

How do female DJs negotiate their place in the male-dominated environment of E/DM?

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the gender gap in the E/DM (Electronic Dance Music) industry, which is still male-dominated. More particularly, it investigates the individual and collective experiences of female DJs in France. The aim is thus to understand how these women have managed to become DJs, and how they have managed to create some space for themselves, both individually and collectively. This research is based on theories about gender-related issues women can face in the E/DM industry, as well as on theories about female communities, their advantages and their challenges.

In order to explore this topic, the research method that has been used is qualitative research. It draws on twelve semi-constructed interviews with female DJs and/or active members of female and queer communities. During those interviews, these women shared their personal experiences as well as their opinions about some aspects of the scene.

This thesis shows that nowadays, in France, female DJs face way less barriers than the previous generation. They still face some gender prejudices – especially at the beginning of their career – that become less and less present as they gain recognition and legitimacy. Being part of the gender minority can also prove to be an advantage sometimes, as they face less competition, and benefit from increasing awareness about the need for more parity in line-ups. There is also an increasing number of female/queer collective initiatives that help those women getting empowered and self-confident, getting more recognition while progressing within the safe-place of those communities.

Keywords: Electronic music, Gender, Community, Feminism, DJ

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1. Introduction

1.1. Gender dynamics in the Electronic/Dance Music (E/DM) subculture

Electronic/ Dance Music (hereafter E/DM) is a broad term that refers to electronically produced music, mostly intended to be danced to. It emerged out of the disco scene in the 1970s which was at the time dominated by the urban, black, and gay communities. From this scene subsequently emerged an impressive number of sub-scenes and subgenres: the E/DM industry is thus constantly evolving and changing.

The hallmark of E/DM scenes is that they are inclusive, non-discriminatory, and free from repressive gender dynamics (McRobbie, 1993), in which people of different ages, sexualities, subcultures, and races dance together (Bradby, 1993). However, this reading is utopian and anachronist (Gadir, 2016) and there are still some racist, sexist, and homophobic behaviors. In scholarly literature about E/DM as well as in real life, women are often consigned to the dance-floor only, in the role of the consumer, and kept away from more “powerful” positions such as disc-jockeys (hereafter DJs), programmers, technicians, etc. (McRobbie, 1993). They are thus distanced from the music and technology, which is central in E/DM subcultures (Farrugia, 2012).

As E/DM became mainstream from the 1990s, the number of women playing behind the decks has increased, but they are still a minority. Every two years for International Women’s day, the international network *Female:pressure* releases a Facts Survey addressing the gender gap in E/DM. More specifically, it quantifies the gender distribution of artists performing at electronic music festivals worldwide. The 2020 Facts Survey (Female:pressure, 2020) shows that from 2012 to 2019, around 80% of festival acts were male. This number is slightly smaller when looking at years 2017 to 2019, but still impressive. Another study by *L’Appel du 8 Mars* (Appel du 8 Mars, 2019) studied this gender ratio for three major Parisian E/DM clubs. Results from 2019 show that only 1/3 of their events include at least one female artist and that females represent only 13% of the artists booked in these clubs.

These numbers show that female DJs still have a long way to go before having the same visibility as male DJs. Indeed, they show that despite the growing awareness about gender inequalities and the emergence of feminist movements such as #MeToo, gender prejudices and discrimination are still important characteristics of musical communities

(Gadir, 2016). They lead to gatekeeping practices that block women from getting as much visibility as their male counterparts. They also struggle more than men to gain social, symbolic, or economic capital, which all are essential to a musician's success, and constantly have to negotiate their identity, on stage and off stage, to avoid being hypersexualized or marginalized. However, it seems that despite the lack of academic research on the matter, the gender gap in E/DM is increasingly getting pointed at, and is often mentioned in French E/DM magazines such as Trax Magazine or Tsugi. But the most important evolution comes from female DJs themselves. Recently, they have become more visible and have managed to bypass the traditional gatekeeping institutions they used to face. A few years ago there were few female superstar DJs, today they are becoming more numerous. Farrugia mentions that women are in a "constant battle to claim space for themselves" (2004:237), and this research aims to investigate how they do so, both individually or through the creation of local, national, or international women-centered networks and collectives.

1.2. Research question

The aim of this research is thus to understand what barriers and gatekeeping practices those women face during their carrier, but most importantly to understand how they may individually or collectively bypass them. Indeed, there has been an emergence of collective initiatives whose objective was to give some visibility to female DJs.

This thesis explores the following question: *how do female DJs negotiate their place in the male-dominated environment of E/DM?* A primary goal of this study is to better understand the experiences of female DJs and the challenges they may face during their careers. The first sub-question this thesis addresses is: *"What are the individual experiences and strategies of female DJs in a gendered industry?"*.

A second interest of this study is to discover the strategies those women may employ to tackle those challenges and gain some visibility. Thus, the second sub-question this thesis explores is the following: *"What are the collective strategies female DJs may employ in order to bypass gatekeepers?"*. Exploring individual experiences within the first sub-question helps to understand the need for collective action addressed within the second sub-question.

1.3. Societal and scientific importance

The E/DM industry is booming, becoming mainstream, and lucrative. A Dutch example is the five-days Amsterdam Dance Event (ADE), attracting thousands of visitors in two hundred locations within the city. At the same time, we have witnessed the emergence of superstar DJs, attracting huge crowds, and touring the whole world. The growing importance of E/DM subcultures in the cultural economy makes them worth researching.

Moreover, the societal importance of this research is that it could create awareness about the under-representation of female DJs and a better comprehension of the challenges they face. Understanding those challenges is essential for every DJ, club-owner, or booker who wants to overcome them. It could also give importance to the collective and sorority. Neoliberalism celebrates individualism; however, this kind of collective action is essential for minorities, in the arts but also in other areas where there are some dominant/dominated relationships. Finally, addressing gender gap issues in electronic music is essential in giving female role models to young women who insidiously have a gendered image of the industry, which reinforces, even more, the gendered stereotypes within EDM culture. The aim of this research is also to show that despite the numerous challenges female DJs have to face compared to their male counterparts, they can still negotiate some space for themselves in this industry, both individually and collectively.

Finally, the scientific importance of this research is to participate in filling a gap in cultural studies. According to Tyler Cowen (1996), the field of cultural economics still lacks some substantial literature on gender issues. This gap becomes wider when it comes to studying gender dynamics within E/DM subcultures. Indeed, E/DM and club cultures have received little scholarly attention. The first reason is that the E/DM genre still struggles to be considered as music worth being studied, too often portrayed as mindless music, attracting narcotized dancers. A second reason is that E/DM subcultures often go unnoticed because they are experienced by a narrow range of the population only; the youth (Thornton, 1995). From the nineties, some feminist scholars (McRobbie, 1993; Pini, 2001; Bradby, 1993) have studied gender dynamics in E/DM before, but once again, on the dance-floor only as they do not extend their analysis to the realm of E/DM production.

There is thus little existing research on the underrepresentation of female DJs, however, some scholars started to give this issue some attention, in particular in the United States, after 2000. Those books and articles were essential when creating the theoretical framework for this thesis. The first essential author for my thesis is Rebekah Farrugia and

her book “Beyond the Dance-Floor: Female DJs, Technology, and Electronic Dance Music Culture” (2012), addressing female DJ’s place in the cultural production of E/DM, and women-centered networks in the United-States. Other authors whose contribution to the research is important are Anna Gavanas and Rosa Reitsamer (2012, 2016) or Tara Rodgers with her book “Pink Noises” (2010) for which she interviewed female pioneers in electronic music.

However, none of these studies have addressed the French E/DM scene, so we might expect some discrepancies in the results because of this geographical difference. Moreover, although this literature is quite recent, they might be a bit outdated as E/DM scenes are evolving at a fast pace.

1.4. Structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into six chapters. After the introduction, the second chapter of this thesis explores the literature review and shows how E/DM subcultures and production are male-dominated, and how women face some barriers and gatekeepers, especially when it comes to accessing the right informal networks or the necessary technical skills required to be a successful DJ. They also face some gender stereotypes and discriminations, which can lead them to constantly negotiate their identity off and on stage. Previous studies have also shown that female DJs can carve out a place for themselves through collective action, thanks to the creation of women-centered networks or collective. However, those communities also face some challenges, such as their identity or effectiveness.

The research method employed to explore those topics and the research question is the use of semi-structured qualitative interviews, to get some in-depth answers. In total, seven DJs have been interviewed, as well as four founders of women-centered collectives and networks. The third chapter of this thesis describes more precisely the methodology as well as the list of interviewees and the data-gathering process.

The following chapter then presents the results of the interviews and how they relate to the concepts presented in the theoretical framework.

The fifth chapter is the conclusion of the research, which aims to summarize and discuss the results, as well as answering the main research question. It also attempts to give some recommendations for future research on the topic.

The sixth chapter refers to the bibliography used within the thesis.

Finally, there is also an appendix chapter at the end of the thesis including the interview guides, as well as coding categories.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. The challenges of being a female DJ in E/DM

2.1.1. Working conditions

- *State of women in the art-world*

Before taking a closer look into the gender gap in music, and more particularly E/DM, it is important to take a step back and look into the position women occupy in the arts.

One of the main studies in the economic literature dealing with women in the arts is from Tyler Cowen. Cowen (1996) mentions that the decision to create art is not only an aesthetic decision but also an economic one. Indeed, artists perform, consciously or not, a cost-benefit analysis when deciding to pursue an artistic path. In his research paper, the author outlines different hypotheses that could account for the observed differences between male and female artists. The ‘discrimination hypothesis’ states that women often do not have the opportunity to develop their skills fully, namely because of inferior training, or because of a negative self-image from their environment (family or society). I will develop this issue of self-representation in part 2.3. Then, the maternal obstacles hypothesis relates to the well-known issue women face in any working environment: child-bearing. Indeed, Tyler notices that in the past, women have been successful in the arts that allowed them to have a domestic life. In the case of electronic music, it sometimes is complicated to “juggle electronic music with parenthood” (Faber, 2019), as the nightlife rhythm is hardly incompatible with family life and requires some compromises. However, the maternal hypothesis is now less relevant than in the past, with the industrialization and market economy, as well as the development of new technologies and birth control (Cowen, 1996). Finally, the last hypothesis is the parity one: female artistic accomplishments are as great as male ones, and more impressive than individuals tend to realize. There are also no less than males in some areas of creation, but they have been invisibilized for too long. Indeed, previous research has shown that women’s musical practices and achievements have been silenced throughout history (Green, 1997:2; Farrugia, 2004:22)

- ***Working conditions of female musicians***

The working conditions of musicians have been documented in the past, most studies highlighting the well-known characteristics of creative labor, namely precarious employment, low wages, and multiple job-holding. Studies focusing on challenges faced by *female* musicians are scarcer and focus on other genres than electronic music. For instance, Cameron's paper (2003) - structured around Cowen's study, deals with female musicians in classical music, jazz, country and western, and rock and pop music. His results show that in each genre, there are examples of successful women, but the author highlights that few were occupying dominant positions, and most of them were still highly dependent on men (for songwriting, background playing, management, etc.). The few other studies on the topic (Buscatto, 2007; Cohen, 1997) agree on the conclusions that female musicians indeed face more obstacles in their road to success than their male counterparts.

- ***Working conditions for female DJs***

There have been some attempts to describe more precisely the working conditions of female DJs (Reitsamer, 2011; Gavanas & Reitsamer, 2016). The authors mention that DJ's, in a growing neoliberal context, have to become 'cultural entrepreneurs' and that female DJ's have to combine the challenge of self-marketing with unregulated labor, where being a female is a "gatekeeper" itself. Just as male DJs, they also face growing competition because of the digitalization of music that increased the number of DJs on the market. Reitsamer and Gavanas (2016) conducted interviews with female DJs from several European capitals, and their results show that female DJs face many difficulties, from low payment rates, deteriorating working conditions, to gender segregation.

Regarding wages, in 2019, the American business platform HoneyBook (2019) released a report about wage equity in the cultural and creative industries, analyzing around 400 000 invoices from October 2018 to October 2019, and using around 2000 answers to a survey sent to American and Canadian freelancers. They analyze the gender gap comparing one dollar earned by a male freelancer to the amount earned by a woman freelancer in seven different industries: DJs/Musicians, photographers, marketing professionals, graphic designers, web designers, event planners, cinematographers. Among all those categories, the

gap is greater in the DJs category: female DJs and musicians earn 0,38\$ to the male dollar. Forbes made in 2019 a list of the best-paid DJs in the world; they were all male.

2.1.2. Technology and gender

As in many other fields, the contribution of women to technology has been hidden from history (Brown, 1996). In the past, women didn't have easy access to education, and when they did, they were prevented from pursuing studies in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM-fields). We can still observe this gendering of academic fields today, as women are way less numerous in scientific and computer sciences studies. However, women have contributed to more computer science discoveries than we think. For instance, in default of being present on battlefields, women's war effort was focused on computer science, and thus had a major role in the discoveries in that field. Brown argues that most of their contributions were "hidden from history" because there is a male bias in technological history research. Gradually, feminist researchers have started to help recover women's contributions, giving them the credit they deserved. However, the concept of technology is still gendered and associated with masculinity (Brown, 1996).

The relationship between gender and technology is indeed a recurrent topic in the literature about women in electronic music (Reitsamer & Gavanas, 2016; Brown, 1996; Farrugia, 2004, 2012). It is one of the main - if not the first - gatekeeper female DJs encounter. Indeed, the mastering of technological devices is an essential condition for whoever wants to become a DJ. Wacjman's contribution (2009) is enlightening when it comes to understanding the link between gender and technology. She argues that the association of technology and manliness is the result of the historical and cultural construction of gender, and allows keeping separating female and male gender:

"Femininity is incompatible with technological competence; to feel technically competent is to feel manly" (Cockburn, 1985:12)

Because the mastering of technology is associated with the male gender, women's technological skills are often doubted when it comes to DJing. There are many examples of female DJs who have been "mansplained"¹ how to use their decks of change cables (Bloustien, 2016). They constantly have to prove themselves (Reitsamer & Gavanas, 2016) because of their supposed technological incompetence (Bloustien, 2016).

¹ Mansplaining is a situation where a man explains something to a woman in a patronizing and condescending manner.

