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The Glass Ceiling: Women in the Music Industry

Imagine an energetic young woman, fresh out of college, arriving for her job interview at a record label that has some of the most popular artists on its roster. As she enters the office of a senior vice president, she can hardly contain her excitement. She learned of a job opening through a college friend, a young man recently hired in an executive position at the label. The first question she hears is, "How fast can you type?" Although she is surprised at the question—she thought that she was interviewing for an executive position like her male counterpart—she answers cordially, "My last typing score was sixty-three words-per-minute with two mistakes." "That's a little slow, most of the girls around here type at least seventy-five, but you'll be on the switchboard most of the time."

Five minutes into the interview, she realized the job of "executive assistant" for which she was interviewing was actually much different than the job her college friend got. Ironically, his position has the exact same job title! This well-educated young industry hopeful knew she had two choices: take the secretarial job, smile, and try to move up in the company and recording industry; or ask why female "executives" are expected to start as receptionists whereas males aren't. Obviously, if she chose the latter course of action, she would probably not be offered the job and would have an arduous task if she chose to file a gender discrimination claim.

Some women in the music industry have pointed out that whereas other industries have moved beyond the "good ol' boys" system of hiring, the music industry often acts as if it is above the law. The obvious gender bias described in the previous hypothetical situation happens at record labels, music publishing companies, and other music firms. Ac-

cluding to reports from women, this happens because the industry continues to rely on gender stereotypes that have been around for years.

ARE WOMEN UNDERREPRESENTED IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY?

A population estimate released by the U.S. Census Bureau on June 1, 1999, indicated that there are 133,230,000 males and 139,406,000 females in our country (www.census.gov). Women can, therefore, be considered the majority (51 percent) gender in the United States. That proportion is also true of undergraduate college enrollments. In addition, the average age for females in this country is almost thirty-eight, whereas for men it is thirty-five. It is intuitively logical, then, to expect females to be well represented in managerial positions in the business world.

The proportion of females in the workforce has increased dramatically since 1940. Women represented one quarter of the workforce in 1940. By 1997 women represented half of all persons employed in the United States (Smith and Bachu, 1997). The motivation behind the Family Medical Leave Act was to help companies retain more female employees after childbirth. Clearly, females are well represented in the population of employees! If half the population of college-educated job seekers is female, half the workforce is made up of women, and they tend to have longer professional lives than males, should we not expect parity in mid- and upper-level management?

In order to determine if females are well represented in music industry occupations, one must look at different types of businesses such as record labels, publishing companies, artist management firms, and booking agencies. These types of companies tend to be clusters of "small businesses," or divisions, often loosely aligned under a larger corporate umbrella. Because of the numerous autonomous divisions, these types of companies often do not have centralized human resources departments, or summary data, for all employees. Typically, they do not have the readily available data about the proportion of females in different levels of management such as a company like IBM, Ford Motor Company, or Prudential Insurance. Therefore, it is difficult to accurately define the number of females vis-à-vis males employed by record companies, publishers, or other music business firms. Audio engineers and record producers, in contrast, tend to be freelance occupations that are even more difficult to analyze from a gender distribution standpoint.

A glance through the employee roster of a record label usually reveals quite a few female employees. As one moves up the corporate ladder toward upper management, however, the gender pattern becomes decidedly male. The *1999 Recording Industry Sourcebook*, a directory of music industry personnel, lists seventy-two senior-level executives at major la-

bels in the United States. A senior-level executive, in terms of this research, was someone at a record company who was listed as holding the title of chairperson, CEO, or president. In total, there were nine chairpersons, twenty-one CEOs, and forty-two presidents. Of those seventy-two senior-level label executives, there were three females: one chairperson and two presidents. In other words, this analysis revealed that 4 percent of the senior-level executives at major labels were women.

The *Los Angeles Times* list of pop music's "Top 40 people who will shape the industry in the 90s and beyond" (The Top 40, 1996) included only one female. She was not one of the few female CEOs in the industry. She was Madonna! Her industry "clout," according to the publishers, emanated from her ability to sell 500,000 copies of her book, *Sex*, in one week.

The executive boardroom isn't the only place where women struggle for recognition in the recording industry. The likelihood of a female being hired as the audio engineer ("first engineer" or "mix engineer") for a major label recording is probably the same as being struck by lightning. The absence of females in engineering roles in the music industry is not, however, much different from the absence of females from engineering in general. Women account for only 8.5 percent of engineers in the United States! Yet, with the large number of females involved with music technology—as performers who use synthesizers, amplifiers, and other electronic gear—one would expect to see more women entering the field of audio engineering.

