

'I wouldn't be the person I am today without Camp Cope': Forging feminist identities through music fandom.

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Abstract

This paper explores the real and lasting impact of the all-women, indie-rock trio, Camp Cope on their fans' identity formation. In interviews, women, and gender-diverse fans of Camp Cope described strong emotional and experiential connections to the band that helped them to forge and activate feminist identities, define their morals, values, and goals, and heal from sexual harm. This study considers what it means to be a woman or gender-diverse fan of women musicians in an Australian music industry that not only privileges male tastes and talent but often excludes women and gender-diverse people from full and free participation.

KEYWORDS: Popular Music, Fandom, Identity, Gender, Feminism

Introduction

In 2017, Australian indie-rock trio, Camp Cope made national headlines for their on-stage call out of The Falls Festival, a large multi-day touring festival held across multiple locations across the country. That year, the festival featured only nine women across the 36-act line up. Camp Cope, a band comprised of three women, represented approximately one third of all women booked to perform. It was a line-up symptomatic of an Australian music industry that privileges men and overlooks or excludes women entirely (Cooper et al 2017; Strong 2016).

During their song, 'The Opener', Camp Cope vocalist and guitarist made a slight change in the lyrics that ignited a national conversation around women's representation, participation, and safety in Australian music scenes (see: Valentish

2018; Watson 2018). 'It's another man telling us we can't fill up a tent, it's another fucking festival booking only nine women,' bellowed Camp Cope vocalist and guitarist, Georgia Maq, to a crowd of adoring fans on the first day of the festival in Lorne, Victoria.

Camp Cope's critique of the music industry quickly turned to the issue of sexual assault and harassment because the issues of underrepresentation on stage and sexual violence off stage are inextricably linked (Support Act Limited 2022; Shaw 2012). In response, The Falls Festival released a statement, touting how challenging it can be to find 'new and middle-range female Australian artists' because 'female talent' isn't always available [to the festival] at that headline level" (Tencic 2018). The statement exemplified Camp Cope's exact point about the music industry's undervaluing of women's talent. Camp Cope's on-stage callouts continued. On stage in Fremantle, Western Australia, Maq addressed the crowd: 'We want an equal and inclusive and diverse music community... because that's what it is, it's just not represented properly... it's bullsh*t and we've had enough of it.' And so too had their fans.

Comprised of Georgia Maq (guitar/vocals), Kelly-Dawn Hellmrich (bass), and Sarah 'Thomo' Thompson (drums), Camp Cope have become known as much for their outspoken resistance to sexism and discrimination in the music industry as they are for their music. Such resistance has inspired a generation of young women and gender-diverse fans. From these on-stage callouts about the lack of women's representation on festival line-ups, and spearheading crowd safety initiatives at national touring festivals, to giving their young audience a vocabulary to challenge sexism and misogyny, Camp Cope were considered leaders at a critical juncture for gender equality in the Australian music industry (Langley 2023). This paper examines the impact of Camp Cope in shaping their fans' feminist identities.

Fandom can play a significant role in shaping people's identities – from revealing facets of their identity and enabling fans to share that, to punctuating moments in their lives and orienting them toward certain goals or actions. As Daniel Cavicchi writes, "Fans recognize themselves in the songs or using the music as a photo album that maps their life histories, they are engaged in an ongoing process of self-discovery, shaping a sense of 'me'" (Cavicchi 1998: 136). Despite this known significance of music fandom, media portrayals of fans, particularly non-male fans, have been critically marginalising (Ewens 2019). From Beatlemania to Swifties and Directioners, mainstream conceptions of fans are grounded in sexist ideas about how women and girls should regulate and express emotion.

Additionally, the construction and reproduction of rock music as a masculine activity, positions women's tastes as inauthentic, trivial, or based only on heteronormative desire (Cohen 1997; Feldman-Barrett 2021; Frith & McRobbie 1978).

Although there is increasing scholarship that challenges these views by examining the impact of woman musicians on their non-male fans, there is a clear focus on artists like the Spice Girls, Tori Amos, Beyoncé, Courtney Love, and Taylor Swift who operate on a global commercial scale (see: Driessen 2021; Ewens 2019; Hains 2014; Trier-Bieniek 2013). No matter how trivial mainstream discourses portray fans' interests and obsessions to be, there is a demonstrable real-life impact on how these enthusiasts view themselves and the world around them through interactions with a fan object (such as a musician or band) (Ewens 2019; Trier-

Bieniek 2013). The following discussion considers what it means to be a fan of women or gender-diverse musicians in a music industry that not only privileges male tastes and voices but often marginalizes or excludes women and gender-diverse people's participation entirely. By foregrounding the often-unheard voices of fan in the research, this study aims to challenge mainstream conceptions of fans as 'silly' or 'hysterical' by highlighting the real and lasting impact of Camp Cope on their fans' identity formation.

