now, more than 10 years later, she reflects on the incident with good humour: 'Fat or sexy!? Whose idea was that!? I can be both, motherfucker!' To laugh about this now is all well and good. However, this incident is indicative of the culture of sexism in the music industry.

24. To my knowledge, VoB have largely avoided that sexist side of their industry. When I asked Firrda if she thinks men and women are equal in the metal scene, she replied: 'Men and women have the same qualities in metal music, however, we [women] feel we are treated as 'special' at concerts maybe? So our people [audiences] are more polite.'

25. Dina, their manager, explains that because it is unusual to see girls in metal, perhaps the audience watches with more respect: 'When the band consists of males it's chaos, but when they [VoB] are onstage, it's calm.' Despite being seen in different lights, VoB, Hera and Tika have all experienced discriminatory treatment because of their gender.

Contradiction

26. Each of the respondents discussed the tensions and contradictions they encountered within their music scenes. The contradictions involved not only the differential treatment of women, but also of other minorities, within the context of showing Islamic piety. The scenes to which the participants belong are supposedly non-conformist in nature. However, when it comes to gender equality, Hera, Tika and Charlie have all experienced contradiction within their scenes. As Hera puts it, 'The punk scene is supposed to be about the outcasts but it's really not.' Tika also shares this sentiment:

> So far I have met lots of contradiction … Like homophobic punks for example, in Indonesia, so many of them are like 'I cannot accept that, I am for equality for all except when you are into same sex whatever,' but the most important thing is to first open up that conversation, 'why are you taking this side on that issue but taking another side on the other issue?' And then you might be enlightened or you might be nah, that's pretty bullshit.

27. Like many former punks and metalheads, at first Charlie was smitten by the scene and its apparent ideology of inclusivity. To begin with, the punk ideology and perspective seemed idyllic, 'cos it's like embrace yourself to be yourself! Respect each other … and then I figure it out that's not really happen[ing]!' As a man, Charlie has not experienced gender-based discrimination against himself within the punk scene. However, he has borne witness to many acts of sexism perpetrated by his former bandmates, which ultimately caused him to leave his band and the punk scene in general. Charlie also spoke about trying to convince his band not to objectify women in a film clip, saying that they refused to cut a scene of a woman being catcalled because that's 'the street,' it's 'raw.' He also describes the harassment of women in bands and in the mosh pit:

> Some female vocalist bands, but I don't wanna say 'female vocalist bands' because … There's … some harassment that's [made] me disappointed about the scene, because when you go to the gigs I think you … wanna express yourself without … people getting injured or getting harassed.

28. The circles in which Charlie moved as a musician were also very rigid in other regards. Although covered in tattoos from the neck down, and making a living as a tattoo artist, Charlie confessed, '[My band was] quite homophobic too … I [do] not really look [like a] tough guy, because I am not a tough guy … I don't have a deep voice, then they started to mock … me.' They also had a problem

with his colourful clothes, highlighting the image-conscious contradiction I was discovering in the scene:

> My friends [mocked] me about my colourful vest because they think punk vest[s] … can't be colourful, because colour is too feminine or too gay. That's so silly! I think so! And then I ask them, 'Why're you so afraid [of] colourful things?' And then, 'Why does everything have to be a black colour in punk?' I don't think that's gotta be an unwritten punk rule, 'cos in unwritten punk rules, there are no rules! Just be yourself!

29. This homophobia could be interpreted as a caustic combination of the 'macho elitism' that is encountered in alternative music scenes and the ideals proffered by Habbibie-era bylaws criminalising homosexuality that have filtered down into everyday consciousness. The contradiction of male scene members was also apparent when Hera screened her film *Ini Scene Kami Juga* throughout Indonesia. Although the film addresses these problematic attitudes directly, she found that many punks simply weren't interested and preferred to subscribe to exclusionary ideals of racism and sexism associated with 'skinhead punks.' Hera agreed that although the film was about the problems created by the scene, many punks did not engage with the message. She cited the plurality and size of the punk scene as a contributing factor to their disengagement:

> [The] punk scene [is] really huge in Indonesia. [There is a] gap between Punk A, Punk B, Punk C. When I go to screenings around Indonesia, I don't understand why the punk [scene] is not really coming. The biggest audience is not punk at all. It's like students with interest [in] music.