One frequently cited reason why females are not promoted to upper-management positions is their lack of experience. As the theory goes, females tend to have less work experience than their male counterparts because of child-rearing duties. For example, a woman with two children might have stopped working for a few years in order to be with her children during their preschool years. After her last child started first grade, she reentered the workforce. The males, against whom she must now compete for promotions, have more on-the-job experience than she does.

Research conducted by the Population Division of the Census Bureau tends to refute the theory that childbearing causes differential experience in women. About 60 percent of all women who discontinue work for maternity reasons return to work within six months of giving birth to their child. Amazingly, 60 percent also continue to work while pregnant. The Family Medical Leave Act has given added incentive for females to "freeze" their job while on maternity leave (Smith and Bachu, 1999). It is unlikely that the percentage of females who work throughout their pregnancy and then return to their careers will decrease in the foreseeable future.

Potential problems a woman faces in the music business begin with finding the job she really wants. This, the first big hurdle, requires that she resist any pressure to accept an "alternative" job instead of the one she is truly seeking. If she is one of the fortunate few who isn't steered away from the job she really wants and into a more "feminine" job, she might be hired. Next, she might encounter her second obstacle: an environment that neither supports nor appreciates female employees. She may encounter an environment that is unpleasant for all "non-male" employees or for her in particular. She could even get the message, "You've come a long way baby . . . now make us some coffee!"

At the end of a productive day on the job, she might grab some samples of upcoming album releases and take them home to play while she relaxes. If she's lucky, the albums won't include songs with titles like "Smack My Bitch Up," a song from British rock band Prodigy's album released by Maverick Records, Madonna's label, and distributed by Warner Brothers. Unfortunately, it is likely that Madonna's label might make huge profits off that very type of music—music that creates a distinct feeling that women are, first and foremost, sexual objects.

Recording industry firms are susceptible to sexist work environments that evolve as a result of the lyrical content of the music they sell. It is, obviously, difficult for many males to spend a lot of time working on recordings and videos that reduce the female image to a sexual object and not let that attitude carry over into their interpersonal relationships in the office. But the judicial system has made it clear that the responsibility for preventing what is termed a "hostile environment" for women in the workplace rests on the shoulders of the company as well as on those of the harassing individual. If a record company creates an atmosphere in which sexually explicit artwork is present, lyrics that denigrate women are played in work areas, and jokes of a sexual nature are common, one might describe it as a "hostile environment" for women. Such an environment has been the basis for claims of sexual harassment in recent years in many different industries, including the music industry.

Although the music industry has always offered a platform for social reform, it does not follow its own example. It seems sadly ironic that a large number of recording artists eagerly support social causes, such as shelters for battered women, yet work for record companies that are blatantly sexist in promoting music that refers to women as "bitches" and "whores." In her scathing indictment of the industry, Annie Fort (1992) asked, "Will all the artists performing at Farm Aid this year care as much about the secretaries who work at their labels as they do about farmers they have never met?"

Her point is well taken. Do artists such as Jewel, Shawn Colvin, and Alanis Morissette sing with passion about problems women face while their record labels promote violence against women? Or are they even aware of the environment that female executives, producers, and engineers endure to make and sell their respective gold records?

GENDER STEREOTYPING

Females are, without a doubt, major consumers of music. The percentage of recordings purchased by women has increased such that they buy slightly more records (51.3 percent) than males (www.RIAA.com). In addition, female consumers buy a large percentage of albums created by female artists. For example, performers such as Jewel, Sarah McLachlan, Sheryl Crow, Whitney Houston, Brandy, and Mariah Carey perform on many of the recordings bought by women (Budu, 1990). If women are active in the creation and consumption of recorded music, then one might assume that females would be equally well represented in boardrooms of record labels. That assumption is, however, quite far from the truth.

An explanation of why there are fewer females in leadership positions in the industry might lie in gender stereotyping. Perhaps women are funneled into the types of jobs that seldom lead to upper-level management promotions. Dyana Williams, president of the International Association of African-American Musicians (IAAAM), stated that women are "locked out of some jobs" in the music industry. According to Williams, "There are females in publicity and there are a lot of female singers, but there are few sales executives, audio engineers and producers." She gave an example of a female friend who was pursuing a job in the sales division of a record label. "My friend was steered away from sales because it is considered a job for males—not females" (Williams, 1999).