Music, fandom, and identity

Music fosters, solidifies, and challenges values and attachments and is an intensely emotional experience (Baym 2018; Hesmondhalgh 2013). It is a means with which people narrativize their lives and gain deeper understandings of themselves. Shared lived experiences and emotional connections with music or performers can be seen to reflect a person's values, morals or self-identity (DeNora 2000; Green 2016). Musical events (such as live performances, songs, and albums) have a significant impact on collective history and identity (Green 2016). Music is a referent for past experience and a force for connecting us with people, places, and moments in time, allowing us to live and re-live those moments (DeNora 2000). The impact of this can reverberate through a person's life – leading them to pursue or take certain goals and actions.

Music fandom is closely linked to expressions of self-identity – providing listeners with a vocabulary to understand and express themselves in ways they otherwise cannot (Cavicchi 1998). As Hesmondhalgh writes, "Music provides a basis of self-identity (this is who I am, this is who I'm not) and collective identity (this is who we are, this is who we're not), often in the same moment" (2013: 2). Considering this view, music is a means fans use to locate themselves in the world, to define self and collective identities, and to locate themselves in the social world relative to others (Cavicchi 1998; DeNora 2000; Frith 1996).

Fandom entails more than bare identification with music. As an 'aesthetic experience,' it involves 'perception' – a transition from simply identifying something (such as music), to the emotional and cognitive processing of it. For fans, their emotional and cognitive processing of the fan object enables them to cultivate experiences toward an intended outcome and, in so doing, develop identities in relation to that object (Bessett 2006). This emotional and cognitive affect creates an aesthetic experience of music that holds a strong degree of collective, personal, and intimate power – enabling a person to foster a deeper understanding of their thoughts, reality, and sense of self (Baym 2018; Hesmondhalgh 2013). With that, fans create meaning beyond what is offered by the fan object, cultivating identities and experiences surrounding that object (Baym 2018). Fans recognize themselves in the stories told by artists and use them to narrate and understand their own lives (Cavicchi 1998). Indeed, fans seek out music that somehow represents their experiences. Trier-Bieniek (2012) found that women especially often sought out music made by women that centred the multilayered experiences of women and presented a feminist agenda (Trier-Bieniek 2012).

Despite this emotional and social significance of fandom, female fans are often conceived of as being 'screaming, uncontrollable messes who cannot be tamed when their favourite performer is present' (Trier-Bieniek 2012: 262). In music scenes, the 'groupie' label is commonly assigned to women fans to reduce their interest in music to a desire for sex and intimacy with (male) musicians (Davies 2001; Larsen 2017).

Fans insist on feeling and connection, beyond consumption alone. Fans create remixes, stories, covers and art, get tattooed, write blogs, and create archives of the objects of their fandom. Online and offline, fans build identities, relationships, and networks with each other (Baym 2018; Ewens 2019; Feldman-Barrett 2021). All these aspects of fandom are significant for the people interviewed in this study – people who seldom saw themselves represented in media, and for whom being fans of Camp Cope has been a source of inspiration, empowerment, connection, and healing. Further significance lies in the challenge both Camp Cope and their fans pose to participation in rock music as a traditionally masculine-coded activity, and the masculine hegemony that still governs the Australian music industry.

From the creation of music itself and what instruments are played, to record collecting, music criticism, and movement and moshing at live shows, rock music is constructed and reproduced as a masculine activity (see: Davies 2001, Cohen 1997, Clawson 1999). While there are a number of notable examples of women and gender-diverse musicians who challenge this (such as the Riot Grrrl movement of the 1990s), women and gender-diverse people continue to be positioned as 'other' and subject to sexist attitudes, undervaluing of talent, objectification and sexual violence when participating in rock music spaces (Cohen 1997; Davies 2001; Strong & Rogers 2016). In Australia, "chronic gender inequality" pervades the music industry, and that women and gender-diverse musicians and workers experienced high rates of pay disparity, bullying, sexual harassment, and assault (Cooper et al 2017: 2, Support Act Limited 2022). A lack of representation across in the industry has "broad ramifications for their experiences and treatment" (ibid: 41). This lack of representation throughout the industry is linked to the high rates of gender-based discrimination, bullying, sexual harm, and violence prevalent in these spaces, for musicians, workers, and fans alike.