30. Tika attributes the punk and metal scenes' sexism to a recent mainstreaming of Islamist conservatism. She sees, 'more and more women wearing the hijab. Not saying that that's necessarily a bad thing, but then a lot of them are pressured into wearing it, then that's a bad thing.' She continues by describing censorship in the mass media, television censors going so far as to blur 'a robot that had tits on it' and 'even a cow udder' when, ten years ago, Tika explains, this would never have happened. 'Back then, gay entertainers were in high demand as MCs at events' and nowadays, women and LGBTIQ+ people are 'bottom of the pile … when we talk about conservatism … yeah, you like men? You can't be on this TV show!' Tika believes that the rise in homophobia and conservatism has become so deeply ingrained into the mainstream that it has permeated the countercultures that supposedly foster equality:

> To say that this is where feminism or all kinds of different alternative and radical lifestyle and context come from —it's true but it's also a breeding ground for lots of sexual harassment and sexual violence like in the mosh pit and in community and in collective houses—so many—and so many being covered up.

31. Current literature supports Tika's theory that since the new millennium, Islamist conservatism in Indonesia has been on the rise. Sakai and Fauzier argue that this is for a number of reasons: Muslims are looking to Islam to help improve and regulate their lives; the availability of Islamic media and study groups offers opportunities for people to engage with Islam independently; and the diversity of Islamic teaching in Indonesia provides greater opportunities for the acquisition of Islamic knowledge.[42] Masdar Hilmy explains that since the fall of the New Order, new Islamic political parties and Islamic socio-cultural groups formed, with a shared purpose to promulgate Islam throughout Indonesia, leading to an increase in Islamism.[43] This rise of the Islamist movement has brought discussions of 'private moralities' (gender, sexuality and the female body itself) into the 'public sphere.'[44] Firrda and Tika both commented on women's piety and the struggles that can arise as a Muslim woman playing alternative music. Tika discussed the need to allow women the freedom to decide how they express their piety:

> I know lots of feminists who are also *hijabis* for example, and our first reaction towards seeing something that in our mind is so contradictive is to think that they're being inconsistent and we are now trying to engage in the conversation with them about why they make the choices that they make—which they're not [required] to explain…but if we were to have that conversation, I think we would understand better and decide for ourselves

> whether it's [to wear the hijab] something we would like to adopt or not.

32. Firrda made it very clear that to play in a band does not affect VoB's piety:

> Metal and Islam are two different things. Islam is our religion … So it is our identity with our *hijab* as well … Muslim women. At the same time, metal is only a genre of music, it is our tool for expressing ourselves. So it's not about that, they're two different things.

These comments reflect a preoccupation with policing women's appearance and choices, thinly veiled as concern for religious piety. Perhaps it should be questioned whether an all-male band would feel the need to explicitly discuss the dichotomy between their music and their religion.

I argue that even within a counterculture, this normalisation and pervasiveness of conservative discourses, coupled with increased accessibility to conservative organisations, allows for the promotion of ideas, values and beliefs that do not embrace gender equality.

Solidarity

33. Solidarity between women in alternative music scenes was identified by participants as being simultaneously necessary and lacking. Perhaps due to a kind of internalised sexism-meets-*ibuism,* men are not the only perpetrators of violence and contradictions. Tika and Hera both emphasise that the scenes in Jakarta and Bandung are huge, and that they cannot speak for everyone involved, but in their experiences women do not necessarily support women—a practice called horizontal violence. Hera believes that concepts of 'seniority,' competition for romantic partners, and affiliation with particular bands divide her scene. She emphasises the need for women to 'lift each other up' and inform themselves about the struggles for equality in the history of the punk movement. Tika also reinforces the need for women in the punk scene to empower one another:

> I once saw a Facebook status, written by one of the female street punkers, who is complaining about a fellow female punk who was being raped, or harassed, I don't know what the case was. But she was saying that when you are a punk woman then you have to be strong, you cannot get drunk and then get raped. You cannot then tell your boyfriend who is also a punk and then make your boyfriend fight with another punk. To me that's just mind blowing, because this is also the scene, the beginning of me becoming a feminist, through the zines, through the women that I meet there, but there are also women like that [who perpetuate victim blaming] there with it.