Why would females not be welcome in some departments? Dyana Williams feels that sometimes male record label employees do things they don't want women to know about. At very least, some think that their male clients would feel uncomfortable having women around at certain times. It has been rumored, for example, that record promotion executives provide perks for radio program directors in order to get radio airplay for the label's records. Several current and former promotion executives, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, admitted to providing "adult entertainment" to radio executives on occasion. When pressed about these activities, Williams (1999) stated, "The practice of promotion staff providing prostitutes and strippers for radio executives at conventions is not uncommon. This type of behavior happens all the time!"

A woman interviewed for a *Los Angeles Times* exposé (Becklund and

Philips, 1991) told the journalists that she left her job in a promotion department because "she could not comfortably take men to strip joints!" A male promotion executive who has worked for major and independent record labels spoke candidly about the "sex for airplay" rumors. He asked to remain anonymous, but confirmed that promotion staff members often have an official hotel suite at conventions plus an unadvertised and confidential suite for special guests. The two types of special guests are men from radio stations and strippers or prostitutes hired by the label. "A stag party atmosphere, complete with booze and women, is offered to important radio contacts," he said. He also noted that though there is no overt agreement that the radio executives will play the label's records, the inference is there. The goal is to establish a "good buddy" relationship with key radio personnel. The presence of female promotion executives would, obviously, put a damper on the party.

SEX DISCRIMINATION AND THE LAW

Media coverage of sexual harassment in the music industry became so frequent in the 1990s that some people began to think it was a regular part of this quirky business. Some veteran executives—both males and females—go so far as to criticize females who file charges alleging sexual harassment or hiring discrimination. They defend unorthodox behavior by stating, "If you can't handle the environment of the music industry, then go work somewhere else."

"It's no worse in the music industry than in other fields" is a common response to allegations of sexual harassment and employment discrimination in the music industry. That line of defense attempts to explain gender bias as "human nature." Accusations of sexual harassment leveled at persons in high-profile positions such as senator, Supreme Court justice, and president have not resulted in substantial sanctions against harassers. The sexist behavior of powerful government figures sends a subtle message to other males: "Boys will be boys." Is such behavior simply a result of gender differences? Even if it is, sexual harassment is now considered totally inappropriate in the workplace, and laws have evolved to support that philosophy.

The federal government has enacted laws that address the various types of discrimination that might confront women in any workplace. Sex discrimination is protected by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Specifically, Section 703(a) of Title VII explains: "It shall be an unlawful employment practice for an employer . . . to fail or refuse to hire or to discharge any individual, or otherwise to discriminate against any individual with respect to his compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment, because of such individual's race, color, religion, sex, or national origin" (emphasis added).



The number of legal actions dealing with discriminatory hiring practices evolved quickly after passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Although most litigation tended to deal with racial discrimination, it established firm footing for gender-based lawsuits that followed. The area of discrimination unique to treatment of females centered around the new concept of harassment in the working environment. To most high school-aged women, sexual harassment is an expression they understand. To their grandmothers, however, it is a recent phenomenon.

In order to further clarify its position on sexual harassment and to declare it a form of gender-based discrimination, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) issued guidelines in 1980. In declaring sexual harassment to be a violation of the Civil Rights Act, the EEOC defined the circumstances under which an employer might be held liable for sexual harassment, what constitutes harassing behavior in the workplace, and steps an employer should take in order to prevent sexual harassment.

In general terms, sexual harassment is unwanted or unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature. An employee who willingly has an affair with a supervisor would have difficulty defending a claim of sexual harassment at a later date. If the sexual advances made by a supervisor were unwelcome, however, the employee might be able to establish a harassment claim. It should be noted that it is not uncommon for an employee, usually a female, to be coerced into having sex with a supervisor. The supervisory person has the power, but not the legal right, to fire or to retaliate in some other way against the harassed employee if she refuses to provide the sexual favors requested. Such sexual conduct obviously remains unwelcome and unwanted.

The EEOC's guidelines were subsequently reviewed and affirmed by a 1986 Supreme Court decision in *Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson* (106 S. Ct. 2399, 40 EPD paragraph 36,159). An additional, and extremely important, outcome of the case was recognition of two types of sexual harassment by the judicial system. The most obvious form of harassment is referred to as "quid pro quo." This Latin expression basically means "something in exchange for something else." If an employer asks for, or merely infers, that sexual favors will result in some benefit or detriment to an employee's job status, then quid pro quo harassment has occurred. The second, and less obvious, form of harassment is called "hostile environment" sexual harassment. If a woman is subjected to crude jokes, pornography being viewed in her presence, or sexually explicit music being played in the work area, then she may very well have grounds for a hostile environment harassment claim. The expression "hostile environment" infers an atmosphere of ongoing sexually oriented activities in one's place of work.