Abtan (2016) explains that male DJs often don't necessarily need to be technically good: through their social networks, they are invited to play before acquiring the necessary skills, while women are often invited only if they are exceptionally good.

2.1.3. Social capital and social networks

Indeed, what female DJs often lack - compared to men - is not theoretical, technical knowledge, but rather social and local knowledge (Abtan, 2016). The inclusion of DJs into informal networks is essential for the recognition of "symbolic capital" (Bourdieu, 1993), essential to their success (Bloustien, 2016). However, for female DJs, this inclusion is not systematic because of the "homosocial nature" of techno (Reynolds, 1999). Indeed, those informal networks in E/DM are male-dominated; they are one of the main gatekeeping practices that aspiring female Djs have to face (Abtan, 2016). Reynolds indeed mentions:

"Tricks of the trade are passed down from mentors to male acolytes. DJ-ing and sample-based music also go hand in hand with an obsessive 'trainspotter' mentality: the amassing of huge collections of records, the accumulation of exhaustive and arcane information about labels, producers, and auteurs." (Reynolds 1999: 274)

Indeed, women often lack opportunities to learn DJ skills, because they are left out of these informal networks in which men usually acquire their technical skills (Bloustien, 2016). In contrast to other music genres, DJing is rarely learned in schools. Abtan indeed notes that dense social networks are essential in teaching musicians the necessary skills for their practice, and for developing their careers. She notes that there is also some knowledge and information-sharing within those networks, such as knowing how to book venues, how to self-promote, or being informed of local opportunities.

The quote above shows that men interested in electronic music spend a great amount of time networking with DJs and producers, while spending a lot of money in record-collecting - which is an overwhelmingly male pastime (Straw, 1997; Reynolds, 1999), sometimes becoming a gatekeeping act. Being left out of such an activity prevent women from connecting as well as their male counterparts with collectors, or record shop dealers - and record shops are sometimes a hub for meeting other DJs and building a valuable network (Farrugia, 2004).

Some authors (Bloustien, 2016; Abtan, 2016; Katz, 2006) explains that those networks are not necessarily discriminatory *per se*, but some women might feel uncomfortable joining them, being sometimes the only girl in a male group.

2.1.4. Identity

- *Gender stereotypes and discriminations*

The fact that technical skills are associated with a male gender identity shows how anchored gender stereotypes are. One of the main gendered representations for female DJs relates to the “feminine” aesthetic (McClary, 1991) that their work is supposed to reflect. Farrugia (2004) explains that there is a trend in electronic music that attempts to align men and women with specific subgenres. For instance, a male DJ might be expected to play harsh songs, with big kicks, while a woman might be expected to play dancing music, with vocals, etc. And, when it happens that female DJs play music that is “good” in the eyes of the participants, the merit is often attributed to her presumed male mentors (Gadir, 2016).

Gadir (2016) also notes that event promoters and marketers have portrayed female DJs as radically different from male DJs, thus “segmenting” the market. Indeed, a recurrent issue is the one of hypersexualization (McRobbie, 2009), which concerns not only DJs but more broadly most women in contemporary culture. Abtan (2016) speaks of “twin difficulties”: female DJs often have the choice between sexualizing themselves or staying invisible. Bloustien (2016) mentions that the comments female DJs receive are often about their appearance and not about their technical and musical skills. As a result, women constantly have to negotiate issues relating to their appearance (Gadir, 2016).

They are sometimes not helped by the media. The specialized media has an important role in this debate. They have responsibilities when it comes to issues of representation, education, and visibility. However, female DJs somehow continue to be depicted as female and not as DJs first. Some media establish a top list of female DJs, which is an issue because it keeps separating them from the other male DJs. In an article dedicated to the issue of gender within the electronic music scene, Lise Merret (2018) notes that in 2010, E/DM specialized media Trax Magazine, dedicated an issue to the feminine scene, which was illustrated on the front page by a naked woman, wearing some turntable knob on top of her tits.

In an article, Elliot-Sheridan (2020) adds: “women who DJ are pitted against each other in the media, Facebook commenters trolling and slating Nina Kraviz for her dance moves, Amelie Lens for copying her, VTSS deemed successful because she’s good-looking...”.

This sums up many behaviors and discourses made about female DJs in the media and on social networks.

- ***Performativity***

Butler's (1990) theory of performativity states that there are unconscious behavioral differences in the way girls and boys perform their gender. According to Farrugia (2004), this leads to a situation where women are "doubly oppressed when they take the stage". For male DJs, being on stage is an extension of their gender role because this performance is in line with people's gendered expectations that men are naturally good in mastering technology. However, the process is different for women who have to constantly mediate "between the conscious stage performance and the unconscious gender performance" (Farrugia, 2004:239). Erwin Goffman (1959) speaks of "front stage behavior", which relates to the behavior on stage when we're being watched by other people. Except in rave parties (free parties) where the DJ sometimes plays hidden, in regular clubs or festivals, the DJ always plays in front of an audience. This may thus alter the behavior on stage.

In the documentary called "Move the Needle", featuring female DJs, the latter explains that they often have to think about their appearance on stage, and sometimes feel compelled to dress casual and in a sober way so that they can be taken seriously (Sheridan, 2020). This is an example of how female DJs alter their gender behavior and appearance on stage to avoid being sexualized by the male audience and organizers.

- ***Role models***

The term "role model" was coined for the first time by sociologist Robert Merton. It refers to a person whose success in a field inspires others, especially young people. Farrugia (2004) argues that same-sex role-modeling has a great impact on what youngsters think they can accomplish and on the fields they choose to study.

The lack of representation of female DJs leads to a self-reproducing phenomenon. If young women don't see any major role models, it is then more difficult for them to consider pursuing this career path. Indeed, Farrugia (2004) argues that the underrepresentation of women is tightly linked to the relative scarcity of successful female DJs. She also says that "role modeling is one of the most effective strategies for encouraging women to become DJs

and it is more than likely that it will do the same for producing” (Farrugia, 2004:65). Elliot-Sheridan (2020) analysis brings him to the same conclusion:

“With fewer females showcased, fewer females will feel confident enough to work for success too.”

Bloustien (2016) indeed argues that role models show to young people that their musical ambitions are valid, and not impossible. The increasing visibility of women creates confidence and allows attracting more women, on the dance-floor but also behind the decks.

2.2. Collective female strategies

2.2.1. Women-only ecosystems

- *Definition*

The creation of alternative spaces for marginalized people does not only take place for women, and not only in the realm of electronic music. Later in the thesis, I will mostly use the words communities and networks. There is a very slight difference between both words. The term networks refers to “the set of relationships, personal interactions, and connections among participants, viewed as a set of nodes and links, with its affordances for information flows and helpful linkages” (wenger-trayner.com, 2011), while communities refers to “the development of a shared identity around a topic that represents a collective intention—however tacit and distributed—to steward a domain of knowledge and to sustain learning about it.” (wenger-trayner.com, 2011). I will use those terms interchangeably, as in most groups, both aspects can be found.

It can be seen as a tool that minorities - women, people of color, disabled people, LGBTQ+ people, etc. - can use to be able to get their voices heard. The creation of all-female networks can be witnessed in other creative areas, like literature, cinema, visual arts. A typical case in punk music is, for instance, the Riot Grrls, a movement that received quite a lot of attention from scholars. In an industry dominated by male musicians and bands, this radical feminist punk movement proposed a criticism to the dominant patriarchal culture. Through a do-it-yourself (DIY) ethic, they addressed issues such as rape, domestic violence, empowerment, sexuality, etc. There have been some studies about some all-female collectives or networks, that I will mention in the following parts, but most of them are quite outdated and were created in the USA.

Elizabeth Dobson (2018) argues that there is a correlation between social environment and attainment and that an overwhelmingly male ecology can be detrimental for women. She uses the term ‘ecology’ to refer to “*evolving inter-relationships of individuals, communities, organizations, networks, businesses, technologies and associated sound and music industries*” (Dobson, 2018:1). As an answer to this male ecology in the music industry, she introduces the idea of Digital Audio Ecofeminism (hereafter DAEF), that she defines as spaces that “*share values that center women, prioritize equality and reject capitalism*” (2018: 1). She interviewed five DAEF communities from the US, and three prominent themes emerged from those interviews. First, these communities centered the marginalized, in a broad sense, by providing them a space where they can manage to acquire some capital (social, cultural, symbolic, and economic). Second, these spaces offer opportunities for education and ‘interthinking’ (learning through dialogue) between the members of the communities which in turn gives them greater confidence. This idea of mentoring is also present in Bloustien’s (2016) research in which she stresses its importance for supporting and giving inspiration to young women. Dobson argues that education is often uncomfortable, as people are often afraid to make mistakes. Such welcoming communities indeed create a ‘safe’ space where women are more willing to take risks. Finally, Dobson mentions that despite their social and economic impact, DAEF communities are sometimes hard to manage as they often depend on voluntary work.

Reitsamer and Gavanas (2016) explain that for female DJs, developing their own structure or events is sometimes a way to bypass the gatekeeping process behind the male-dominated networks in electronic music. Indeed, networks are essential for artists, and especially for DJs. They are important for their entrance on the market because it is mostly through informal networks that DJs acquire their first skills. Through their DJ friends, aspiring DJs have access to material and informal training. The network is also crucial when it comes to stay in the market and be successful. Indeed, we have seen that DJs in our neoliberal context now have to act like ‘cultural entrepreneurs’ (Reitsamer, 2011). Part of an entrepreneur's work is to expand its network and build relationships that will help them develop their career. In the case of a DJ, this can be done through face-to-face interactions - in techno parties, for instance - or through virtual networks.

- ***Online networks and communities***

In their 2016 study, Gavanas and Reitsamer report that the female DJs they interviewed considered that female networks – such as female:pressure, SheJay (UK), Pink Noises (USA) – “are effective in introducing female role models, sharing technical knowledge, increasing invitations to DJ performances, receiving feedback on DJ sets, producing tracks and so on.”

Rosa Reitsamer studied in 2012 the network female:pressure, which is an (online) collective of female DJs, producers, club organizers. Using interviews, she analyses the motivations behind the creation of such a network, describes its integration in the broader field of EDM. She also studies the members/activists’ self-representations as artists.

Farrugia (2004) argues that “via the Internet, and more specifically the adoption of communication strategies such as networking and community building in online forums, that women are able to create their own E/DM discourses” (2004:65). She investigated the online network *Sisterdjs*, whose objective was to create a constructive and informative space for women in electronic music. It aims to create a non-judging and educative space, with no offline equivalent. Her content analysis reveals that the network - created from a collective wish from female DJs to move beyond their prescribed gender roles - was indeed effective in creating a safe place where women discussed DJing abilities, frustrations, and any other issues the female DJs may face. The content is shared online, and its effectiveness is seen in the female DJs everyday life and practices.

- ***Hybrid organizations (online and offline)***

Farrugia (2009) also investigated the US women-centered DJ collective *Sister SF*, through a case study in the city of San Francisco, considered as a hub for female DJs. Observing the practices of the collective and realizing face-to-face interviews with local female DJs, the author tried to understand how Sister SF established itself in the city and created a space for female DJs. The collective is hybrid, as it also has an online space that allowed the sharing of information and skills between female DJs. Both spaces - online and offline - managed to give more visibility to women DJs, and offered networking possibilities while valuing altruism and information-sharing among its members. Farrugia (2009) also mention that such collectives play an important role in inspiring aspiring female DJs, and

sometimes propose some mentoring activities where experimented DJs teach the basic of DJing to beginners.

- ***Local clubs***

Hancock (2017) studies a lesbian club called Lick Club, employing only female (or trans and non-binary) DJs. She analyses the queer DJ network that emerged from this club, and the power of such physical spaces for face-to-face networking, by interviewing local female and non-binary DJs. It resulted that this physical club provided them easier access to mentors, equipment and performances, thus fostering their career. This club allows DJs who do not feel represented by the dominant heteronormative scene to create a safe space for themselves, which is “free from unwanted, straight, cis-gendered male attention” (Hancock, 2017:78). Moreover, the club often encouraged amateurs DJs to practice, learn, and eventually perform. This kind of real-life space is complementary to online networks, as it provides direct access to technology or gigs.

Bloustien (2016) also mentions the existence of local not-for-profit communities in London whose aim is to provide some free classes for motivated women as well as performances and networking opportunities.

In Paris, there was one lesbian club, called the Pulp, which was very similar to the Lick club. All the staff was female, and many - now-famous - female DJs such as DJ Sextoy, Chloé, and Jennifer Cardini started their careers there, as residents. This club closed its doors in 2007 when the city of Paris decided to buy the building to build social housing.

2.2.2. Main challenges

- ***Identity and self-labeling***

The way organizations in the women-only ecosystem label themselves can be a tricky exercise. Most of them are having a “feminist agenda”, but claiming it may be a bad strategy because of the bad connotation the word may have, especially among men. Thus, some of these networks may want to distance themselves from feminism as a “precautionary measure” (Farrugia, 2009) in order to still maximize their efficacy in a male-dominated industry (Farrugia, 2012). This is for instance the case of the online website *Sisterdjs* (Farrugia, 2004), who does not consider itself as a feminist network even though the topics

and issues mentioned by the women participants do reflect feminist ideas. This rejection of a feminist label is also found in the way the collective Sister SF identifies itself. Farrugia (2009) explains that the collective openly reject the feminist label - even though their activities are - as their mission statement reads:

“We’re not raging feminist - we just think it’s better to be viewed as a DJ first, and then as a woman, when you’re behind the decks. SISTER is not anti-male at all, it is simply pro-female.” (Sister SF, as cited in Farrugia, 2009, p.340)

Farrugia explains this choice by the political context in the mid-1990s when the group was created. Since the 1970s and the beginning of second-wave feminism, even though the media supported gender equality, they treated the word “feminism” as something threatening towards males. It resulted in a general misconception of feminism and feminists as “raging and man-hating” women (Farrugia, 2009: 341). Girls were also discouraged from defining themselves as “feminist”. This whole climate was thus hostile to the feminist movement and explains why a collective such as Sister SF choose not to identify as such but instead decided to brand themselves with a more professional and polished image (Farrugia, 2004; Farrugia, 2009). Even the website used a minimalist theme using shades of grey and black, thus having a more ‘masculine’ aesthetic appealing to professionals.