34. The sexual double standard between men and women in these scenes is almost palpable when examining Tika's comment above, and in Charlie's discussion about his experiences with his former bandmates. While on tour, Charlie's bandmates were on the constant look out for girls to 'bring back to their hotel room' and if women wanted their photo taken with the band, Charlie's former friends would ask if those women could be taken home too, because 'this is our tour!'

> They [did not direct their questions] to the girls, they [would] just speak out. But that's the problem, I think. When you think it's okay to say something like that in front of people, that's a problem because you don't have [a] filter in your heart and in your mind because your words may hurt some people and they are> definitely gonna hurt girls. It's not really cool.

35. From these comments, it appears that women in these scenes are expected to put up with behaviour such as that described by Charlie, and these women are often blamed for the attacks, as Tika mentioned. It seems permissible for men to behave in a way that denotes sexual agency, and yet when women are subjected to such behaviour they, the women, are blamed. Indeed, women, on the other hand, have their morality, piety and sexuality questioned regularly.

36. Despite these instances, Hera and Firrda make the point that men still comprise the majority of the

members of the punk, metal and hardcore scenes in which they move. When Hera first became interested in the punk scene in Bandung she would hang out with many women, whom she said were very welcoming to her as a solo newcomer and she soon formed her first band, which was all-female. Firrda (VoB) also feels that her metal scene in Jakarta is 'welcoming to women, not restricting them to dancing, and allowing women the freedom to have their dreams and do anything.' Hera remained with her first band for one year, however, she felt that she had to, 'quit because I realised [there are] so many problems in the punk scene here. I [formed] another band, this time I was the only *perempuan* [woman].' This band has released cassettes, CDs and DIY merchandise (Zines, T-shirts, etc.). '[I] experienced [my] first tour with the band.' It was at this point that Hera realised that the number of women in the Bandung Punk scene was dwindling. Firrda also noted that there are, '*bukan banyak wanita … kedunia metal* [Jakarta]' (not many women in the world of metal in Jakarta). Hera says she used to wonder where all the women were and she expressed the opinion that women are more attracted to metal over punk scenes as punk scenes contain '*banyak* asshole' (many assholes). It was this lack of women that led Hera to write her own original songs as most of the content she was hearing were men singing about getting drunk. At this point she also discovered the crust punk band, *The Beginning of the End,* who were pro-choice, and who sung lyrics that challenged the status quo. In 2009, Hera decided to make the film *Ini Scene Kami Juga.* As Hera explained:

> The inspiration came from the number of times the band and I would come to every city, every show, there were only one, two, three women, or none at all! Only me! And I asked, 'Where is a woman!?' That was my first question, 'Where are all the women?' …. What are they? … Don't they like the music?

37. All of the participants agreed that women are not at the forefront of the alternative music scene, and that the lack of women is of concern. Solidarity between women was flagged as important within the participants' music scenes and it appears that this solidarity has been fostered through some of the creative projects inspired by the sexism the participants have experienced, for example, *The Bersama Project* and *Ini Scene Kami Juga.*

Conclusion

38. In this article I have examined gender-based discrimination in Indonesian alternative music scenes and the ways in which state-sponsored gender ideologies continue to have an impact on gender norms as they play out in women's lives. I analysed the interview responses and discovered three repeating themes within the participants' discussion of sexism: discrimination, contradictions, and lack of solidarity. My analysis explored the ways in which women are prevented from gaining access to alternative music scenes and also from participating equally in these communities once they have joined them.

39. Sexism was discussed in the context of the New Order's prescribed gender roles that still linger in Indonesian society today. The participants discussed their experiences of exclusion, contradiction and objectification. The women experienced difficulties from a range of sources. Expectations that women should pursue more domestic roles and conservative careers were discussed by all the women participants. Hera and Tika both described family concerns about their non-traditional life choices and aspirations. They discussed the mutual concessions which allowed the family unit to remain cohesive. VoB's families initially expressed reservations about their musical path, but for these musicians of the younger generation, it has been environmental challenges such as online 'haters' that create barriers to full freedom of expression. The failure of some women to support others within their music scene was discussed by Tika and Hera. They spoke passionately about the impact of sexism in musical communities and, in particular, the need for women to affirm each other's experiences. Hera and Firrda both said that they found their scenes welcoming, however,