Fairlamb & Fileborn describe the Australian industry as being governed by masculine hegemony – a set of norms and practices which work to maintain the dominance of men within the industry (Connell 2005; Fairlamb & Fileborn 2019). Masculine hegemony ascribes women 'acceptable' roles – often based on their relationships, attractiveness, or sexual availability to men. This results in women being sidelined as girlfriends, dismissed as groupies, or ascribed decorative or supporting roles for their male counterparts (Fairlamb & Fileborn 2019). Women musicians, such as Camp Cope, who challenge the masculine status quo by stepping outside of these 'acceptable roles' – are faced with sexist attitudes, dismissal of talent and worth, belittling, or exclusionary treatment, ridicule, and sexual objectification while their behaviour is often policed by men (Strong 2016).

In the Australian music industry, women and gender-diverse people challenge these norms by assuming roles outside of what masculine hegemony has traditionally deemed 'unacceptable' for them. As a band comprised of all women, which centres the experiences of women in their lyrics and commercial identity, Camp Cope is an example of this. These experiences are identifiable in songs like

'The Opener' - a scathing, irony-drenched song about sexism in the music scene that often books women as the opening act – if at all; or 'The Face of God,' which details the aftermath of sexual assault. These songs articulate anger, sadness, and solidarity and soothe fans' emotional struggles, and are a call to arms against sexism, discrimination, and sexual violence. By focusing on women's perspectives in their songwriting and branding, and by speaking out against sexism, Camp Cope challenges the masculine structures that marginalize them (and mobilizes their fans to do the same) in a music industry that privileges heteronormative, male perspectives in almost every way.

This challenges reductive and sexist mainstream understandings of female fans as hysterical or that their interest is based only in heteronormative desire for male musicians. (Trier-Bieniek 2012). To be a woman musician who creates music that represents the multilayered experiences of women, challenges this dominance. To identify as a fan of such a musician, and to find empowerment in that music, challenges it once again. As will be discussed, Camp Cope's feminist messaging has been a force for change within the Australian music industry and has galvanized their fanbase to challenge sexism and misogyny within the music industry and society more broadly. Their fans also challenge these norms and heteronormative understandings of fandom by making meaningful emotional and experiential connections with an all-woman fan object and using those connections to determine their morals, values, and goals. The sections that follow explore the significance of Camp Cope fans' shared experiences and emotional connections in shaping and mobilising their feminist identities.

Fans to the front – Centring the experiences of women and gender-diverse fans.

This study is based on semi-structured interviews with four Camp Cope fans, which were conducted in August 2020 (3). Interviewees were selected based on the level of detail in an expression of interest, as this indicated they were likely to provide in-depth responses at interview. Interview data was analysed using thematic analysis. Interviewee Lori, who was 26 at the time of interview, has been a fan of Camp Cope since their first album was released in 2016. She says Camp Cope was a source of strength and empowerment throughout an abusive relationship, and that their music helped her to heal from that trauma. Another participant, Nox, is a non-binary sound technician, who was 22 at time of interviewing. Camp Cope inspired them to fight for their place in a music scene they have been involved with since their early teens. Meanwhile, Joan who was 19 in 2020, was immediately enamoured by the band's outspokenness, which then motivated her to start a band of her own. Alice has a Camp Cope-inspired tattoo to express the strength she found in the band. Like Nox, she was 22 when this study was conducted.

Rather than simply identifying with the music, these fans 'find themselves' in Camp Cope's music. They have forged emotional and experiential connections and use these connections to forge a sense of self and pursue certain actions or goals. In interviews, these fans described the impact of engaging with a feminist fan object on their identity formation. They have each established deep emotional

connections and identified shared experiences with Camp Cope, constructing meanings beyond what is offered by the band's music and commercial identity, to gain a deeper understanding of themselves and the world around them. They have used these connections to forge and activate feminist identities - solidifying their values and motivating them to pursue particular goals or actions.

These fans see themselves reflected in Camp Cope's music. They draw connections between their experiences, and those of Camp Cope, and construct identities surrounding them. For these fans, their experiences with Camp Cope can be described as 'epiphanies' – pivotal moments that evoke intense feelings that leave a lasting impact on their character and guide future actions (Green 2016). However, these significant moments are not necessarily positive or joyful. Some of the strong feelings Camp Cope has evoked are grounded in sadness, anger, and trauma. As will be discussed, these intense connections with Camp Cope have been significant sources of inspiration and influence, and affirmation of identities. These fans' engagement with a feminist fan object and the empowerment they gain through that experience poses a challenge to heteronormative, patriarchal expectations of music consumption (Hesmondhalgh 2006; Frith & McRobbie 1978). The mobilisation of these fans through their connection to Camp Cope poses a challenge to masculine hegemony in the Australian music industry and beyond.

'I would not be the person I am today without Camp Cope' – Empowering individual identities.