- ***Reinforcement of the gender gap***

Reitsamer (2012) speaks of a “paradox of women’s advancement”: the members of *female:pressure* are on a network that aims to increase the number of female DJs, through women-only events, broadcasts, labels. However, this could lead to reinforcing the gender differences, and ultimately the “binary structure of male/female social network segregation” (Reitsamer and Gavanias, 2016).

Elisabeth Dobson (2018) also cast some doubts on women-only communities: she argues they can sometimes be like ‘echo-chambers’ where women only exist in women-centered spaces.

- ***Tokenism and all-female line-ups***

Some organizations (labels, events, collectives...) may, in order to look more diverse and equal, use a strategy of tokenism, which is defined as: “*actions that are the result of pretending to give advantage to those groups in society who are often treated unfairly, in order to give the appearance of fairness. The practice of making only a token effort or doing no more than the minimum*” (Cambridge English Dictionary)

Women are tokens in a skewed group when they account for less than 15% of the entire group (Kanter, 1977). The French collective “L’Appel du 8 Mars” (A8M) delivered in 2019 a preliminary study in order to understand how female DJs and producers are represented in France and Europe. They studied the gender ratios of three major electronic Parisian clubs (Concrète, Djoon, Rex Club). The results show that in 2017, those three clubs booked 9.7% of female artists. This number slowly increased in 2018 (11.8%) and 2019 (13.0%), and this progression is mainly due to Concrete’s programming choices. This is however a quite small improvement, and the authors of the study rightly add that if it keeps increasing at that rate (+3,24% in two years and a half), parity will only be reached in twenty-two years. As mentioned in the introduction, the last Facts Survey released by the collective *female:pressure* (2020), shows that between 2012 and 2019, out of forty-six French electronic music festivals, only 14.4% of the line-up was female. Of course, these two studies can not be used to generalize the representation of female DJs in clubs or festival line-ups, but they give a general overview and show that in most cases, women can still be considered as tokens, as Kanter defines it.

Bloustien (2016) explain that male DJs and programmers sometimes want to include some girls, just to show that their network is not only a male zone and thus avoid being associated with homosexual behaviours. She also mentions that some female DJs are aware that they have been sometimes programmed only because - or thanks to - their gender. They have mixed feelings about this because on the one hand it offers them great opportunities, but on the other hand they feel like they didn’t get them thanks to their merit only.

Sheridan (2020) argues that even though all-female line-ups are a great initiative, it will not lead to any progress or deep change if it is not in the continuity of the programme.

3. Method

This chapter addresses the methodology used for this research. The latter raises some interrogations around which challenges female DJs face and how they manage to create a place for themselves in an industry that is male-dominated.

3.1. Research design

As mentioned in the introduction, the main research question is the following: *how do female DJs negotiate their place in the male-dominated environment of E/DM?*

In order to address the research question, the qualitative method is chosen. Indeed, qualitative research aims to “understand the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants” (Bryman, 2016:375). This definition fits perfectly the goal of the research, which is to understand how female DJs in France have managed to create a space for themselves, both individually and collectively. In order to understand better their experiences and their background, words are preferred, rather than numbers.

Therefore, it seemed that the most appropriate way to get the interpretation of those experiences by French female DJs themselves is to conduct face-to-face interviews. It would have been better to conduct interviews in person, but given the sanitary crisis linked to the COVID-19, only Skype interviews were possible. More specifically, the qualitative method consisted of semi-structured interviews, as this method allows the interviewer to cover all the topics mentioned in the theoretical framework, and as it is flexible enough to allow opening the discussion to other topics.

Moreover, this research can fall into the scope of a feminist research framework, as its final goal is to understand how one can achieve gender equality and parity in the electronic music industry. Bryman (2012:491) explains that in feminist research, qualitative research through semi-structured interviewing is more appropriate. Indeed, feminist research implies a high degree of reciprocity on the part of the interviewer, a non-hierarchical relationship, and the perspective of the women being interviewed (Bryman, 2012:492). That is another reason why the semi-structured interview is preferred, as it allows the interview to be like a conversation between two women, allowing the interviewee to feel safe enough so that they can share their - sometimes personal - experiences with the interviewer.

I did a thematic analysis of the transcripts that follows the themes mentioned in the theoretical framework.

3.2. Operationalization of terms

Several terms are often used in the thesis, that are worth defining here. As precised in part 2.2.1, communities and networks are used interchangeably in the thesis, even though there is a slight difference between both terms, as explained before. E/DM refers to the term Electronic/ Dance Music; it is here used in a broad sense of electronically produced music. The term “gatekeepers” or “gatekeeping practice” is also often used throughout the thesis. It refers to people (here, mostly men) or practices that prevent female DJs from accessing the information, the network necessary to become successful, or to dissuade them from becoming DJs in the first place. Another word that is used often is “feminization” of the E/DM scene; it means that more and more women are actively participating in the scene as DJs, but also as programmers, or bookers, for instance.

3.3. List of the interviewees

In total, 12 women were interviewed. Three criteria were set in order to choose the list of respondents to the interview:

1. They must identify as a woman.
2. They are involved in the French electronic music scene, either as a DJ **and/or** as a founder of a women-only or queer collective/ network.
3. They have been active on the scene for at least two years. This last criterion ensures that the interviewees have enough years of experience in order to have the benefit of hindsight.

Thus, having those criteria in mind when contacting the possible respondents, the sampling was not random. There were two phases of selection for the candidates. In the first phase, I published the same message on two Facebook groups. The first group is *Shesaid.so* France, which is the local network for women working in the field of music. The second group is *Woman's Speech*, which is a French network for female and queer DJs - or more broadly for female and queer individuals involved in the electronic music industry. In the message posted in those groups, I explained the research project, as well as the criteria

needed in order to be a participant. From this first phase, I got four participants: two DJs, one founder of a women-only collective named *Wicked Girls*, as well as one artistic director (programmer) of an association called *La Petite*, which aimed to give visibility to female artists and often organizes parties with female DJs only.

In a second phase, I used an excel document present on *Woman's Speech* Facebook group, which is a (non-exhaustive) list of French female DJs. This document shows the name, email, subgenre style, professional page of around a hundred female and queer DJs. I reviewed each person on the list and selected the emails of the DJs satisfying my three criteria. I emailed them an explanation of the research project, the different themes I wished to tackle during the interviews, the approximate length of the interviews, as well as the possibility to be anonymous. In total, I sent around 30 emails and got many enthusiastic answers from women willing to participate and share their experiences. I also got a few messages from female DJs refusing to participate. Most of them refused to participate because they felt like they were not legitimate to speak about those topics. I thus got six more participants - all DJs - from this phase.

Finally, two more DJs were selected out of this excel document. I choose them because we had friends or interests in common, so it was easier to contact and approach them.

The final sample is the following:

Name	Stage name	DJ	(Co-)founder of an all-female and/or queer community	Membership in an all-female or queer E/DM community
Léa	LeLéon	Yes	Bande de Filles	Bande de filles/ Woman's speech
Océane	SCARLET	Yes	/	Conspiration/ Woman's speech
Lou	Slow Dimension	Yes	L'appel du 8 Mars	Woman's speech
Eva	Evnr	Yes	/	Discoquette, Woman's speech, Bande de Filles

Marion	Mila Dietrich	Yes	/	Conspiracy; Woman's Speech
Lisa	LISA	Yes	/	/
Camille	/	No	La Petite / Girls Don't Cry	/
Aurélie	/	No	Wicked Girls	/
Marianne	Calling Marian	Yes	/	Conspiracy
Chloé	Bernadette	Yes	Move Ur Gambettes	Move ur gambettes/ Woman's speech/ Wicked Girls/ Bande de filles
Ana	Mira Lo	Yes	/	Woman's speech
Anonymous	Anonymous	Yes	/	/

3.4. Operationalisation

In order to answer the research question, two interview guides were written (see Appendix 1 and 2). The first one is made of 20 questions for female DJs, written around five themes: working conditions, identity, technology, networks and challenges. The second one is made of 11 questions for founders of all-female communities, written around three different themes: activities, identity and challenges. Thus, as an example, Léa (*LeLeon*), who is a DJ but also a founder of a female DJ collective (*Bande de Filles*) has been asked around 30 questions.

Inside each theme, the questions refer to specific concepts and theories that are mentioned in the theoretical framework. Some questions relate to their personal experience and background, whereas some others relate to their thought on a particular topic ('What do you think of?...). Sometimes, the use of specific example facilitates the understanding of the question. The examples are also mentioned in the theoretical framework.

In the interview guide, the questions are following the order of the theoretical framework, but in practice, I sometimes changed the order to follow the interviewee and create a more natural conversation.

The first section of each interview with some presentation questions served as an introduction for the rest of the interview. Then comes the intermediary sections with the questions relating to the theories mentioned in the theoretical framework. Finally, each interview concluded with a final and open question, about other strategies they think about in order to make female DJs more numerous and more visible. I also ask them if there is anything else they think is worth mentioning and that I might have forgotten.

After finishing transcribing, I realized that I missed some information. For this reason, I sent an additional document (see Appendix 3: Additional questions) to the DJs only, with additional questions. I gave them a week to write the answers. Four of them returned the document.

3.5. Data collection

The 12 interviews were conducted between the 20th of April and 25th of April and accounted in total for 10 hours and 56 minutes of interviewing time (656 minutes). The average time per interview was 54 minutes. However, the length was sometimes unequal, as the shortest interview lasted 36 minutes, and the longest 1h30. Interviewees were open with sharing their experiences, they receive my message with great enthusiasm and liked that I was treating this subject, which matters to them.

Before recording the interview, I took a few minutes to explain in a few sentences the master I am doing and the subject of the research. I explained to them the topics that are going to be mentioned. I also mentioned that the interview was being recorded, for the purpose of writing the transcripts. Only one respondent chose to be anonymous, however some others do mention some parts of the interviews that they want to be anonymous. All the interviewees were in French, as all interviewees are French, so it was easier for all of us.

Finally, I also offered the possibility to the interviewees to read the transcripts, for them to check that there is no mistake; I gave them a few days to read through it, and eventually make some comments about some parts. The transcripts available in appendix are the original ones, and the comments were only included as footnotes. Some interviewees mentioned that they find it reassuring being able to check the transcripts. Respondent

validation of the transcripts is also a good way to ensure that there was no miscommunication between the interviewee and the interviewer.

3.6. Data analysis

After finishing the interviews, the following week was dedicated to writing the transcripts. I used the software Express Scribe, which allows slowing down the pace of the vocal file, and makes the transcription a bit easier. Then, those transcripts were analysed using the software ATLAS.ti. After a first reading of the interviews, I made a list of 38 codes (see Appendix 4: Coding categories). This list was then divided in 3 groups. The first group relates to the first part, dedicated to the individual experiences of female DJs, while the second group relates to the second part of my theoretical framework. Thus, the codes of these two groups relate to concepts and theories that have been mentioned in part 2. However, some other results and topics appeared during the interviews. Some other codes have been written and belong to a third group called “other important topics”. I then made a second reading of the interviews and coded them accordingly.

3.7. Validity and reliability

It is important to mention that some factors might have influenced the findings of the research. For instance, the results cannot necessarily be replicated to other countries, external reliability is weak. The electronic music scene varies significantly from country to country, but also from city to city. Indeed, most interviewees are working as DJs in Paris, where the feminization of the scene is way faster than in other smaller cities. However, this topic was often - not always - discussed during the interviews and a small paragraph will be dedicated to this issue in the results part.

Regarding the validity, all interviewees eventually shared some personal experiences and their honest thoughts on the topic. The transcript validation (all interviewees checked the interview transcripts) also ensures the credibility of their discourse. However, this honesty might raise some ethical concerns as some interviewees were sometimes critical towards other DJs, collectives, or networks. Thus, even though all interviewees gave their authorization for their name to be stated, I sometimes choose to make some fragments of their discourse anonymous in the findings, when I judged those fragments to be potentially harmful for their reputation.

4. Results

The main goal of this research was thus to acknowledge - through the interviews conducted with several DJs or women working within the electronic music industry - the individual and collective experiences of female DJs in France. In this chapter, I will expose the findings resulting from the data analysis I conducted. Parts 4.1 and 4.2 relate to the concepts from the theoretical framework. However, some other interesting and essential ideas that arise during the interviews will be presented in part 4.3.

4.1. The challenges of being a female DJ in E/DM

4.1.1. Working conditions

Respondents were asked to reflect on their working conditions and our discussions led to talk about their personal and professional environment (being part of a production or booking agency), the competition at stake, multiple job-holdings, or wages.

The question about personal life and the “maternity” hypothesis has not been asked to every DJ. It was in the additional question list I sent them, but some of them didn’t reply to it. On the matter, Chloé says:

“Indeed, I think that is still the case today. Many women do not dare to start for fear of not being able to reconcile family life and professional life. However, it is possible to combine the two if desired. For example, German DJ Cinthie has a daughter and continues to go on tour and makes a lot of music.”²

Marianne mentions that it’s always easier to progress in your career if you don’t have children; however she says that this is the same for every field, and that it should also be the same whether you’re a man or a woman. Léa also says that usually, great ambition requires great sacrifices, especially regarding the personal life.

² « Effectivement, je pense que c’est encore le cas aujourd’hui. Beaucoup de femmes n’osent pas se lancer de peur de ne pas pouvoir concilier vie de famille et vie pro. Cependant, il est possible de combiner les deux si on le souhaite. Par exemple, la DJ allemande Cinthie a une fille et elle continue de tourner et de faire beaucoup de musique. »

Finally, another DJ explains that not wanting children also allows her to keep some freedom. But even if she was to have some with her boyfriend, they would share equally the charge of it and the sacrifices that comes with it.

It seems that the maternity hypothesis is less and less relevant, as society is more and more equalitarian when it comes to parenting.

Regarding what Reitsamer and Gavanoas (2016) explain regarding DJs having to become ‘cultural auto-entrepreneurs’ in a neo-liberal context, this is not necessarily the case. Indeed, some interviewees recognize that they have a professional environment (manager, booker), which is detrimental to their career.