Hera noted on several occasions the lack of women. The participants experienced gender-based discrimination from family, society and within their musical communities, which, I argued, was influenced by conservative gender ideals perpetuated at a state level, that have been subconsciously ingrained into contemporary everyday interactions. The contradiction within ostensibly 'anti-authority' communities reinforcing patriarchal attitudes was also discussed. At times women felt unwelcome and excluded from networks that would provide musical opportunities, creative stimulus and which 'advertise' themselves as inclusive. Some of the participants also spoke about the irony of being oppressed by a counterculture that claims to oppose existing power structures. Though anecdotal, the data gathered from these interviews strongly indicated that the casual sexism routinely expressed by men created barriers to full female participation in Indonesian alternative music scenes.

Notes

[1] Members of the punk subculture or people who subscribe to the punk 'lifestyle' are typically defined by a DIY aesthetic, dyed hair, torn clothes and an anti-authoritarian attitude. See: '100-punk poll: Gender, age, and the definition of new punks,' *New York* 46(12) (29 April 2013), accessed 15 Mar. 2020.

[2] Fans of heavy metal music and members of communities surrounding the genre. Often seen with long hair, band T-shirts and dark coloured clothing. See: Tasha R Howe, Christopher L. Aberson, Howard S. Friedman, Sarah E. Murphy, Esperanza Alcazar, Edwin J. Vazquez and Rebekah Becker. 'Three Decades Later: The Life Experiences and Mid-Life Functioning of 1980s Heavy Metal Groupies, Musicians, and Fans.' *Self and Identity* 14(5) (2015): 602–26, DOI: 10.1080/15298868.2015.1036918.

[3] Members of the gothic subculture, a community distinguished by a distinctive combination of punk, glam rock and new romantic fashion, heavy makeup, black clothes and music which is often described as 'dark' or 'macabre.' See: Paul Hodkinson, *Goth: Identity, Style, and Subculture,* Oxford: Berg, 2002, DOI: 10.2752/9781847888747.

[4] This article was developed from my Honours thesis. See Caroline Townsend, 'Perempuan ke depan: Gender activism, music and religion in Java,' Honours thesis, The University of Queensland, 2018.

[5] In this article, 'alternative' or 'alternative music' refers to music that is not considered 'mainstream' or 'popular' music, regardless of whether or not the band is signed to a major or independent music label. 'Scene' refers to a group of people who come together around specific music genres and ideologies.

[6] Kathryn Robinson and Sharon Bessell, 'Introduction to the issues,' in *Women in Indonesia: Gender, Equity and Development,* ed. Kathryn Robinson and Sharon Bessell, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2002, pp. 1–12; Saskia Wieringa, *Sexual Politics in Indonesia,* New York: Palgrave, 2002, p. 32, DOI: 10.1057/9781403919922.

[7] Robinson and Bessell, 'Introduction to the issues,' pp. 1–12.

[8] Kathryn Robinson, *Gender, Islam and Democracy in Indonesia,* London: Routledge, 2008, pp. 68–89, DOI: 10.4324/9780203891759.

[9] Wieringa, *Sexual Politics in Indonesia,* p. 35.

[10] Robinson, *Gender, Islam and Democracy in Indonesia,* 2008, p. 68.

[11] Julia Suryakusuma, 'The state and sexuality in New Order Indonesia,' in *Fantisizing the Feminine in Indonesia,* ed. Laurie J. Sears, Durham: Duke University Press, 1996, pp. 92–120, DOI: 10.1215/9780822396710-004.

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[13] Saskia Wieringa, 'Gender harmony and the happy family: Islam, gender and sexuality in post-Reformasi Indonesia,' *South East Asia Research* 23(1) (2015): 27–44, DOI: 10.5367/sear.2015.0244.

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women's movement,' in *The Future of Asian Feminisms: Confronting Fundamentalisms, Conflicts and Neo-Liberalism,* ed. Nursyahbani Katjasungkana and Saskia Wieringa, Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012, pp. 320–48.