Camp Cope's feminist politics can be compared to the Riot Grrrl of the 1990s. Like Riot Grrrl, Camp Cope confronted sexism and misogyny ingrained in music scenes and in broader society and foregrounded women's experiences in their songwriting (including themes of love and grief as well as sexism and sexual violence). Camp Cope disrupted the masculinist status quo of the music scene, with on-stage and social media callouts of festivals and abusers in the music scene. Following the Riot Grrrl tradition, Camp Cope led grassroots campaigns promoting crowd safety and encouraged audiences and fellow musicians to stand against sexual assault and their live shows often called for 'women and non-binary people to the front [of the crowd]' to promote those fans' safety and inclusion in live music spaces. Their feminist politics went beyond addressing sexism music scene through their promotion of social justice organisations and causes – a key aspect of feminist music (Trier-Bieniek 2013). They encouraged fans to sign petitions or donate to social justice causes for First Nations and family violence prevention initiatives, as well as donating profits to these causes themselves.

Interviewees identify Camp Cope's on stage and online expressions of these feminist politics as key reasons for liking the band. These fans were drawn both to Camp Cope's feminist politics and the band's overall beliefs. Fans, particularly those marginalized by dominant cultures, want to see themselves, and their stories and interests represented in the music they consume. They use this to present their 'selves' to themselves and others, as well as relate to the artist (DeNora 2000; Cavicchi 1998). These fans connect experientially and emotionally with Camp

Cope's feminist songwriting and use those connections to produce a self-image, shaping their feminist identities and strengthening a sense of self. These study participants describe their experiences with Camp Cope as 'crucial' and 'life-changing' – highlighting the real and lasting impact of their fandom.

Joan describes the impact of Camp Cope's feminist messaging on her self-image. She said that she would 'not be the person she is today' without Camp Cope. She describes the band as an important tool in constructing her self-image, affirming her identity, and presenting that identity to the world. For her, the trio symbolizes a 'safe space' through which Joan can be herself and explore and experiment with her identity:

I had a lot of self-confidence issues about expectations that society places on female-identifying people - you know, 'you have to wear this, or be this.' But Camp Cope have always been a very safe space to be yourself and through them.

Here, Joan describes the role Camp Cope has played in helping her develop a self-image that is - to use DeNora's words – "tenable, doable, and habitable" (DeNora 2000: 73). Informed by their own unique experiences and interpretation of Camp Cope's songs and message, Joan derives meaning from and establish identities through interactions with the band. Engagement with feminist musicians can have a considerable impact on fans' lives. Joan says Camp Cope's strident feminist activism has helped her to develop her personal and professional goals and shape her morals and values. She says that though she was a feminist before finding Camp Cope, she did not previously have a word for it and her fandom has helped shape her identity. Her engagement with Camp Cope's feminist messaging has motivated her to challenge patriarchal expectations of gender presentation, for example. She said that through her fandom:

[I have] found that I can wear the clothes I want to wear, rather than what society wants me to wear or to wear my hair how I want to. Or to be more openly queer – things that I always wanted but had never been able to express before I saw other people, like Camp Cope, expressing it.

Like Joan, interviewees Alice and Lori expressed that they identified with feminism before discovering Camp Cope. And similarly, they both say the band has been instrumental in finding ways to confidently express their beliefs. Lori says she was drawn to Camp Cope because their feminist politics reflected the views and beliefs she held. She says she admired their outspokenness and confidence in their bodies and sexuality:

The thing I like most about [Camp Cope] is that they're a representation of the things that I believe in. But in a way that's more unapologetic. And that's nice, because I think as women, we're expected to be quite careful about the way that we express things like [political ideas] and they just don't care. They just... they know what is right. And they kind of champion that.

For Alice, Camp Cope helped her to find her voice. She said:

I found [Camp Cope] at a pretty crucial time in my life. I was 18 at the time and still trying to find my way. I had similar values to Camp Cope – feminist, anti-racist, but I wasn't very good at expressing it. I was quite shy, so watching them being loud about the things they were passionate about and not backing down and not being scared really connected with me. I think I've learned a lot through that.

Similarly, Nox says that their discovery of Camp Cope was 'life-changing':

Camp Cope were talking about these things [gender inequality, representation] and it changed my life because it taught me I could do it and I could fight. I got the idea that I could make a difference too, and be the people Camp Cope are to me, for other people.

Unlike general experiences with music, these fans formed intense emotional and experiential connections with the band and credit them with influencing and shaping their identities. Joan, Lori, Nox, and Alice's testimony demonstrates the epiphanic impact of their fandom and how they use that to understand themselves and their place in the world.