First of all, being part of a professional environment gives access to a much wider network. Indeed, it allowed Marianne to expand her network, allowing her to navigate between an underground network and a more institutional and mainstream one. According to her, the coexistence of those two networks is what partly led her to win the *Printemps de Bourges* in 2019, which is a musical springboard that takes place every year in France. Ana also explains that her manager is the one who allowed her to “meet the right people who will make her progress in the scene”³.

Marion explains that having some professional environment releases pressure and stress that comes with the DJing activity. It is also a way to negotiate remuneration more easily and to get better pay rates.

However, one of the disadvantages of being part of a booking agency is a loss of independence and control, Marion explains. Marianne found common ground with her touring agency: she is fully independent when it comes to performing as a DJ, but not when she does live performances⁴. Bernadette is not part of a booking agency, so she still has to find gigs by herself as an auto-entrepreneur. She however belongs to a production agency, which manages all the administrative paperwork.

Reitsamer and Gavanoas (2016) also explained that female DJs – the same as male DJs - face growing competition because of the digitalization of music. Bernadette explains that competition is indeed part of any artist’s work, male or female:

³ « Rencontré les bonnes personnes qui étaient capable de me faire avancer dans le milieu »

⁴ During a DJ set, the DJ mixes pre-recorded music, whereas in a live set the DJ creates new music live, using softwares and/or instruments

“I think the competition will always be there, but not necessarily between girls and boys. It’s just that... when you’re an artist you need to be often reassured, and, indeed, you often look at what artists at the same level are doing, to see if their progress is more or less the same, especially if DJing is your job, as you’re under a lot of stress telling yourself: “Is it gonna work? Will I make a living out of it? For several years?” So you’ll inevitably have a look at what others are doing”.⁵

She is joined by Marianne, who explains as well that when you have managed to negotiate some space, you cling to it. Competition is always there, no matter the genre or the level of recognition.

This topic of the competition came back quite often during the interviews and turned out to be tightly linked to the topic of underrepresentation. Indeed, the underrepresentation of female DJs can be seen as a “competitive advantage” for existing female DJs:

“I climbed the ladder quite quickly because I think we were only a few girls to mix, there were four of us [...] It coincides with the time we started to realize that there were very few women booked, and I found myself at the right time in the right place to benefit from this visibility. So, as soon as a girl was needed on a line-up so that it doesn’t look sexist, one of us was approached, depending on the musical genre of the party.” (Marianne)

Other DJs indeed agreed to say that being a woman in this scene offered them more opportunities. It thus seems that the parity hypothesis developed by Cowen is fading, as female DJs have gained a lot of visibility in the previous years, and there are some increasing efforts to include more women in line-ups.

Multiple job-holding is frequent among the DJs I interviewed. Indeed, six out of the ten DJs interviewed had to manage their DJ activity while working somewhere else. Some DJs have various projects and activities within the realm of electronic music. According to Léa, that’s how most artists can live out of their passion for electronic music: they have either great remunerations, or they have multiple activities linked to electronic music, such as labels, record shops, event organization. Léa herself is combining her DJ activity with a job within the cultural sector, which is flexible enough for her to continue DJing during the

⁵ « Je pense que la compétition sera toujours là mais pas forcément entre les filles et les garçons, c’est juste que quand t’es un artiste t’as besoin d’être souvent rassuré, et c’est vrai que tu vas souvent un peu regarder ce que font les mêmes artistes qui ont à peu près le même niveau que toi pour voir si l’avancée est à peu près la même, surtout si tu en fais ton métier et du coup t’as énormément de stress en te disant ‘est-ce que ça va marcher ? Est-ce que je vais pouvoir en vivre ? Est-ce que je vais pouvoir en vivre pendant plusieurs années ?’, donc forcément tu vas toujours un peu regarder ce que font les autres »

week-ends. She however mentions that without this flexibility, she couldn't have continued, because of the working rhythm.

Indeed, for those whose job is very demanding and exhausting, it is not that easy: Lou had a burn-out when she was working at the Woodbrass call-center. She quitted this job so that she can focus on her musical projects; however, she eventually had to find another job in order to earn enough income. She found a very flexible job with school timetables, which allows her to conciliate music and work, but she also mentions that it would not have been possible with a full-time job. Ana also found a part-time job as a bartender that allowed her to keep her DJ activity while she struggles to get the intermittent status⁶.

Finally, Eva has a job that is not related to electronic music, but she sees DJing as nothing more as a passion and a hobby and does not aim to live from it. It is, for now, the same for Lisa, who works as a bartender in the club where she plays as a resident every weekend:

“I want it to remain a hobby for the moment, even if I actually play quite a lot. I could try but I don't really want to, I'm still very young so I have a lot of time ahead of me”⁷.

When asked whether they are less paid than men, answers were much contrasted. Three out of ten think there is gender inequality regarding wages, six others disagree with that statement, and one of them didn't want to answer.

First of all, among those who think there is a gender difference in wages, Marion explains:

“I think it's obvious, only at a very high level it will perhaps fade or even reverse, but here we are talking about five huge headliners, you see whom I think about. [...] The salary development takes way more time, I see it at times.”⁸

Ana gave a very concrete example of a gig for which she was extremely underpaid compared to the male DJs playing that same night. That night, she was the only girl on the line-up, and she was not even playing during the warm-up⁹:

“And I was paid €200/hour, I asked the other artists how much they were paid for the hour, and they told me €800”¹⁰

⁶ The *intermittent* status is a precarious working status specific to France. It allows some artists – who need to achieve a specific number of hours – to get some unemployment benefits between two contracts.

⁷ « J'ai envie que ça reste un loisir pour l'instant, même si au final je tourne pas trop mal. Je pourrais peut-être essayer mais j'ai pas trop envie, je suis encore vachement jeune donc je me dis que j'ai le temps ... »

⁸ « Je pense que c'est évident, c'est juste à très haut niveau que ça va peut-être s'effacer voire s'inverser, mais là on parle de cinq énorme têtes d'affiche, tu vois à qui je pense. Mais oui à mon niveau, carrément. [...] L'évolution au niveau du salaire est beaucoup plus longue, moi je le vois à certains moments »

⁹ The warm-up DJ plays at the beginning of the party in order to gently start the night before the headliners play. He or she is thus usually a bit less “famous” than the DJs playing after him or her.

¹⁰ « Et j'étais payée 200€ l'heure, j'ai demandé aux autres artistes combien ils étaient payés pour l'heure du coup, et ils m'ont dit 800 »

Lou also had similar experiences where she was underpaid and had to play for almost nothing in exchange for gaining visibility.

However, six DJs explained that they don't feel like women are less paid than men. Marianne, Ana, Léa and Eva argue that what differentiates two DJs' salary are the fame and the notoriety, not the gender. However, Marianne notes that you're more likely to be famous when you're a man. Indeed, Lisa mentions:

“I've never noticed any big difference in terms of wages, however there a lot of other inequalities”¹¹

Another DJ (anonymous) has another perspective on the matter:

“It's almost even easier for me to have more money. Because today there are a lot of people looking to highlight women, and as there are few women in the scenes, well... bookers manage to push prices up a bit. But ... yeah no, well, I didn't feel I was discriminated against, moneywise.”¹²

Scarlet, chose not to have a clear answer on this topic, as she explains that most of her gigs take place within the queer scene, which aims to give visibility to women, non-binary or queer people. So, she cannot compare what she gains with her male heterosexual counterparts.

From these results, it seems that the working conditions are not so different whether you're a man or a woman in the electronic music industry. Difficulties faced by female DJs are more or less the same as the difficulties faced by male DJs. It also seems that Cowen's maternal or parity hypotheses tend to fade. On the contrary, being a female can also be seen as an advantage today, where the demand for female DJs increases more than the supply. It seems that the working conditions don't form barriers that prevent women from pursuing a career as a DJ.

4.1.2. Technology and gender

Mastering the technology linked to their DJ practice was not an issue per se. What is common to all the DJs interviewed is that they all learned by themselves in a DIY manner.

¹¹ « J'ai jamais trouvé qu'il y ait une très grosse différence au niveau des cachets, après par contre il y a plein d'autres inégalités. »

¹² « Enfin c'est presque même plus facile pour moi d'avoir plus de thunes. Parce qu'aujourd'hui y'a pleins de gens qui cherchent à mettre en avant les femmes, etc, et comme y'a peu de femmes sur les plateaux, ben les bookers arrivent à faire un peu monter les prix. Mais... ouais non enfin, je me sentais pas trop discriminée par rapport à l'argent en tout cas. »

Something that came up a few times is that mastering this technology is the key to reach autonomy. Océane explains:

“Well, I always had this tomboy and geek side, so I was interested in what was reserved for men, for the sake of autonomy in the first place, because if we leave it to men, then we’re still dependent on them [...] I realized very early on that the secret of autonomy was to have control over its means of production, a bit like in the capitalist system where there are workers, and those who have the means of production, and if you do not have control over the means of production you will always be dependent on a boss, so that’s what I applied in music and that’s why I took a training course in sound engineering, so that I don’t need anyone”¹³

Léa as well decided to learn the functioning of the technology and the material linked to the DJ practice when she was organizing events – before being a DJ herself; for the sake of autonomy and in order to better understand people she worked with. Before becoming a DJ, Marion was a drummer, and she decided to start mixing because electronic music offers independence and autonomy. Lisa and Marianne underline that the internet and the wide availability of DJing tutorials make the learning process accessible and easy nowadays. However, this DIY method is also longer than learning with someone else:

“I learned everything on my own but now I realize that it would have been better to do this with someone because in the end, it took a long time. And also, at the time I lacked confidence, and I preferred to do that on my own and to assume my mistakes alone because I was maybe a bit afraid of what other people think” (Léa)

Several DJs mention that they indeed wanted to learn alone, on their own, away from other people’s looks. However, the reason why Marianne chose to learn by herself, autonomously, is a bit different:

“I always had this DIY approach, but in hindsight I think it’s also that I didn’t want to ask anything, you know. I didn’t want anyone to help me; I didn’t want to owe anyone, because when you’re a girl and you know how to mix, the first thing you are asked is which guy taught you, you know”¹⁴.

¹³ « Bah moi j’ai toujours eu ce côté un peu garçon manqué un peu geek, et du coup ce qui était réservé aux hommes j’ai jamais bien m’y intéresser, par souci d’autonomie déjà, parce que si on laisse ça aux hommes on est toujours dépendant d’eux. [...] Je pense que en fait j’ai vraiment pris conscience très tôt que c’était le secret de l’autonomie d’avoir la main sur ses moyens de production, un peu comme dans le système capitaliste y’a les travailleurs et ceux qui ont les moyens de production, et si t’as pas la main sur les moyens de production tu seras toujours dépendant d’un patron, du coup c’est un peu ce que j’ai appliqué dans la musique et c’est pour ça que j’ai fait une formation en son, en ingénierie du son, pour vraiment ne pas avoir besoin de quelqu’un. »

¹⁴ « J’ai toujours eu cette démarche autodidacte, mais avec le recul je pense que c’est aussi que j’avais pas envie de demander tu vois, j’avais pas envie qu’on m’aide, j’avais pas envie de devoir quoi que ce soit à qui

This joins Gadir's idea (2016) that merit is often attributed to presumed male mentors. Chloé also shares a similar experience she went through while she was in the backstage of a club. The sound technician came to her and asked "Whose girlfriend are you?"¹⁵ as if she was necessarily here thanks to one of the male DJs or organizers. The same thing happened to Léa while she was organizing an event.

What Marianne says reveals that even though technology is not a gatekeeper *per se*, the relationship between technology and manliness is still strong. She also explains that even the design of the decks and controllers - with all the flashing buttons - is made to look like something virile and impressive. But for most of the DJs I interviewed, they were not that impressed, on the contrary. Marianne also mentions an example of a stage manager who said to another technician, right in front of her - and speaking about her:

"What is nice with girls is that they have small synthesizers"

Moreover, the situations of mansplaining Bloustien (2016) mentioned are still a reality for most female DJs, even though there are still a few for which these situations were exceptional, or never happened. Lou explains that these situations, where the DJ or technician just before her touches the decks are recurrent and irritating. She adds that they would never dare to do the same with a male DJ. The same happened to another DJ, who did the soundcheck for her even though she didn't ask for it, and did a terrible job. Once again she adds that it would not have happened if she were a man.

As a result, some DJs often felt compelled to prove their legitimacy and to prove themselves in situations where their male counterparts wouldn't have to. Marion explains:

"It takes a little longer to prove yourself, though [...] and we'll always start from the premise that you're less skilled than them - even if they don't know - rather than more skilled. You'll always be a little devalued."¹⁶

When Lou worked as a salesperson at Woodbrass¹⁷, it happened a few times that she approached a new customer proposing her help for choosing their equipment and that this customer refused her help, asking for a male seller. Ana told me a story about a New Years'

que ce soit, parce que quand t'es une meuf et que tu sais mixer, le premier truc qu'on te demande c'est quel mec t'as appris tu vois »

¹⁵ « T'es la copine de qui ? »

¹⁶ « Pour faire ses preuves c'est un peu plus long quand même [...] et on partira toujours du postulat que tu sais moins bien faire qu'eux de base, même s'ils en savent rien, plutôt que d'entrée de jeu tu saches mieux faire qu'eux. En fait tu seras toujours un peu dévalorisée. »

¹⁷ Woodbrass is a shop specialized in musical instruments and DJ equipment.