[15] Eva Nisa, 'Embodying the "True" Islam: Face-veiled Women in Contemporary Indonesia,' PhD thesis, The Australian National University: Canberra, 2012, pp. 20–22.

[16] Maria Platt, Sharyn Graham Davies and Linda Rae Bennett, 'Contestations of gender, sexuality and morality in contemporary Indonesia,' *Asian Studies Review* 42(1) (2018): 1–15, DOI: 10.1080/10357823.2017.1409698.

[17] Terence H. Hull and Ninuk Widyantoro, 'Abortion and politics in Indonesia,' in *Abortion in Asia: Local Dilemmas, Global Politics,* ed. Andrea Whittaker, New York: Berghahn Books, 2010, pp. 175–98.

[18] Indonesia, Law on Pornography (Law No. 44/2008), Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia, Nomor 44 Tahun 2008, Tentang Pornografi (UU tentang Pornografi), adopted 30 Oct. 2008 (accessed 26 Feb. 2020).

[19] Wieringa, 'Gender harmony and the happy family,' p. 28.

[20] Wieringa 'Gender harmony and the happy family,' p. 28.

[21] Platt, Graham, Davies, and Bennett, 'Contestations of gender,' pp. 12–13.

[22] Harriot Beazley, 'Vagrants wearing make-up: Negotiating spaces on the streets of Yogyakarta, Indonesia,' *Urban Studies* 39(9) (2002): 1665–83, DOI:10.1080/00420980220151718.

[23] Emma Baulch, *Making Scenes: Reggae, Punk and Death Metal in 1990s Bali,* Durham: Duke University Press, 2007. DOI:10.1215/9780822390343; Alimatul Qibtiya, 'Self-identified feminists among gender activists and scholars at Indonesian universities,' *Australian Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 3(2) (2010): 151–74; Rachel Rinaldo, *Mobilizing Piety: Islam and Feminism in Indonesia,* New York: Oxford University Press, 2013, DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199948109.001.0001; Kathryn Robinson, *Gender, Islam and Democracy in Indonesia,* London: Routledge, 2008, DOI: 10.4324/9780203891759; Jeremy Wallach, *Modern Noise, Fluid Genres: Popular Music in Indonesia, 1997–2001,* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008; Rebekah Moore, 'Elevating the underground: Claiming space for indie music among Bali's many soundworlds,' *Asian Music* 44(2) (2013): 135–59, DOI: 10.1353/amu.2013.0013.

[24] For further reading on alternative interpretations and youth perspectives of Islam see: Nur Amali Ibrahim, *Improvisational Islam: Indonesian Youth in a Time of Possibility,* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018; Rifki Rosyad, *A Quest for True Islam: A Study of the Islamic Resurgence Movement among the Youth in Bandung, Indonesia,* Canberra: ANU Press, 2006, DOI: 10.26530/OAPEN_459476; Pam Nilan and Michelle Mansfield, 'Youth culture and Islam in Indonesia,' *Wacana, Journal of the Humanities of Indonesia* 15(1) (2013): 1–18, DOI: 10.17510/wjhi.v15i1.102; Andrew N Weintraub, *Islam and Popular Culture in Indonesia and Malaysia,* London: Routledge, 2011, DOI: 10.4324/9780203829004.

[25] In this article, 'punk' refers to music that is fast, loud, distorted and angry and which holds a countercultural or political message. See Lars J Kristiansen, *Screaming for Change: Articulating a Unifying Philosophy of Punk Rock,* Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2010.

[26] In this article, 'metal' refers to music which is distorted, loud and heavy like punk, but also has more musically technical elements (such as fast, complicated guitar solos). Metal is typically more 'busy' sounding than punk and may or may not have a countercultural or political message. See Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music,* Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2013.

[27] Wallach, *Modern Noise, Fluid Genres,* pp. 248-59; Baulch, *Making Scenes,* pp. 52-54. See also Brent Luvaas, 'Exemplary centres and musical elsewheres: On authenticity and autonomy in Indonesian indie music,' *Asian Music* 44(2) (2013): 94–114, DOI: 10.1353/amu.2013.0011.