In the lived experience of these four fans, Camp Cope's feminist message and confidence was an important connection point for their fandom, which inspired confidence and outspokenness in each of them. These fans describe being influenced by Camp Cope's modelling of this aesthetic, enabling them to express their beliefs and challenge sexism loudly and unapologetically in their daily lives.

'[Camp Cope] know the words and teach us the words and inspire us' – Feminist consciousness-raising and the social learning experience.

Music is a collective experience, through which people forge connections with others. This can be through live performance and establishing networks and friendships based on shared affection for an object, or through the possibility that one's private, emotional experience with music might be shared with others (Hesmondhalgh 2013). Through fandom, feelings of connection and community established at live performances are carried into the audience's everyday lives (ibid). Beyond the mobilisation of feminist self-identities, fans' engagement with Camp Cope has also helped to cultivate a broader, collective feminist identity. This is because music, as an aesthetic experience, has the capacity to unite and divide people (Hesmondhalgh 2013). The emotional 'perception' of an aesthetic experience can be viewed as a form of emotional mobilisation (Reger 2007: 1353), that is, "the articulation of an emotional state (e.g., pride, shame, anger, joy) that causes a change in an individual's behaviour and aligns him or her to a movement" (ibid).

This 'social learning experience' is also seen in Trier-Bieniek's study of Tori Amos fans, who take inspiration from Amos and build feminist agendas through their fandom (Trier-Bieniek 2012). Fans of Camp Cope do something similar. Camp Cope's feminist politics, articulated through their music and commercial identity

can be seen as a form of feminist consciousness-raising and a social learning experience. More than simply being inspired by Camp Cope, the social learning experience requires an emotional response. These fans expressed anger, sadness, strength, and hopefulness about issues raised by Camp Cope. This emotional response, leading to an alignment with a movement, helps to facilitate a social learning experience. These experiences have the capacity to unite or divide people and develop common values within the public sphere (Garnham in Hesmondhalgh 2013).

Camp Cope's consciousness-raising within the Australian music industry can be seen as creating space to discuss feminist issues. The facilitation of this space allows for the 'emotional mobilisation' of their audience. For fans of Camp Cope, the emotional and experiential connection forged with the band has led to emotional mobilisation – where intense emotions evoked by the fan object align with and connect fans to a larger community or movement (Reger 2007). The fans included in this study described the feeling of connection they had to not only the band, but others who shared in their experiences. These fans said Camp Cope helped them to connect with community and forge collective identities – both as feminists and fans.

Maq's personal experiences are embedded in Camp Cope's lyrics. From her previous work as a nurse in 'Flesh and Electricity' to personal experiences of grief and loss, in tracks like 'Song for Charlie' and 'I've Got You,' the articulation of such experiences in the songwriting, paired with the band's vocal support for women and gender-diverse people's safety, representation and equality foster a sense of trust and intimacy amongst fans.

These fans' shared experiences helped them to connect not only with Camp Cope, but with a broader feminist and fan community. Through this connection, and resulting emotional mobilisation, fans have been influenced to engage with politics and feminist issues. Beyond foregrounding women's perspectives and lives in their music, Camp Cope use their social media platforms and stage presence to engage their fans in social and political causes they care about. The band frequently posted about anti-racism, trans rights, women's rights, refugee rights and Indigenous rights on their social media accounts and encouraged donations to social justice organisations (see: @camp_cope on Instagram). The fans interviewed for this study deem the band's use of their platform to advocate for these issues an important reason for why they like the band.

Joan says that finding Camp Cope was a 'big wakeup call' for her because she 'did not realise that so many people felt the same [about feminism, anti-racism and anti-homophobia]'. She said that learning of and feeling connected to others with shared values and ideas helped develop confidence in standing up for others and expressing her views.

Interviewee Lori also emphasized the importance of the community beyond live music that she feels has been established by Camp Cope. Lori says that their feminist message highlights to her the importance of collectivity, and 'makes [her] believe that community is important. It's important to use your platform to give people a voice and bring about change.' For Lori, Camp Cope's message and unapologetic use of their platform and privilege to speak about issues they care about is a driving factor of her fandom:

[Camp Cope] are definitely not shy about spreading messages that they believe in and just using their platform to give people a voice. And that's probably one of the things that I like about them the most.

Camp Cope's vocal advocacy has emphasized the responsibility Lori feels to use her privilege to help people who do not have the same power, and to encourage others to do the same. This demonstrates 'emotional mobilisation' – where Lori's learning and empowerment through interactions with Camp Cope, solidified her alignment with the feminist movement and motivated her to act. Lori believes that the band's outspokenness and consciousness-raising actions 'make a difference for a lot of people.'