Eve party she was at last year. There were decks available for mixing, so she thought she could plug her USB key and play. The “owners” of the decks came to her with a pretentious voice and were like “so you’re a DJ?” as if they didn’t believe it. She quickly understood that, and she asked them where they usually play. When eventually they asked this question to her, she could say that she played in that or that club. All of sudden, they were really impressed and their vision of her changed immediately. Now she could play. But she had to prove herself and earn their respect before, whereas she is convinced that if she were a man, she could have played directly without anyone doubting her abilities and skills. Indeed, some people still apparently find it surprising that female DJs can be good at it; it is very commonplace that they receive remarks such as: “you play great, for a girl”¹⁸ (Léa, Marion, Eva) or “for a girl, you totally crushed it”¹⁹ (Marianne)

Lisa also agrees that mansplaining situations are not as frequent if you ask the technicians to leave you alone and prove to them you can do your thing. But once again, you first have to prove it and assert yourself. This idea is also developed by Marianne:

“When you're a woman you have to work twice as hard to get noticed, and be at the same level of recognition of a man, you know?”²⁰

It thus seems that the technology linked to the DJ practice is today more accessible and easy to learn that a few years ago, especially with the digitalization of the practice and the wide availability of resources on the internet. The link between technology and manliness is fragile but still present. There are still many examples of situations where female DJs are being mansplained their work which leads situations where they have to prove themselves more than their male counterparts. Many say that once you’ve proven yourself then those situations become scarcer, but this gain of legitimacy often requires much more time if you’re a woman. Marianne, speaking about male DJs, adds: “We're not going to question their legitimacy as an artist because they've only been making music for four years, you know.”²¹

¹⁸ « Tu joues bien, pour une meuf »

¹⁹ « Pour une nana, tu les as bien niqué »

²⁰ « Quand t’es une femme tu dois faire deux fois plus d’efforts pour être remarquée, et être au niveau de reconnaissance d’un homme tu vois »

²¹ « On va pas remettre en question leur légitimité en tant qu’artiste parce que ça fait que quatre ans qu’il font de la musique, tu vois »

4.1.3. Identity

On top of stereotypes linked directly to the technology, there are other obstacles that female DJs have to face, such as sexist behaviors, hypersexualization, the lack of role models, etc.

- *Gender stereotypes and sexism*

Regarding what McClary (1991) calls the “feminine aesthetic” regarding sounds, the respondents agreed on the fact that musical aesthetic is not dependent on the gender of the musician. Bernadette adds as an example that she couldn’t make a difference between a set realized by a man or a woman if she’s not watching it. Léa had similar reasoning:

“It's funny because I was talking about it with some friends yesterday, who asked me kind of the same question "is there a female hand? ». In that case, it would be very interesting to do a blind-test with tracks from female and male producers, to see if we can hear a difference. We could do the same with a DJ set blind test, and guess if it's a man or a woman? Honestly, can we really hear it?”²²

If the feminine aesthetic is not a thing in the eyes of the respondents, the issue of hypersexualization is still present, and complex. When I asked about the twin difficulties mentioned by Abtan (2016), explaining that female DJs often have a choice between sexualizing themselves or staying invisible, most DJs agreed with the statement.

Aurélie remembers a DJ friend of her who received a message from a guy who said to her: “you should draw more attention to yourself, you'd sell more tracks, you'd be more booked.”²³ She also notes that today, huge festivals female headliners all have the same hetero-normal profile:

“I don't really have a problem with the fact that they're sexualized and feminine, the problem is the global representation; and in fact, the programmers remain guys, and what

²² « C'est drôle parce que j'en parlais avec des potes hier, qui me posaient un peu la même question « est ce qu'il y a une patte féminine ? ». Dans ce cas-là ça serait très intéressant de faire un blind test avec des tracks de meufs et des tracks de mecs, est ce qu'on sent vraiment une différence ? Pareil blind test de dj sets, devinez si c'est un mec ou une meuf ? Franchement est ce que ça se sent à ce point ? »

²³ « Tu ferais mieux de te mettre en valeur, tu vendrais plus de tracks, tu serais plus bookée »

really bothers me is that I don't find all the different types of women, and I mostly see only ultra-hyped and ultra-good-looking women”²⁴

As a result, there is always the stereotype that some female DJs managed to be successful because they're beautiful, because they're sexy, Camille explains. Bernadette agrees by noting that whenever a woman is on stage, people wonder whether she's here for her talent or something else. According to her, it's more difficult to be taken seriously because of that, and it can create a feeling of illegitimacy.

The attention they receive from the audience as well is distorted. Chloé notes that she receives a lot of messages on social networks from guys telling her she's beautiful and asking for her number and other personal questions that have nothing to do with music. Léa also had some similar experiences:

“I remember I was playing at *La Rotonde* with a friend and we felt like pieces of meat. We were confronted with looks from some men in the audience, that made us a bit uncomfortable; we thought ‘we're not there to be watched, we're there to play our music and for people to have a good evening. We're not here to look pretty.’”²⁵

This is also a recurrent issue for Lisa:

“Yeah it has already happened to me that people don't listen to music, they come up to me at the end of my set to congratulate me and tell me right away ‘yeah, you have everything going for you, you're beautiful’. But it's not you should say to a DJ after its set, I'd rather people listen to my set and give me their opinion on it than to talk about my image, my style...”²⁶

Marianne makes an interesting statement to quantify what she said about hypersexualization. According to her, there is a real difference between heterosexual and

²⁴ « J'ai pas vraiment de problème avec le fait qu'elles soient sexualisées et féminines, le problème c'est une représentation globale, et en fait les programmeurs restent des mecs, et ce qui me dérange en fait, c'est de pas retrouver toutes les classes de nanas, et toutes les normes de nanas, et de voir toujours des meufs ultra lookées, ultra bonnes »

²⁵ « J'ai le souvenir à la Rotonde avec une copine où on avait l'impression d'être des bouts de viande. On a été confrontées à des regards qui nous mettaient un peu mal à l'aise de la part de certains hommes dans le public, on se disaient mais en fait on est pas là pour être matées, on est là pour passer notre son et que les gens passent une bonne soirée. On n'est pas là pour faire joli en fait »

²⁶ « Ca m'est déjà arrivé ouais, que les gens écoutent rien à ce que je fais, ils viennent à la fin me féliciter et me parler tout de suite de “ouais en plus t'as tout pour toi t'es belle”. Mais c'est pas un truc qu'on va dire après un set, je préférerais qu'on écoute mon set et qu'on me donne son avis dessus au lieu de tout de suite me parler de mon image, de mon style ... »

lesbian DJs. The latter gain more easily recognition and legitimacy as they are way less subject to hypersexualization in male-dominated environments:

“Lesbians are a bit less of a woman, so it's no big deal. They're not part of the group of women you can hope hooking up with, they're friends, they're male allies, so there's no worry about them being there, they're part of your "male gang". But on the other hand, straight female DJs, they are... we question their position as women. No DJ is being bashed as much as a DJ who is beautiful, straight, but who is not available because she's famous and you can't have her, you know.”²⁷

She takes the example of Nina Kraviz, who constantly receives tons of negative comments about her, her music, her appearance. After years of experience, some people still don't take her seriously even though she has achieved a lot more than many other DJs “because she has the face of a Russian model” (Marianne). Ana also mentions that her male friends often say that Nina Kraviz is successful because she looks like a model.

Most women are not entirely pessimistic regarding this issue and feel like things are changing, mentalities are evolving:

“It's still very present, but fortunately it's less and less the case, because it's ultra-reductive. [...] As there are more and more projects by women, there are also a lot of different representations coming up, you know, and that's cool. There are not only two categories, and there are a lot of different profiles, I like that.”²⁸ (Marion)

According to Lou, the difference also lies within the kind of scene you're in. She makes a difference between underground scenes and commercial scenes, in which behaviors can be quite different. Another part will be dedicated to this dichotomy underground/mainstream (4.3.3), which is sometimes necessary to untangle gender issues at work within the E/DM scene.

²⁷ « Les femmes lesbiennes elles sont un peu moins des femmes, du coup c'est moins grave. Elles font pas partie du game des femmes que tu peux espérer choper, c'est des potes, c'est des alliées masculins donc y'a pas de soucis qu'elles soient là, elles font partie de ta « clique virile ». Mais par contre les DJ femmes hétéros, elles sont... On questionne leur position de femme justement. De femme objet, de femme disponible... Aucune DJ ne se fait autant basher qu'une DJ qui est belle, hétéro, mais qui n'est pas disponible parce qu'elle est connue et que tu peux pas la pécho tu vois. »

²⁸ « Mais il y a encore vachement de ça, on s'en éloigne heureusement peu à peu, parce que c'est ultra réducteur. Mais je trouve que c'est bien... Comme y'a de plus en plus de projets de meufs, y'a aussi pleins de représentations différentes qui arrivent, tu vois, et ça c'est cool. Y'a pas que deux catégories, et y'a pleins de profils de plus en plus variés, ça ça me plaît »

Regarding media representation, most female DJs agreed that specialized media – such as Trax, Manifesto 21, Tsugi, or PWFm – are doing a great job in featuring more women in their articles, but also in a more clever way than before. “Of course they feature more boys but... it’s not a feminist media so it’s more complicated” explains Marianne, while highlighting that they have more and more articles about feminism, queer or female collectives, etc. Chloé also noticed an evolution in the previous years: she explains that from the moment she started to be interested in electronic music until now, the media has tackled such questions way more frequently. Lou, who has been DJing for many more years, arrived at the same conclusion. Marion adds that the female DJ has somehow been ‘normalized’ in the media, in that they are presented as DJs first, instead of *female* DJs.

Camille works at La Petite, which is an association aiming for gender equality in the cultural sector. La Petite created a few years ago its own media, called Girls Don’t Cry. She explains that its creation came after assessing that female artists were not represented enough in the mainstream media. Léa and Ana also reproach the media for not representing enough women, and that media often focus only on the “superstars”. This ‘superstar effect’ will be discussed more precisely in part 4.3.3.

- ***Resilience***

The previous part shows that sexist behaviors and stereotypes are still anchored in the field of electronic music, even though there have been many evolutions. A recurrent topic that came back a lot during the interviews – even though I didn’t specifically ask questions about it – is the one of resilience. In order to pay no heed to such behaviors and stereotypes, most of the DJs I interviewed told me they had to persevere. Firstly, they had to persevere because it’s not easy to negotiate some space in electronic music, whether you’re a man or a woman, but they also had to persevere in order to be taken seriously in this male-dominated environment. Resilience and perseverance can thus be seen as essential to the success of female DJs.

Marianne takes the example of the female precursors of electronic music in France – such as Cardini, Chloé, DJ Sextoy, etc. – and explain that it took them a very long time to gain the recognition they have today and that they didn’t give up. When we talked about technology, Léa told me that it was important for an aspiring DJ to believe in herself and her abilities:

“We have to stop telling ourselves that we're not going to make it. That's something that can drag people down.”²⁹

Marion also says that it's important not getting flustered, especially when you're a woman, otherwise it can prove to be demoralizing:

“It happened so much to me to be surrounded only by male DJs or organizers. And, hum... Don't let yourself be intimidated [...] It's hard at first because you're not self-confident, it's normal, you're new to the game ... And this feeling can last for years when you're a girl. Now I have the chance to be more experienced in the field and to have people following me, I have my public, and I feel much more legitimate [...] but, indeed, it happens very often.”³⁰

Ana and Lisa also agree by saying there is no choice but to assert yourself in this game, and sometimes work twice as hard and persevere (Anonymous DJ).

This shows that resilience and perseverance are entirely part of the life of women DJs, especially at the beginning of their careers.

- *Gender performativity*

In order to approach this topic, I spoke to the DJs about the statements made by some female DJs in the documentary « Move the needle » (see part 2. Theoretical Framework). I tried to understand how they usually construct their “front stage” appearance.

Marianne agrees that some female DJs probably dress down on purpose, even though in her case she does not necessarily think about her appearance that much and usually dresses as in everyday life. Eva also has a sober look so she keeps it simple, but she agrees that most DJs dress down probably to avoid remarks about their appearance. She takes the example of DJ Deborah de Luca, who has a very feminine look, with lots of make-up, and she's constantly being criticized for that. Women thus have to dress down and think ahead of their stage appearance to keep the audience from being focused on anything more than their music. Ana indeed considers that a sober look is also a defensive strategy to avoid certain behaviors or remarks. Lisa adds:

²⁹ « Faut s'enlever un peu ces barrières de se dire qu'on va pas y arriver. Ça c'est un truc qui peut tirer certaines personnes vers le bas. »

³⁰ « Alors ça ça m'est tellement arrivé si tu savais, d'être entouré que de gars dans les djs ou d'orgas gars. Et euh... Faut pas se laisser impressionner. [...] Au début c'est dur parce que t'es pas sûre de toi en fait, c'est normal, t'arrives dans le game... Et ça peut prendre du temps hein, ça peut durer des années cette sensation par contre, hein, quand t'es une meuf. Donc après maintenant j'ai la chance d'être plus installée dans le paysage et d'avoir des gens qui me suivent, d'avoir un certain public et du coup je me sens beaucoup plus légitime [...] mais c'est vrai que ça arrive très fréquemment. »

“If for example during the summer we perform wearing shorts or a skirt, it will be said right away that we use our bodies to gain visibility even though it's not the case, whereas a guy who plays shirtless will never be reprimanded”³¹

As a result, Eva and Lisa regret that most female DJs have to be a bit of a tomboy to be left in peace.

Chloé couldn't tell whether her stage appearance was thought in order to avoid hypersexualization *per se* or not, as she is someone for whom people's looks matter in general. However, she also adds that she doesn't necessarily overthink her stage appearance because she has a sober look usually:

“Before going on stage [...] I'm going to dress as I want, but as I want can also be influenced by the society that has always... [...] I mean, if I was someone who wore very short or very revealing clothes, then maybe I'd think about wearing those before going onstage. But as in general I dress quite in a classic way, soberly I guess, so I don't think too much about it.”³²

When she started DJing, Lea found it difficult to dress in a very feminine way, with short tops and high heels, in which she felt very uncomfortable. She stopped doing it until she started to play surrounded with members of her female collective called ‘Bande de Filles’³³:

“I've managed to re-appropriate my own body and my femininity in part thanks to 'Bande de Filles'. When I'm LeLeon I feel sexy, I feel good, I feel beautiful and most importantly I do it for me, and I love it.”³⁴

Another DJ notes that the way she chooses her stage appearance depends on her mood. On days she doesn't want to be looked at, she'll wear something simple, but if she feels comfortable enough to wear something fancier she'll do it.