[28] Rebekah Moore, 'Indie music in post-bomb Bali: Participant practices, scene subjectivities,' PhD dissertation, Indiana University, Indiana, 2015; Susan Browne, *The Gender Implications of Dangdut Kampungan: Indonesian 'Low Class' Popular Music,* Melbourne: Monash Asia Institute, 2000; Baulch, *Making Scenes,* p. 9.

[29] Each interviewee has given both written and verbal consent to being identified in this article, so I have not used pseudonyms. All interviews were recorded with permission and any quotations that follow are direct transcriptions, and my translations of direct transcriptions. All interviews were conducted in a combination of Bahasa Indonesia and English.

[30] A faster, more aggressive form of punk music.

[31] A slow, heavy subgenre of metal music.

[32] Pronounced 'new metal.' A genre which combines metal with elements of other genres, such as hip hop and funk.

[33] Lars J. Kristiansen, Joseph R. Blaney, Philip J. Chidester and Brent K. Simonds, *Screaming for Change: Articulating a Unifying Philosophy of Punk Rock,* New York: Lexington Books, 2012; Ian Glasper, *Burning Britain: The History of UK Punk 1980–1984,* Oakland: PM Press, 2014; Maria Katharina Wiedlack, *Queer Feminist Punk: An Anti-Social History,* Vienna: Zaglossus, 2015, DOI: :10.26530/OAPEN_574668; Stacy Ray Thompson, 'Making ideology material: Theory and practice in punk,' PhD dissertation, Purdue University, 2000.

[34] For example, Brian Johnson and Angus Young, *For Those About To Rock (We Salute You),* 1981. Lyrics available from *AC/DC Lyrics* (accessed 24 Mar. 2020).

[35] For further writing on sexism in music scenes outside Indonesia see: Rosemary Lucy Hill, 'Metal and Sexism,' *Metal Music Studies* 4(2) (2018): 265–79, DOI: "https://doi.org/10.1386/mms.4.2.265_1 >10.1386/mms.4.2.265_1 Sam George-Allen, *Witches: What Women Do Together,* Melbourne: Vintage, 2019; Wayne Enstice, 1943 and Janis Stockhouse, 1955, *Jazzwomen: Conversations with Twenty-One Musicians,* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004; Claire Coleman, 'Voicing experience: Female indie musicians "calling out" sexism,' *Feminist Media Studies* 17(1) (2017): 121–25, DOI: 10.1080/14680777.2017.1261466; Ilana Kaplan, *Camp Cope: Melbourne Punk Trio Says 'I Want the Music Industry to Own Up to Their Own Failures,'* London: Independent Digital News & Media, 2018.

[36] 'Artists,' *Amity Asia Agency* (accessed 1 Aug. 2018).

[37] A slow, chugging sub-genre of metal.

[38] Kate Lamb, 'The schoolgirl thrash metal band smashing stereotypes in Indonesia,' *Guardian*, 9 June 2017 (accessed 7 Mar. 2020).

[39] Non-mainstream, often DIY music that combines elements of rap and rhythm and blues and often uses sampling. Sampling is one of the primary ways in which hip hop beats are created. It involves capturing sound as digital information, customarily from 1960s and 1970s soul and funk records, which can in turn be endlessly manipulated and layered into musical collages. See: Anthony Kwame Harrison, '"What happens in the cabin…?": An arts-based autoethnography of underground hip hop song making,' *Journal of the Society for American Music* 8(1) (2014): 1—27, DOI: 10.1017/S1752196313000588.

[40] Catriona Mitchell, 'My body, my authority: Kartika jahja,' *Brava* 1 (January 2018) (accessed 1 Aug. 2018).

[41] Mitchell, 'My body, my authority: Kartika jahja,' para. 16.

[42] Minako Sakai and Amelia Fauzia, 'Islamic orientations in contemporary Indonesia: Islamism on the rise?' *Asian Ethnicity* 15(1) (2014): 41–61, DOI: :10.1080/14631369.2013.784513.

[43] Masdar Hilmy, *Islamism and Democracy in Indonesia: Piety and Pragmatism,* Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010, pp. 109–12, DOI:10.1355/9789812309730.

[44] Suzanne Brenner, 'Private moralities in the public sphere: Democratization, Islam and gender in Indonesia,' *American Anthropologist* 1(3) (2011): pp. 478–90, DOI: 10.1111/j.1548-1433.2010.01355.x.

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