Meanwhile, for Alice, Camp Cope's consciousness-raising posts on social media have shaped how she views the world, giving her an understanding of her privilege as a white, middle-class, cisgender woman and inspiring her to advocate for those less privileged:

[Camp Cope] have opened my eyes to a lot of things and changed how I think about the world - seeing that the world isn't a very kind place to everyone. I don't want to say I was ignorant. But I guess I didn't realize how like deep [inequality] ran.

She says the band have also inspired her to use her voice to vocally advocate for causes she cares about.

I don't worry about what people will think of me if I post something advocating for a cause I care about. I think [Camp Cope] have given me more self-confidence to kind of advocate for other people.

Camp Cope's promotion of such causes as Black Lives Matter, Indigenous deaths in custody, and trans rights has encouraged these fans to become more vocal and aware of social justice issues. For example, Alice first learned about Indigenous deaths in custody when Camp Cope circulated a petition at Laneway festival in 2019 – something which she says she would not have otherwise heard about or investigated if the band had not spoken about it. In addition, her understanding of the COVID-19 lockdown of social housing estates in Melbourne, which disproportionately impacted poor and migrant communities, was also informed by the group's consciousness-raising online:

I think the things that Camp Cope talk about and the way I think about the world, I'm very critical of the way [the lockdown] happened... and I don't think I would have felt the same a couple of years ago.

Similarly, Nox says they have learned a lot about social justice issues from following Camp Cope on social media. Through this, they have deepened their understanding of the world. By engaging with Camp Cope's consciousness-raising posts on social media, Nox has been mobilized to donate money to causes, sign petitions and advocate for the causes Camp Cope promote on their own social media. Nox also discovered other activists through Camp Cope's sharing of posts on Instagram. Nox says they learned about the COVID-19 lockdown of social

housing in Melbourne through Camp Cope's social media and was motivated to sign petitions and share consciousness-raising information in their own circle.

Alice and Nox's learning and political engagement through Camp Cope can be understood as a social learning experience. The emotional and experiential connections forged through interaction deepened their understanding of their position in the world and of themselves, thus shaping and affirming personal and collective feminist identities. Joan says she has gained 'second-hand confidence' through Camp Cope's confidence and that their outspokenness has inspired her to do the same. As a young person, she says she already supported anti-racism, anti-homophobia, and anti-sexism causes, but finding Camp Cope encouraged her to be more vocal in supporting those causes.

If they can't see it, they can't be it – inspiring the next generation.

Camp Cope's active resistance to gender hierarchy within the music industry inspired Joan and Nox to assume roles within it outside of the 'accepted' order prescribed by masculine hegemony. Joan and Nox's experiences exemplify what Green (2016) describes as an 'inspiration experience', where their interactions with Camp Cope have influenced them to participate in music. In some ways, Camp Cope has given young women and gender-diverse people in music permission to do something that they had been told previously was out of reach. This representation alone works to challenge masculine hegemony in the Australian music industry.

For Joan, Camp Cope was an inspiration for starting a band with another woman. Influenced by some of Camp Cope's lyrics, her band wrote a song challenging the way women are categorized as 'girl bands' – a differentiation which implies inferiority to men who play in 'bands'. Joan's band uses their platform, as Camp Cope have, to advocate for the causes they care about – in song, on stage and online. Joan's experience is of biographical significance that has guided her toward a particular trajectory and encouraged her to use her band's platform to express herself politically and advocate for causes she believes in.

Joan sees Camp Cope as having paved the way for younger women in the music scene – that they have created a space and generated an awareness of systemic sexism in the music industry in young woman musicians. In her own band, Joan and her bandmate have taken inspiration from Camp Cope and frequently broadcast their political beliefs and use their platform to further causes they care about – such as anti-racism campaigns, Black Lives Matter, LGBTQ rights and feminism. She believes it is important that her band uses its platform, as Camp Cope does, to advocate for political beliefs through music.

Joan also volunteers with Girls Rock! – a grassroots organization that aims to empower young women, trans, and non-binary youth through rock music. She sees being actively involved in the scene as important to cultivating the same safe space Camp Cope provided her and for inspiring the next generation of young people. Joan's band already has been the source of inspiration experiences for younger women musicians, who have been moved by her group to start their own band.

Joan is also critical of the music industry more broadly – something which she became aware of through Camp Cope's public criticism of the music industry. Her band uses their platform to criticise organisations for their support of (alleged) abusers and willingly turns down opportunities from businesses or organisations that do not align with their values.