A lawsuit filed against Price Waterhouse by Ann Hopkins, an accoun-

tant, established a firm legal precedent because it was appealed to and decided by the U.S. Supreme Court. The act of gender stereotyping by an employer was the legal issue decided in this case. Specifically, the Supreme Court decision declared gender stereotyping by an employer to be grounds for sex discrimination claims. The case of *Hopkins v. Price Waterhouse* (and later, *Price Waterhouse v. Hopkins* in appellate courts) also had a significant impact on subsequent legislation dealing with civil rights. It may also provide the legal precedent for female employees in the music industry who experience gender stereotyping.

Hopkins joined the accounting firm of Price Waterhouse in 1978 and worked in their Office of Government Services for five years. It was common practice for accountants at the firm to apply for partner status after several years of successful employment. In 1982 Ann Hopkins applied for partnership. At that time there were 662 partners, 7 of whom—1 percent—were females. Of the 88 persons seeking partner status that year, Hopkins was the only female. Twenty-one candidates were rejected, 47 were accepted and 20, including Hopkins, were held for consideration the following year. After learning that it was unlikely she would win partner status the next year, she filed a lawsuit against Price Waterhouse.

When Hopkins' employment records were examined during her U.S. District Court trial, it was apparent that she accomplished many things one would expect from partners. Records revealed that she "played a key role in Price Waterhouse's successful effort to win a multi-million dollar contract with the Department of State" (*Hopkins v. Price Waterhouse*, 287 U.S. App. D.C. 173; 920 F. 2d 967, 1990 U.S. App.). The trial court proceedings indicated that her clients were pleased with her work and that none of the partners had been as successful in the year preceding her application for partnership.

The firm justified not awarding Hopkins partner status by pointing to negative comments made by partners. The negative comments referred to her problems with interpersonal skills. During her trial Judge Gesell concluded that "both supporters and opponents to her candidacy indicated that she was sometimes overly aggressive, unduly harsh, difficult to work with and impatient with staff" (*Price Waterhouse v. Hopkins*).

Both written and spoken comments made by partners showed a definite pattern: The partners' major concern was that Hopkins' behavior was not "ladylike." Comments from partners about Hopkins' less-than-feminine demeanor included a reference that she was "macho"; another speculated that she "overcompensated for being a woman"; one suggested that she take a "course at charm school"; and several felt that she should not use foul language because it was inappropriate for a woman (*Price Waterhouse v. Hopkins*).

At the trial Dr. Susan Fiske, a social psychologist, testified that the

partner selection committee appeared to be influenced by gender stereotyping. The Supreme Court agreed with Dr. Fiske. In the course of reviewing the reasons for denial of her partnership application, Supreme Court Justice O'Connor concluded that Price Waterhouse "permitted stereotypical attitudes toward women to play a significant, though unquantifiable, role in its decision not to invite her to become a partner" (Rothstein and Liebman, 1994). The lower-court trial judge noted that female candidates for partnership were viewed more favorably if they were perceived to be more feminine. He also noted that one partner said he would not support any women for partnership because "women were not even capable of functioning as senior managers (a level below partners)" (*Price Waterhouse v. Hopkins*, 1990).

Ann Hopkins was ultimately awarded back pay of \$371,175 and admitted to partnership at Price Waterhouse. The most significant historical outcome of this case was the influence it had on the subsequent revisions of the Civil Rights Act. Debate over passage of the 1991 civil rights legislation made reference to legal issues presented in *Price Waterhouse v. Hopkins*.

On November 21, 1991, President George Bush signed into law the 1991 Civil Rights Act. The intent of the law was to update the existing Civil Rights Act. In doing so, Congress agreed to provide victims of civil rights violations the right to recover monetary damages. Specifically, a plaintiff could be awarded an amount of money that would compensate them for what was lost as a result of the discriminatory act. This award, called "compensatory damages," might include foregone salary or wages. In addition, for cases in which the actions of the employer were committed with "malice or with reckless indifference," the plaintiff can be awarded punitive damages. Punitive damages are intended to discourage the offending party from doing such a thing again (Civil Rights Act of 1991).