In a nutshell, female DJs know that the “male gaze” implies a sexualized way of looking at them, objectify them. The front stage appearance is not necessarily a big deal for those

³¹ « Si par exemple l'été on fait un set en étant en short ou en jupe tout de suite on va utiliser son corps pour avoir des vues alors que pas du tout, un mec qui mixe torse nu il va se faire réprimander »

³² « Avant de monter sur scène [...] je vais m'habiller comme j'en ai envie, mais comme j'en ai envie peut aussi être induit par la société qui m'a toujours... [...] Je veux dire si j'étais quelqu'un qui met des trucs très courts ou très décolletés, peut-être que je réfléchirais à mettre ça avant de monter sur scène. Mais comme de base je m'habille quand même assez « classique », sobrement on va dire, et ben c'est vrai que du coup je réfléchis pas trop. »

³³ Could be translated by « Girl Gang »

³⁴ « J'ai réussi à me réapproprier mon corps et ma féminité en partie grâce à Bande de Filles. Quand je suis LeLeon je me sens sexy, je me sens bien, je me sens belle et surtout je le fais pour moi, et ça c'est le kif »

who have a neutral style – and as Marianne notes: “the neutral is often masculine”. It can still be difficult for women to dress more feminine, as they want to avoid being objectified or prevent people from saying they got to this point thanks to their look. However, there are some situations or moods in which women feel empowered, and confident enough to dress just as they want without caring about other’s looks. It can be, for instance, the case within the queer scene, which is often safer. It can also be the case for women who DJ with their female collective; I’ll go back to the benefits of the latter in part 4.2.

- ***Role models***

Some DJs explained that the presence of some female DJs on the scene was really important in their eyes and for their careers. Marianne remembers the first time she saw a girl perform – Chloé. She explains that just the fact that she was here and visible was decisive for her and adds:

“The more women get booked, the more women think they can get booked as well, and the less likely they are to feel illegitimate to be there, as a woman, you know.”³⁵

Marion’s role models were also the female pioneers of electronic music – Chloé, Cardini, and Miss Kittin, for instance – with whom she could identify. She explains it was indeed hard to tell yourself that it’s possible to make it, as they were only a few when she started DJing. Now she has seen some evolutions and an increasing number of girls in studios or behind the decks, which can in turn inspire and encourage other women. An anonymous DJ reveals that seeing women you can identify to or even talk to helps not feeling lonely. Lou also mentions the same role models – Cardini, Sextoy... - who, according to her, paved the way to the new generation of female DJs.

Lisa mentions Nina Kraviz as one of the multiple models she had. She doesn’t necessarily like her music that much, however, she was impressed by how she handled all the criticism she received.

4.1.4. Social capital and social network

Some respondents agreed that it takes time and effort to build a valuable network within the scene. When Marianne moved from Lyon to Paris, she had to create a new local

³⁵ « Plus y’aura de femmes bookées, plus y’aura de femmes qui se diront qu’elles pourront être bookées, et moins elles se sentiront illégitimes d’être là en tant que femme, tu vois. »

network and it can be discouraging sometimes. Léa explained that it took her time and many sacrifices to expand her network.

But it is more than necessary because every woman agreed that the network is essential for career progression and for getting gigs. Marianne explains that if you want to play in clubs today in Paris, you're obliged to be part of a label or a collective. Bernadette indeed agrees that being part of a DJ collective helped her getting gigs.

The boys' club is still alive. Marianne explains that her network has become much more professional in the last two years, and is thus inherently more masculine because in general, men have more responsibilities. Camille also notes that women are progressively excluded when we're going up the professionalization ladder. She is the only artistic director of a musical organization in Toulouse, and when she began this job she felt quite lonely. So, if the number of female DJs increases more and more, the working environment (labels, booking agencies, production...) is predominantly male. It is also the case of Marion, who says that around 85% of the labels she signs are labels run by men, and that most of the time she's the only girl in the middle of the boys' club. The thing is that they still make the decisions about programming, label signing and thus can be considered as gatekeepers. I'll address this question in the last part of the results (4.3.4). Some of the DJs I interviewed indeed entered the scene through their male friends. It is however not necessarily the case for the DJs who started in the queer or lesbian scene.

As an answer to this, more and more female initiatives are emerging:

“The boys' club has had its time, and if the only way to fight against it is to make a girls' club, then we'll make a girls' club.” (Léa)

The next part will focus on the latter, on the activities of such initiatives, their advantages, and their challenges.

4.2. Collective female strategies

In the last few years, many initiatives have emerged to bring together women working in the field of electronic music, through networks or collectives. I will also mention some queer collectives or networks, as they also aim to give some space to minorities and thus also propose an alternative to the heterosexual/cis-gendered boys' club. In the following parts, I will focus on the following communities:

- *Bande de Filles (BDF)*: collective of female DJs
- *Woman's speech (WS)*: online platform (a Facebook group) for female and queer DJs

- *Conspiration*: collective of queer DJs. It doesn't exist anymore.
- *Discoquette*: Queer and drag collective
- *La Petite/ Girl's don't cry (GDC)*: La Petite is an association from Toulouse aiming to support women working in the cultural sector. In 2016 they launched their own media and label Girls Don't Cry, with which they – among other things – organize electronic music nights to give visibility to female artists.
- *Wicked Girls (WC)*: Female collective/ event planner
- *Move Ur Gambettes (MUG)*: Concept created by Chloé (Bernadette) in which she proposes mix workshops for women.
- *L'appel du 8 mars (A8M)*

4.2.1. Women-only ecosystems in E/DM

- **Activities of female and queer communities**

The activities carried out by those collectives and networks are multiple. They all do some event production in which they mostly propose all-female and/or queer line-ups. As Océane puts it when speaking about *Conspiration*:

“The goal was to organize parties in which we were already autonomous, we were able to create our own parties and we didn't depend on a booker to invite us to play. We could create entire line-ups.”³⁶

Indeed, organizing events allowed those networks and collective to give visibility to female/queer artists.

Some of them - such as BDF, WS, A8M – propose some networking and/or panel discussions about women working in electronic music, allowing girls belonging to these groups to meet like-minded DJs and expand their network.

Some offer some mix workshops for women (*Wicked Girls*, *Move Ur Gambettes*) or formations and professional training (*La Petite*).

Finally, they all take advantage of their online presence to share information on their websites or pages. This can for example take the form of sharing articles, podcasts, or artists pages, in order for people to discover female/queer artists and highlight their work.

³⁶ « Le but c'était d'organiser des soirées où déjà on était autonomes, on pouvait créer nos propres soirées et on n'avait pas besoin qu'un booker nous propose de jouer. On pouvait proposer des line-ups entiers. »

- **Benefits of female and queer communities**

These communities have a lot of positive effects on the feminization of the scene: they offer opportunities, visibility, sorority, inspirational, and sharing/ networking spaces.

First of all, being part of a female or queer collective offers recognition and easier access to booking offers, like any other collective. As explained by Marianne before, in Paris - but in other cities as well - you have to be in a collective if you want to play. She adds that observation partly led to the creation of the queer collective *Conspiration*. Marion, who was part of the same collective, agrees that it indeed allows progressing further within the scene.

Moreover, such communities offer higher visibility. They indeed all share the desire to put more women of stage and get their voices heard. This visibility can be offered through the organization of events, but it can also be online: for instance, Girl's Don't Cry shares on its Facebook page one different female artist³⁷ every day since its creation in 2016. Woman's speech has also developed some Podcast series featuring female artists. The anonymous DJ has a radio show in which she invites female DJs to share the show with her. Léa hopes that this increased visibility and the activities led by *Bande De Filles* will lead to "normalize" the female DJ. Océane notes that people may remember better collectives – especially if they're female or queer – rather than individuals; it draws more attention.

Another important advantage of such communities is the sorority it creates. They offer a safe space that allows women to "progress in a benevolent setting"³⁸ (Aurélie). Camille, who organizes the Girls Don't Cry parties in Toulouse, asked for feedback from the female DJs who were invited. She sent some of them to me; what stood out is that the 'Girls don't cry' parties provided the DJs a safe place where they could feel self-confident. Other DJs indeed revealed that belonging to a female network or collective increased their confidence. I already mentioned that Léa felt more confident to dress in a feminine way when she is surrounded by her female DJ friends. An anonymous respondent also explained she could let herself go more easily in that case. She herself organized some parties where she invited female DJs on stage with her. Before the party she has a kind of 'ritual' during which she spends the afternoon with them, going to the hammam, dining together. She explains it

³⁷ In all areas of creation, not necessarily in electronic music.

³⁸ « Evoluer avec une totale bienveillance »

creates some sorority and confidence which allows the women to completely let go on stage. Non-mixity spaces are sometimes very important in the construction of sorority and self-confidence. Camille explains:

“I believe a lot in non-mixity, and we see it in our actions, we've been practicing non-mixity for 15 years, it's working very well and the group dynamics are not the same when there's a cis-man or when there isn't.”³⁹

She adds that non-mixity brings a feeling of legitimacy and a space where people can express themselves freely and listen to each other. When Chloé organizes her DJing workshops, they're usually in non-mixity as well, and she explains that it is very reassuring for women. Marianne also agrees that non-mixity is essential for such workshops.

Such communities are also essential for inspiring other women. We have seen in part 4.3.1 that role modeling and the increasing visibility of female DJs can encourage others to follow the same path. When speaking about mix workshops, Marianne also adds:

*“It's important that women do the transmission, because what the fuck does it feel good to tell you that you could get to where she is, you know?”*⁴⁰

Léa also explains that belonging to *Woman's speech* was very inspirational, as it provides some kind of role models who show that it's possible to make it. In return, it is also what she wants to offer through *Bande de filles*:

“In fact, we also created *Bande de Filles* because at the beginning, the three of us didn't really "dare" to play. Including myself. And if now I have the right tool to tell other girls that they can be bold, well, that's for the best because I would have liked someone to come and tell this to me, even though in the end I did it on by myself.”⁴¹

Finally, one of the most important benefits of those communities is meeting like-minded women with whom you can share experiences and skills. Ana explained that she wished she had met some female producers in the beginning and that those communities allow meeting the right people to ask the right questions. Some of those communities (*Woman's speech*,

³⁹ « Je crois énormément en la non-mixité, et on voit dans nos actions, on pratique la non-mixité depuis 15 ans et ça marche très bien et c'est pas les mêmes dynamiques qui se créent dans un groupe quand y a un mec cis ou quand y en a pas. »

⁴⁰ « C'est important que ça soit des femmes qui fassent la transmission, parce que putain qu'est-ce que ça te fait du bien de te dire que tu pourrais arriver là où elle en est tu vois »

⁴¹ « En fait on a aussi cette envie là car toutes les trois au début on a eu ce truc de 'on ose pas'. Moi la première. Bah en fait voilà si là aujourd'hui j'ai l'outil pour dire à d'autres filles qu'elles peuvent oser, bah c'est tant mieux parce que j'aurai tellement aimé que quelqu'un arrive pour me le dire, même si bon au final j'ai fait toute seule. »

A&M) for example organized some panel discussions, which allows freeing the voice of female DJs. *Bande de filles* created a Facebook chat where there are around 15 female DJs. Chloé is part of this chat, and she explains that it is a safe space where you can ask questions without being judged.

They also provide the feeling that those women are not alone. Aurélie is part of a mentoring program called MEWEM⁴² which aims to develop female entrepreneurship in the musical industry. She explains that the experience of being surrounded by like-minded women working in the same field as she does was life-changing. Chloé's project *Move Ur Gambettes* was partly created because she realized she didn't know any other girl DJing in Grenoble, so it was also a way for her to meet other women sharing the same passion.

Female and queer communities thus provide opportunities and visibility, models and inspirations, while promoting sharing – of information, skills, and network – between their members. They contribute to give greater confidence through the sorority it generates.

- **Queer and lesbian scenes**

As Marion puts it, “Feminism and queer issues are closely connected. Very often, feminist collectives are also queer and LGBT, everything is connected”⁴³.

Indeed, queer and lesbian scenes have done a lot for the feminization of the scene in France. An example that came back quite often in the interviews is the former club called *Pulp*⁴⁴. Marianne explains: “even if you're not a lesbian, the lesbian club is intrinsically a feminist space, where women could exist as artists or – I don't know – technicians...”⁴⁵ She adds that according to her, in the history of feminism, lesbians have always led the way for progress. She herself started her career as a DJ in the lesbian and queer scene. She managed eventually to play in other scenes as well now, but she is very grateful towards where she comes from - the LGBT scene - which allowed her to exist as an artist. Océane indeed agrees that the queer scene is decisive when it comes to discovering up and coming talents.

The *Pulp* closed its doors in 2007. It was one of the rare lesbian clubs dedicated partly to electronic music in Paris. Lou regrets this period, as it was, according to her a kind of

⁴² Mentoring Program for Women Entrepreneurs in Music Industry

⁴³ « C'est étroitement lié hein, le féminisme et lutte queer et lgbt, c'est clair. Et souvent les collectifs féministes ont quelque chose de LGBT ou de queer, enfin tu vois tout est connecté. »

⁴⁴ Already mentioned in the theoretical framework (Part 2.2.1)

⁴⁵ « Le club lesbien était un espace féministe par essence, parce que les femmes pouvaient y exister en tant qu'artiste et en tant que... je sais pas, que techniciennes, enfin j'en sais rien... »

‘golden age’, where it was easy and there was no star-system as there is today. Marion, Marianne, and Eva mention the importance of the lesbian and feminist collective Barbi(e)turix for the feminization of the scene, as the latter organizes the ‘Wet For Me’ parties which are extremely popular and always feature female or queer DJs.

Moreover, the DJs who are usually playing in LGBT scenes are less subject to the issues mentioned in part 4.1.3. Eva is the only girl of a queer/ drag collective called Discoquette:

“And I mix a lot in the LGBT scene, so... I didn't get a lot of remarks.”⁴⁶

As explained before, Marianne also argues that there is a huge difference between lesbian and heterosexual DJs when it comes to recognition and legitimacy (see part 4.3.1) and that it may be easier for lesbian DJs.

4.2.2. Challenges

If these female and queer communities have many advantages and allow female DJs to negotiate some space for themselves, they also face many challenges. During the interviews, four topics were discussed, namely identity (feminist and queer identities), tokenism, all-female line-ups and the paradox of women’s advancement (Reitsamer, 2012, 2016)

- ***Identity and self-labeling***

In the theoretical framework, it was explained that the women-only spaces which have been studied in the past by other researchers had troubles defining themselves as ‘feminist’, even though their agenda is feminist.