Like Joan, Nox has also been influenced by Camp Cope to actively participate in music – as a musician and sound engineer. They said that Camp Cope helped them to overcome their anxiety about taking up space in their local music scene – which they described as a 'boys club.' Previously, they had felt uncomfortable and anxious and often avoided attending shows. They were feeling disillusioned with the music industry and the barriers they faced as a non-binary person in a male-dominated field. Camp Cope's role in the music industry as creatives has given Nox confidence to pursue their career in sound production and motivates them to improve the industry for other non-binary and queer youth. For Nox, Camp Cope not only prompted their career goals, but assured them that they were not alone in the struggles they faced in a male-dominated music industry. Camp Cope motivated them to 'fight' the structural challenges they faced in the hope that they could one day influence others in the same way.

These inspiration experiences are significant because, as Sara Cohen (1997) notes, women's participation in music increases when women are represented on stage (Cohen 1997). In the Australian music scene, which is dominated by men, the participation of women in roles masculine hegemony deems 'unacceptable' for them, such as musicians or sound engineers, works to challenge these norms. Therefore, the impact of this is not limited to musicians inspiring other musicians (like Joan) but opens more possibilities when thinking about working in music. Joan and Nox's accounts emphasise the lasting impact of music as an 'inspiration experience' that serves as the reason for taking a particular course of action (Green 2016).

#MeToo and the healing power of speaking out

Camp Cope has been vocal about abuse in the music industry and are vocal supporters of survivors of abuse and assault. For three of these fans, Camp Cope represented a safe space to heal from sexual harm. Lori, Alice, and Nox connected with Camp Cope on emotional and experiential levels and used these connections to process, heal from and speak out about sexual assault. These fans idolize Camp Cope because through their lyrics and commercial identity, they 'make feelings available' to their fans and equip them with a vocabulary to name and process complicated emotions.

In particular, the song, 'The Face of God,' which details the aftermath of Maq's sexual assault by another musician, evoked strong emotional and experiential connections with these three fans. The song speaks to the widespread issue of sexual assault and harassment in the Australian music industry and on the protection it provides to male musicians at the expense of women's safety. 'The Face of God' can be considered an expression of solidarity with survivors of assault, as well as an embodiment of the practice of speaking out that #MeToo encourages (Trott 2021)(3). Indeed, it was the public testimonials and solidarity expressed in

#MeToo movement that assuaged the band's concerns about releasing 'The Face of God' and gave Maq the courage to speak out (Hennessy 2018). Maq's story of assault is embedded in and articulated through the 'The Face of God' and rearticulated and expressed through the audience's consumption and cognitive 'perception' of the song. By articulating her own personal experiences, the artist rearticulates and recreates the experience of the audience. Maq sharing her story of abuse and assault through music, helped Alice, Lori, and Nox to understand that the sexual assault and abuse they experienced was not their fault.

Participants in Trier-Bieniek's study of Tori Amos fans reported similar experiences of musical healing. Like these Camp Cope fans, they used Tori Amos' music to understand and process complicated emotions surround sexual abuse and assault. For some, listening to Amos's music helped them to identify abuse and assault (Trier-Bieniek 2013). This is reflected in Camp Cope and their fans and is particularly powerful in the broader social context of the #MeToo movement. Camp Cope speaking out about their experiences, through their music or on social media, challenges the dominance of men within the Australian music industry, as well as in broader society. These three fans' testimony demonstrates the power of speaking out and the impact this has on both personal and collective levels.

Although not discussed in depth during the interview, Alice mentioned that Camp Cope 'had a really powerful way of conveying awful things, like sexual assault' and that their music and commercial identity had helped her to heal from sexual assault. She said that she really connected with Camp Cope's album, *How to Socialise and Make Friends* and songs like 'The Face of God' 'really meant something' to her as she processed her own trauma.

'The Face of God' also helped Nox to feel less alone. They say the song helped them to understand that being groomed online and assaulted was not their fault and provided comfort through community: 'We all relate to ['The Face of God'] and it's a lot easier if we can all deal with it together. I don't have to be alone anymore.' For Nox, the song connected them to an imagined community of survivors of abuse (4). For them, Maq is someone they can look to as a person who has survived, and this alone provides assurance that they can too. This is a sentiment echoed by Alice and Lori – both of whom also felt safe and less alone in the sense of community and collectivity fostered by Camp Cope. 'The Face of God' and Camp Cope's vocal support for survivors and frequent callouts, helped Nox to feel stronger and empowered them to speak out about their experience and to be vocal about abuse within their local music scene. Hearing the song was particularly emotional for Nox, as their abuse is linked to the music scene. They explained that 'I met [my abuser] through music, so Georgia [Maq] talking about [her experience] from a music point helped me express the sadness that came with it'. Here, Nox makes an experiential and emotional connection with the song and interprets its meaning according to their own unique experience. Camp Cope's example has helped them to express feelings of loneliness and sadness resulting from their abuse.