Some respondents indeed agreed that being openly feminist is not necessarily a good thing. Chloé explains:

“In fact, there was a struggle but it was more low-key, and I feel that in the last few years it has taken on a new dimension, I mean... The struggle is getting louder, and as a result it is less well-received. And you indeed have to be careful... So I don't know, it creates more conflicts, I have the feeling.”⁴⁷

⁴⁶ « Et je mixe beaucoup dans le milieu LGBT, donc... on m’a pas trop fait de remarques »

⁴⁷ « En fait y’avait une lutte mais qui était plus discrète, et je sens que ces dernières années ça prend des proportions, enfin... La lutte se fait plus entendre, et elle est moins bien perçue du coup. Et c’est vrai qu’il faut faire attention... Du coup je sais pas, ça rajoute encore des différends, j’ai l’impression. »

She adds that some men can indeed negatively receive those initiatives and that it is sometimes hard to start a discussion about gender issues, and that they are going to say things like: “Well she’s a feminist, she pisses me off”⁴⁸ and are not going to listen to her in the end.

Léa also adds that it’s evident that *Bande de Filles* is feminist as it aims for gender equality, however, she doesn’t like to say it is:

“We just think it's obvious enough as it is and we don't want to make a big deal out of it...”⁴⁹

Lou also considers that A8M is not feminist, but rather ‘activist’.

Aurélié has created *Wicked Girls* in 2011. She explains that at the time they didn’t really feel comfortable saying they were feminists, because it was seen as an insult. She says that at the beginning it was badly received, especially from the male audience or DJs. However, there has been an evolution and now they feel totally at ease with defining themselves as feminists, because they have read and learned about it. Camille explains that *La Petite* as well has no problem positioning themselves as a feminist association and that they publicly express their opinions on the matter. They have been present in the scene in Toulouse for many years and their strong feminist opinions never shocked anyone.

Sometimes, the situation is the opposite. One of the respondents regrets that some collectives or networks define themselves as feminist or queer to give an impression of progressivism and militancy even though their actions are not.

The definition of ‘identity’ can be a real challenge for collectives. This issue is – from what I understood – one of the reasons why the collective *Conspiration* split up. Members didn’t agree on the initial values of the collectives, and the smooth operation of an organization is based on a common belief in the same values. Some members fell within a feminist, queer, and thus activist approach, while others didn’t really want to engage too much with those issues.

It thus seems that positioning oneself as a feminist community is no longer a problem, especially for long-standing and well-established ones like *Wicked Girls* or *La Petite*, which

⁴⁸ « Ouais elle est féministe, elle me casse les couilles avec ses discours »

⁴⁹ « On se dit que c'est assez obvious comme ça et qu'on veut pas en rajouter une couche »

have been in the scene for many years now. Other communities however prefer to remain out of such political statements, not necessarily because they think it will not be received well – mostly by men – but also because they want to focus on their artistic activities rather than political ones. It thus all depends on how those women perceive and approach the struggle. It seems that it's now more an individual or intra-collective choice, rather than a choice which depends on how men are going to receive the existence of such queer and collective identities, which contrasts with previous research on the subject.

- *Tokenism*

The DJ respondents were asked whether they think they have sometimes been booked uniquely because they're a woman, and not necessarily for their music. All of them, except two (anonymous and Eva) answered it already happened.

Ana remembers a time where she was invited to play and she heard in the backstage that she was only invited because she's a woman and she's pretty, that it would bring more boys in the audience. It was one of the only times it happened. Chloé explains that when she realizes it is the case, of course she is annoyed but she doesn't bury her head in the sand, she knows that it is sometimes how it works. When it happens, she still does her best in order to show those people that she's not just a token and that she is valuable for her music and not for her gender. Léa also says that it happens a lot, but usually, the programmer doesn't have bad intentions, they just want to reach more parity. She adds:

“Of course we ever got booked because we are women. But at no point are we going to say no [...] We want to work, we want to spread our message, and business is business, so...”⁵⁰

Lou also explains she has to ignore such behaviors sometimes:

“If I get booked because I'm a woman it pisses me off; if I get booted because people like my music it makes me happy, you see. But I'm not going to look any further, because if I start nitpicking then I'm going to get depressed, I'm not going to have a good time...”⁵¹

⁵⁰ « On a été bookées parce qu'on était des filles. Mais après à aucun moment on va dire non. [...] On a envie de travailler, de faire passer nos messages, et puis bah business is business, donc... »

⁵¹ « Si on me booke parce que je suis une femme ça me fait chier, si on me booke parce qu'on aime ma musique ça me fait plaisir tu comprends. Mais je vais pas aller chercher plus loin, parce que si je commence à aller chercher la petite bête je vais déprimer, je vais pas être bien... »

Aurélié is against such behavior of tokenism: “I’m not your quota”⁵², she says. Whenever she gets booking demands for female DJs, she tries to understand the real intentions of the programmer. If she ever perceives he wants to book girls just so that they can be their ‘token’, then she’ll refuse to send the girls to play for him.

Lisa explains that usually she still accepts gigs where she knows she was invited because of her gender, as it didn’t happen that much. However, she dared to quit the agency she was part of when she realized they took her in just because she is a woman. She thus canceled all the gigs she was about to do with the agency.

It seems that tokenism is still a very common behavior from programmers. On the other hand, it still offers visibility to women, and a chance to prove those programmers that their music is more valuable than their gender. That’s why most DJs decide to move beyond such behaviors. In some situations however, they managed to refuse such gigs.

- ***All-female line-ups***

Once again, the way all-female only line-ups are received is a matter of intentions. Almost all the respondents answered they didn’t have a problem with female line-up *per se*, and that it depends on the way it is done:

“To me it all depends on how it is done. It depends on the intention of the organizer and the ultimate purpose of the event.”⁵³ (Marianne)

“I think that such an initiative should be encouraged if it is well-intended.”⁵⁴ (Léa)

“There are two types of all-female events. There is the event of a club who is going to do one night only in the year with only women, and that’s bad because it’s completely unusual. And then there are the collectives who do that all-year-long...”⁵⁵ (Marion)

⁵² « Je ne suis pas ton quota »

⁵³ « Pour moi tout dépend de la manière dont s’est fait. Tout dépend de l’intention de l’organisateur et de l’intention finale de la soirée. »

⁵⁴ « Moi je dis qu’il faut encourager l’initiative si elle est bien pensée. »

⁵⁵ « Y’a deux types de soirées de meuf. Y’a en mode le club qui va faire une soirée dans l’année en mode ‘ce soir c’est soirées meufs, avec un line-up que de meufs’ et ça c’est nul, parce que c’est totalement exceptionnel. Et après les collectifs où c’est leur DA de faire jouer des meufs... »

“Doing all-female line-ups just to boost the numbers doesn't help, especially when you don't book women during the rest of the year, that's what I can't stand.”⁵⁶ (Lou)

“I think it's good when it's organized by women, but when it's organized by men, I think it's a bit borderline.”⁵⁷ (Eva)

“Well, if it's not a feminist or queer collective, or at least a collective that intrinsically holds such values, I find it a bit odd. I have more faith in a notion of a parity that spreads over time, but then again, if you're a queer collective, or as I do with my own parties, then it makes more sense.”⁵⁸ (Anonymous)

When the initiative comes from other women or feminist organizers then it can be viewed as a pertinent programming choice, especially if it is in line with their other actions throughout the year. Aurélie agrees that all-female line-ups are great when there is a real intention behind it; however when it's just a fad then it doesn't make sense. Camille explains that there are already so many 'all-male' line-ups, so she doesn't see any problem in doing all-female line-ups. Chloé also adds that it can be a way to restore a kind of balance.

- ***Reinforcement of the gender gap***

According to the answers given by the respondents, it doesn't seem that the 'Paradox of women's advancement'⁵⁹ mentioned by Reitsamer (2012, 2016) is likely to happen (Cf.p.21). Indeed, when I approached this topic during the interviews, it appeared that most women have no intention at all to go that far, and exclude themselves, on the contrary. Aurélie wished she could invite some men on stage, but there are still so many line-ups with men only that they're gonna keep programming more women. But she wished that in the

⁵⁶ « Être 100% féminin pour faire gonfler les chiffres ça ne sert à rien, surtout quand tu ne bookes pas de nanas le reste de l'année, c'est ça que je ne supporte pas. »

⁵⁷ « Moi je trouve ça bien quand c'est organisé par des femmes, par contre quand c'est organisé par que des hommes, je trouve ça un peu limite »

⁵⁸ « Bah si c'est pas un collectif féministe ou queer, ou qui porte en tout cas ces valeurs-là de façon intrinsèque, je trouve ça un peu bizarre. Je crois plus en une idée de la parité diffuse dans le temps, après si t'es un collectif queer, ou comme moi je fais avec mes soirées, oui ça a du sens. »

⁵⁹ As a reminder, this paradox suggests that all-female communities could lead to reinforcing the gender differences, and ultimately “the binary structure of male/female social network segregation” (Reitsamer and Gavanas, 2016)

future that will not be needed anymore. They removed the ‘Girls’ from *Wicked Girls* in order to also normalize the female collective. Men never highlight their collective is all-male, so she doesn’t want to do the same as well. Léa also says that in the future she wants to invite men with *Bande de Filles*, and that they don’t want to keep themselves to themselves. Lisa also explains that parity is extremely important and that it would be a shame to be too extreme, and separate the scene in two.

However, some mentions that the queer scene, despite being very inclusive can sometimes be excluded from the rest of the scene. Marianne explains that Chloé – who started in the lesbian scene, at the *Pulp* – had a hard time finding gigs out of the lesbian scene. Léa explains that sometimes, as a heterosexual woman, she feels excluded from queer scenes. Ana, who is a lesbian, thinks that the queer scene is sometimes excluding itself from the rest of the scene. Océane started to play in queer scenes but also hopes that she will be playing for other audiences as well, as “music has no gender”⁶⁰.

Most respondents thus agreed and realize that keeping themselves to themselves can be dangerous. Marion highlights that it is a touchy topic and that it also depends on how you want to commit yourself as an artist. I do not want and do not feel legitimate to enter the political aspects of this.

4.3. Other results

Some other topics, that were not covered within the theoretical framework, came up during the interviews, and are also essential to understand the topic.

4.3.1. Hope and evolutions

As mentioned before, most interviewees were positive regarding the feminization of the scene. They have noted many evolutions in the last few years. Marianne notes that we don’t realize it that much now because we’re in the middle of the change so we don’t have the benefit of hindsight yet. Lou explains that at the beginning, the only women visible were the ones playing at the *Pulp*; now there are way more female DJs visible. Even Léa notes an evolution in only the past two years.

⁶⁰ « La musique n’étant pas genrée »

There seems to be a generational gap that allowed an evolution of mentalities concerning gender issues. Many respondents (Marianne, Aurélie, Camille, Ana) explain that younger DJs or organizers are today way more respectful towards their female counterparts. The current generation is more aware of gender, feminist, or queer issues, whereas the previous generation has been living through their lives with entrenched clichés and stereotypes, Marianne notes. Aurélie explains that line-ups made by people aged between 20 and 30 are way more eclectic and diverse:

“You're the future because you're looking at things differently, saying ‘but wait, but why do I have to be seen as a gender first, why do you have to look at me and say that I'm a man or a woman, and why do you have to put my sexuality in the foreground?’ And the fact that you initiated that is creating a much more eclectic scene, and which is much prettier to look at, I think.”⁶¹

According to her, the younger generation is thus way more open-minded than the older one. She also adds that young women as well are starting to understand the importance and benefits of the sorority, instead of feeling in competition with each other as we often have been raised to be.

Moreover, as Chloé noted, the struggle is more visible now, thanks to the media, social networks, etc. As a result, it also participates in raising awareness and educate men and women about those topics. Lisa agrees that social networks are essential for raising awareness, thanks to many pages about feminism, misogyny:

“Social networks are very good at presenting feminist ideas, there are a lot of pages that do it very well, on Instagram, for instance. I became aware of many misogynistic remarks that I didn't necessarily notice before, like little sentences or stereotypes about women that I thought were normal.”⁶²

Léa adds that many programmers, collectives are starting to realize that gender parity on stage is far from being reached. Lou did with *L'Appel du 8 Mars* a study on female DJs in France, they also organized some panel discussions to talk about the topic. She explains that as a result, she has witnessed in 2018 some evolutions that she is very proud of. Talking about

⁶¹ « Vous êtes le futur parce que vous êtes en train de regarder les choses différemment, avec votre regard à dire ‘mais attends, mais d'où je dois être sexuée, d'où t'es obligé de me regarder en disant je suis un homme, une femme, et d'où t'es obligé de mettre ma sexualité en avant ?’ ; et le fait que vous aviez initié ça est en train de créer une scène vachement plus éclectique, et qui est vachement plus jolie à regarder, je trouve »

⁶² « Les réseaux sociaux mettent vachement en valeur le féminisme, y a plein de pages qui font ça super bien euh, sur Instagram tout ça qui nous rendent compte ... enfin moi je me suis rendu compte de plein de trucs misogynes que, que je voyais pas forcément avant, des petites phrases, ou des stéréotypes qu'on a sur les femmes et qui pour moi étaient normaux »

these issues, tackling them, are the best way to make it visible and to educate people, and especially men, who most of the time don't even realize that they don't include women enough or that they have sexist behaviors (Léa, Camille, Marion). According to Lou and Léa, they sometimes don't even make the effort to discover and learn more about female DJs. Léa explains that it already happened that promoters told her they couldn't find any girl. She adds that female DJ Olympe4000 managed to do an online festival – Sisterules – during which she invited female DJs to play for an entire week.