Lori believes that Camp Cope has been an important part of her healing from an abusive relationship. Although Lori has never met Maq, she found strength and solidarity in the shared experiences and emotional connection she forged with the band's frontwoman. Lori said that Maq publicly 'calling out' her abuser, who she says emotionally abused, manipulated, and harassed her, was empowering to hear,

as it mirrored her experience of abuse. Lori says, 'Camp Cope have been a really important part of my healing from an abusive relationship and understanding that the way I was treated within that relationship was not ok.' This connection Lori made helped her to process her experience and to be vocal about what happened to her. She was a fan of Camp Cope throughout the abusive relationship, and she believes her ex-partner ridiculed the band for their feminist politics, strength as women and moral ideology in an attempt to 'stamp out' the power and strength Lori drew from Camp Cope. She found strength in knowing there was a community behind Camp Cope and that she was not alone. Speaking about, or 'calling out' abuse, can be seen to encourage others to the same. Lori believes it is important for women to speak out about traumatic experiences because it 'makes other women brave'. She says that 'When Georgia [Maq] spoke out about [her abuser], that made me feel more comfortable in speaking about my experience in a more public way'. In a society where there is seldom formal justice for survivors of assault, speaking out can be seen as a means to seek acknowledgement and remedy (Jaffe 2018).

Lori says that seeing Camp Cope play 'The Face of God' live was a cathartic experience. She recalls seeing the song performed on a night when she had a chance encounter with her abuser and that the performance had 'hyped' her up and provided her strength to deal with the situation. Here, Lori uses Camp Cope's music to self-modulate, transitioning between feeling frightened and intimidated, to feeling strong and empowered (DeNora 2000). These fans' experiences exemplify how an emotional and experiential connection with a fan object can be used by fans to understand and process complicated emotions. As Adrienne Trier-Bieniek's research found, women fans are interested in music that they can connect with on an emotional level, and that this can inspire them to engage in feminist activism (Trier-Bieniek 2012; 2013). These three fans applied songs like, 'The Face of God' as a "unique balm" for their emotional struggles (Ewens 2019: 54).

The band's music and commercial identity has helped these fans to convert shame, loneliness, and self-blame, into strength, healing, and empowerment. Indeed, sparking a change in behaviour is particularly relevant to feminist mobilisation, as helping women convert shame and inadequacy into anger and empowerment is seen as a key objective of feminism (Reger 2007).

Conclusion

In this study, four fans, inspired by Camp Cope, operate as feminist actors within the Australian music scene. They derive meaning beyond what is offered by the fan object to gain deeper understandings of their emotions and experiences and are in turn mobilised to influence change in their communities (Baym 2018; Trier-Bieniek 2012). The discussion of this phenomenon helps affirm the power of music as a social learning tool and vehicle for social and political change. It also highlights the power musicians have as leaders – regardless of whether they have global commercial success or operate in smaller, localised industries and the translocal music scenes that support them. These fans challenge mainstream conceptions of fandom as silly or trivial by consuming the music and feminist messaging of an all-woman band and finding strength through that engagement. Fans of Camp Cope challenge masculine hegemony in the Australian music industry, and in broader society. As we move toward a post-#MeToo music industry, fans and their

experiences must be included in this conversation, as their passionate consumption of music and political message keep the industry alive and profitable (Ewens 2019).

Representation of these groups of people on music stages not only impacts performers, but also those who participate in the scene in various ways – from sound engineers and producers to venue workers, writers, photographers, and audiences. The fans interviewed for this study saw confidence, outspokenness and strength in Camp Cope and derived meaning from their message and presentation, which helped them to become more confident and stronger in their own personal identities. Through these emotional and experiential connections, fans also established collective identities, aligning themselves with Camp Cope's feminist beliefs and feminism within the #MeToo era more broadly. This case study exemplifies the 'If she can't see it, she can't be it' rhetoric of representation. If fans can't see empowered, outspoken women challenging the structures that marginalise them, in the music industry or elsewhere, they can't be them.

Endnotes

- (1) The original lyrics of 'The Opener', 'It's another man telling us we can't fill up a room. It's another man telling us to book a smaller venue' highlight how men in the music industry actively discourage women and gender-diverse musicians.
- (2) This study was subject to ethics approval from The University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee. H-2020-145
- (3) #MeToo was a social movement against sexual harassment and abuse that gained global traction in 2017. Inspired by activist Tarana Burke's decades-long work with sexual assault survivors, the viral hashtag sparked a global conversation about sexual harassment and violence and sought to build solidarity, critique power structures that silenced victim-survivors, and hold abusers to account.
- (4) I use Anderson's term 'Imagined community' here because while fans may never meet every fan of Camp Cope, or every survivor of sexual harm, they feel connected to a broader community of people like them (Anderson 1991)

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