However, some DJs note that this process and these evolutions are extremely slow. Chloé sums that up in a sentence: “Yes, there is an evolution, but the fight is not won”⁶³. Aurélie also notes that the evolution is – for now – too slow. Camille also arrives at the same conclusion:

“It seems to me that it's really not improving at all. Every year there are new statistics, we believe that equality is on its way and that it's getting better and better, but I really don't think so. [...] It still happens very often that I go to events with no women in the line-up. And I can't help it, I'm always counting...”⁶⁴

4.3.2. Centralization in Paris

It also takes time because for now most of the evolutions take place in big cities, and especially in Paris. Marianne explains there are more queer initiatives and collectives in Paris because historically, people from the LGBTQ community come to the capital, as it can be often quite hard to be homosexual in other smaller cities:

“From the density of population can grow activist movements”⁶⁵

Marion also agrees that evolution is quicker in Paris. Some DJs, like Chloé when she was in Grenoble, or Lisa in Clermont-Ferrand, have the feeling that there are too few women. Océane also notes that the scene is very different in Paris. She compares the Parisian queer scene to the Berlin scene – even though she notes there are many differences – while regretting that in the South of France for instance, it is mostly heterosexual club nights where people are more here to hook up rather than for the music.

⁶³ « Une évolution oui, cependant le combat n'est pas gagné »

⁶⁴ « Il me semble bien que ça progresse vraiment pas. Que justement chaque année il y a des nouvelles stats, on se dit que l'égalité est en marche et que c'est de mieux en mieux, mais je crois vraiment pas. [...] Ça m'arrive encore très souvent d'aller à des soirées où il y a aucune meuf. Et je peux pas m'empêcher, je compte tout le temps et franchement ... »

⁶⁵ « C'est dans la densité de population que les mouvements militants peuvent exister, tu vois »

This topic of centralization is the same for every country, for every kind of art. Anywhere, the capital is where things happen.

4.3.3. Underground VS. Mainstream scenes

Evolutions and the feminization of the scene are also different whether we look at the underground scene or the more commercial scene. Marianne explains:

“There are so many different approaches and things are so different whether you're in Tomorrowland or a small Parisian club, you know, it's not the same thing at all... You can't give a general answer...”⁶⁶

There exists also a “superstar” economy peculiar to the commercial scene. There are a few female “superstars”, such as Amélie Lens, Nina Kraviz, Charlotte de Witte, Peggy Gou, Deborah DeLuca. According to Aurélie, most programmers in the commercial scene don't do the effort to discover new (female) artists and will only book the most famous ones for purely economic reasons. Léa also regrets that it is always the same ten female artists that are found in most line-ups, and that it doesn't show the diversity of female DJs. Ana also regrets that programmers and people, in general, are interested in only a handful of women while there are plenty of other DJs with as much talent who do not get the same coverage at all.

As a result, she explains that the underground scene is the one who can make a change and discover new talents. Lou adds that the issue of hypersexualization is also less present in underground scenes. An anonymous DJ explains that she got very rarely confronted to situations of sexism because she plays in a “particular scene”, where people are more conscious about these issues, and that “if I was playing tech-house, things could have been different”⁶⁷

It is thus important to have those differences in mind in order to understand better all the nuances within this topic.

⁶⁶ « Y'a un axe de réflexion tellement différent et il se passe des choses tellement différentes que si t'es à Tomorrowland ou si t'es à Paris dans un petit club, enfin tu vois c'est pas du tout la même... Tu peux pas faire une réponse généralisée... »

⁶⁷ « Si c'était vraiment la tech house, ça serait peut-être un peu différent

4.3.4. Programming

The main gatekeeping process that prevents a greater feminization of the scene is that the programmers are – most of the time – men. Aurélie explains:

“The problem is that you have hetero-normative guys programming them, and they don't work with the full spectrum of women, you know?”⁶⁸

Of course, some of them start to realize there is a lack of parity in the scene and act accordingly.

When I asked the respondents what would be the best way to encourage the feminization of the scene, most of them told me that the scene needs more female programmers. The problem is indeed “at the top of the pyramid” (Aurélie). Marion and an anonymous DJ also agree that there should be more female programmers, women having big responsibilities in the organizations of events, in labels, in radio shows, etc. Lisa started to produce her own events in the club (called *101*) where she is a resident:

“I hate to say it, but it was a bit for getting... for getting a bit of respect. If I produce my own events, then it means that I'm able to do it on my own. Even though the 101 helped me a lot, I'm the only person in Tsunami, and I wanted to prove to others that I could do it and that there are also female promoters.”⁶⁹

It is thus primordial that women gain access to senior positions in the field of music; they are today too few.

4.3.5. Other solutions

The interviews were finishing on an open question to the respondents, asking them whether they were thinking about any other individual or collective strategy that could help for the feminization of the scene in France.

Some have already been mentioned throughout the results part, such as the implementation of mix workshops. Many respondents think that it is one of the best ways to help women enter the scene. Such workshops – especially in non-mixity - help women accessing the technology and progress with a mentor in a safe space.

⁶⁸ « Le problème est d'avoir des mecs hétéro-normés qui les programment, et qui finalement composent pas avec l'intégralité du panel de gonzesses, quoi. »

⁶⁹ « J'aime pas dire ça, mais c'est un peu de base pour avoir ... pour obtenir un peu de respect en fait. De produire mes propres soirées, on sait que je suis capable de le faire toute seule, même si le 101 m'a beaucoup aidé, je suis toute seule dans Tsunami, et je voulais prouver aux autres que j'en étais capable et que y a pas que des promoteurs qui sont euh masculins »

Aurélie explains that implementing quotas could be a solution. An anonymous DJ was also thinking about implementing a kind of ‘rule’ in her booking conditions: she would refuse to play for a club who hasn’t booked around 30% of women throughout the year at least.

According to Ana, musical contests can also be a way to help female musicians and DJ. They can serve as a springboard for them to be recognized and gain success.

And then, there is still a need for more information and sensibilization about this topic. The more we talk about it, the more people will realize that it is important and value parity and diversity within their line-ups.

5. Conclusion

This thesis aims to investigate the individual and collective experiences of female DJs in a male-dominated environment. The research question stated: *how do female DJs negotiate their place in the male-dominated environment of E/DM?* The results of this research have shown that today, female DJs don't face as many gatekeeping practices as in the past, or at least less than the literature predicts. Pursuing an artistic or musical path is still a hard path, regardless of the gender. It also seems, from the results, that "entering the scene" and learning DJing skills is getting easier; the technology is becoming more and more accessible, and the internet allows anyone to learn the fundamentals. However, even though most of the respondents are quite positive regarding the evolution and the feminization of the scene, they still face gender-related issues and still struggle to acquire legitimacy and recognition. They always have to prove they are capable, because otherwise people will question their place.

Being part of the minority can prove to be quite an advantage, for several reasons. First, they face less competition than male DJs, as there are less "competitors" – other female DJs – in the scene. Moreover, during the previous years, the media has increasingly made more visible the debate about women in electronic music. As a result, some programmers have now realized it is important to book more women and thus female DJs benefit from this. This greater visibilization also gives more role models to young female DJs who can now identify to other women and realize they can also pursue this path and be good at it.

However, they still face many gender prejudices, regarding their abilities, their aesthetic, their legitimacy, their appearance. They are still sometimes seen as women before being seen as DJs, and people often question their place in the industry. A common personality trait of the respondents is thus their resilience: they need to persevere and pay no heed to those prejudices; otherwise it can prove to be very difficult to 'survive', especially at the beginning. Indeed, it seems once they have overcome those barriers, once they have proven their legitimacy as DJs, they don't face that many gender-related problems.

Sometimes, belonging to a community – and more particularly a female or queer community – can make it easier. Such communities allow female DJs to feel empowered and self-confident, while getting more recognition and visibility. Through them, female DJs

can meet like-minded women with whom they can share similar experiences, skills. The sorority created within those communities is thus essential for some DJs.

In a nutshell, becoming a DJ when you're a woman is less difficult as in the past, as in the previous years the scene has witnessed many evolutions; entering the scene is more accessible than before, and also mentalities are changing. There are more female DJs, and thus more role models to identify to. It is of course still hard – especially at the beginning – but most of the barriers – gender-related or not – can be broken after perseverance. They are sometimes more easily broken when belonging to a collective that can help those women feel empowered and safe.

The results also show that there are many reasons to be positive about the future. The evolutions are still slow and unequal, and are not the same in the Parisian scene or in smaller cities, not the same in the underground or commercial scene. But at least things are moving, mentalities are changing, some initiatives are growing.

This research has several limitations. Twelve interviews of course do not give a general overview of the topic. I also decided, from the beginning, to listen to the voice of the women directly concerned by the topic, but it would also have been great to hear the voice of others, such as programmers, label-owners, booking agents, the audience – women or men. Thus, more extended research is needed in order to understand why there are still too few women on stages today. My research has shown that female DJs are facing fewer obstacles than in the past, and are more prepared to tackle them today, individually or collectively. An interesting lead for future research would be to conduct research about the 'top of the pyramid' in the E/DM scenes, in order to tackle the problem at its core.

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Appendix 1 – Interview guide DJs

Presentation

1. Can you introduce yourself and your background as a DJ?
2. What made you want to become a DJ? Did you have any models in particular?
3. Did you have a mentor? Anyone in particular who introduced you to DJing?

Working conditions

4. Is your job as a DJ a full-time job? If no, would you like it to be?
5. Could you describe your working conditions (working rhythm, compatible with a normal personal life, ease in finding dates, salary)?
6. Are you part of a booking agency or do you have to find dates on your own?
7. Do you think you are paid less than a male DJ of equal notoriety?

Identity

8. Have you ever experienced sexism and misogyny as a DJ?
9. In the documentary "Move the Needle", there are testimonies of female DJs who say that on stage they make an effort to dress as soberly as possible to be taken seriously. And that's something I found in my research, there's a researcher who explains that often women DJs have the choice between being hypersexualized or invisible. What do you think about it?
10. What do you think about the representation of female DJs in the media, in general?

Technology

11. Was technology a barrier for you when you wanted to start DJing? How and where did you learn?
12. Would you agree that there is a relationship with the technology between men and women? Have you encountered situations where your technical abilities have been doubted? Mansplaining situations,, for example?

Network, social capital

13. How important do you think social networking is for DJ work? Is yours mostly made up of women or men?

14. In your experience, would you say that women in the electronic music industry help each other?

15. Are there any collectives/networks/labels that according to you have participated in the feminization of the scene in France? How important is the LGBT scene?

16. Are you part of a network or collective aiming to put women forward? What has it brought you as a DJ?

Challenges

17. What do you think about all-female line-ups?

18. Have you ever played at a party where you were the only woman?

19. Do you think you've ever been programmed because you were a woman? What is your feeling about that

Final question: According to you and based on your experience, what are the strategies - individual or collective - that would allow a greater feminization of the line-up?

Appendix 2 – Interview guide female/queer community

Presentation

1. Can you introduce yourself and the collective?
2. What is your role in the collective?

The collective

3. What motivated its creation and what are the values carried by the collective?
4. What are the main activities of the collective?
5. Do you have regular feedback on your activities? From participants and/or DJs?
6. What does the collective offer to its members? Self-help, visibility, mentoring?

Challenges

6. Do you define yourself as a feminist collective/association? What does this imply for you?
7. What are the main challenges faced by the collective?
8. Have there been times when your activities have been singled out, especially by guys who feel in danger?
9. In the research papers I read, the authors mentioned that this type of women's network or collective could have a perverse effect, by reinforcing gender differences, creating on the one hand an exclusively female network, and on the other hand a male network, and that the problem was sometimes not solved. What do you think about this?

If not asked before:

10. What do you think of 100% female line-ups?
11. Do you think that the electronic music scene has evolved in the last few years in terms of feminization ?
12. According to you and based on your experience, what are the strategies - individual or collective - that would allow a greater feminization of the line-up?

Appendix 3 – Additional questions

- [If DJing is your career now OR you're considering it] When you decided to start an artistic career, did anyone try to talk you out of it? Did you have any support?

- One of the reasons often cited for the lack of women in artistic careers, particularly in music, is the difficulty of reconciling professional and personal life, for example because of pregnancy. What do you think about this? Is this still the case today?

- How do you prepare before you go on stage? Do you think about how you look on stage? Based on what?

- Do you think there's a feminine aesthetic? In terms of sound, sonorities, etc. And how would you describe your musical aesthetics?

- When you are looking for new sounds, do you prefer to do it on the internet or go to your local record store? Why would you do that?

- According to you, what are the advantages and disadvantages of being a woman in the music business, and more specifically in electronic music?

Appendix 4 – Coding categories

Code	Group
Appearance/ performativity	Part 1 - Individual experiences and strategies
Autonomy/ DIY learning	Part 1 - Individual experiences and strategies
Competition faced by female DJs	Part 1 - Individual experiences and strategies
Digitalization	Part 1 - Individual experiences and strategies
Hypersexualisation	Part 1 - Individual experiences and strategies
Legitimacy	Part 1 - Individual experiences and strategies
Media representation	Part 1 - Individual experiences and strategies
Models	Part 1 - Individual experiences and strategies
Personal Life	Part 1 - Individual experiences and strategies
Resilience	Part 1 - Individual experiences and strategies
Social networks	Part 1 - Individual experiences and strategies
Sounds and sonorities	Part 1 - Individual experiences and strategies
Stereotypes / Sexism	Part 1 - Individual experiences and strategies
Technology	Part 1 - Individual experiences and strategies
Underrepresentation / Invisibilization	Part 1 - Individual experiences and strategies
Wages	Part 1 - Individual experiences and strategies
Working conditions	Part 1 - Individual experiences and strategies
Activities of female/queer communities	Part 2 - Collective strategies
All-female line-up	Part 2 - Collective strategies
Benefits of female/ queer communities ; Sorority	Part 2 - Collective strategies
Challenges of female/queer communities	Part 2 - Collective strategies
Feminist identities	Part 2 - Collective strategies
Local clubs	Part 2 - Collective strategies
Mentoring	Part 2 - Collective strategies
Mix workshops	Part 2 - Collective strategies
Paradox of women's advancement	Part 2 - Collective strategies
Queer/lesbian scene	Part 2 - Collective strategies
Tokenism	Part 2 - Collective strategies
Age/ Generational gap	Part 3 - Other important topics
Centralization in Paris	Part 3 - Other important topics
Hopes and evolutions	Part 3 - Other important topics
Long and slow process	Part 3 - Other important topics
Other solutions/ strategies	Part 3 - Other important topics
Production	Part 3 - Other important topics
Programming	Part 3 - Other important topics
Realization about gender issues / Education and sensibilization	Part 3 - Other important topics
Superstar system	Part 3 - Other important topics
Underground VS Mainstream	Part 3 - Other important topics