HARASSMENT IN THE MUSIC WORKPLACE

The last decade of the millennium might receive the dubious honor of being dubbed the "Decade of Sexual Harassment Claims." According to the American Management Association, "Between 1990 and 1996, the number of sexual harassment cases filed with federal and local agencies skyrocketed 150 percent, jumping from 6,127 to 15,342" (Reynolds, 1997). Although the exact number of claims filed by employees working in the music industry is not known, media coverage of such harassment cases exploded in the 1990s.

In 1991 the *Los Angeles Times* published an in-depth story about complaints of sexual harassment in the music industry. The two investigative reporters who wrote the article, Laurie Becklund and Chuck Philips, re-

vealed that during the previous eighteen months, female employees at three different record labels had filed harassment charges against powerful male executives at each respective company. The supervisors named in the three separate claims were all well known and powerful industry executives: Marko Babineau, former general manager of Geffen subsidiary DGC Records; Mike Bone, former co-president of Mercury Records; and, Jeff Aldrich, former senior vice president of A&R at RCA Records. At about the same time, Abe Somer, former head of the Music Department at Mitchell, Silberberg & Knupp, a powerful entertainment law firm in Los Angeles, also was the target of sexual harassment charges by a former law clerk.

Some of the women interviewed for the story described corporate environments in which sexual harassment was blatantly ignored and even joked about. The reporters learned of informal networks created by women in the music business to warn one another about sexist males to watch out for. They called those males "bimbo hounds."

Chuck Philips, the male reporter of the investigative duo, continued to investigate and report on sexual harassment in the music industry over the next three and one-half years. Philips seemed to have uncovered a dirty little secret of the music industry: Frequent incidents of sexual harassment perpetrated by specific executives are typically well known throughout a company long before any formal complaints are filed. A few of the executives found to have committed sexual harassment were not even fired. In fact, the females who lodged complaints were sometimes transferred to another area of the corporation while the male offender remained in his job. Apparently, the record labels thought that moving harassed women to a different area was the appropriate way to deal with the problem.

As a result of Philips' relentless efforts to determine how prevalent sexual harassment was in the music industry, other media pursued the topic. *Billboard* magazine published an article that conducted interviews of selected female and male executives. ABC-TV's *Prime Time Live* produced an investigative report that aired on national television. One could say that Chuck Philips was responsible for bringing sexual harassment in the music industry to a national forum.

Finding information about past incidents of sexual harassment in the music industry is quite difficult. When faced with lawsuits that appear to have a good chance of winning in court, music industry firms typically settle out of court. But in order to receive the cash settlement, female plaintiffs must agree not to discuss the case or the settlement with anyone. In rare instances, though, the plaintiff and her legal counsel decline settlement offers and proceed to a civil trial.

Penny Muck, who has been referred to as the "Anita Hill of the Music Industry" (Philips, 1992), filed a multi-million-dollar lawsuit against Geff-

fen Records and its parent company, MCA, over allegations of sexual harassment by her former boss, Marko Babineau, former general manager of Geffen Records' DGC label. Although Muck initially refused to talk to the press about her charges, she eventually agreed to an extended interview with the *Los Angeles Times*. Her graphic description of Babineau's outrageously disgusting behavior prompted numerous other women to give anonymous reports of sexual harassment to the media.

Muck had worked in the music business for eight years, the last two as secretary to Babineau. In her lawsuit Muck alleged that Babineau had fondled her breasts and buttocks. As his behavior grew progressively more repulsive, he began occasionally to masturbate in front of her and two other female employees over a two-month period. His behavior was so bizarre that she feared no one would believe her if she reported it. "After he ejaculated, it was so weird. Like something out of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. He just walks back into his office and it's like business as usual" (Philips, 1992, p. 1).

Geffen Records' response to Babineau's behavior was, amazingly enough, just as bizarre. Sources at Geffen told reporters that Babineau had sexually harassed other female employees as far back as 1984, when he became head of promotion at Geffen. Prior to Muck's complaint, two other women had been transferred to other departments when they complained about him. Babineau's punishment at the time? He was promoted to general manager of Geffen's newly formed DGC label when Geffen Records was sold to MCA in 1990!

Penny Muck settled her lawsuit for assault, battery, and sexual harassment against Geffen Records for over \$500,000 according to anonymous sources interviewed by the *Los Angeles Times* in 1995 (Philips, 1995). A second sexual harassment case against Babineau, filed a year after Muck's, was settled for \$100,000. Although Muck was prepared to be ostracized from the music industry, she found an excellent job as the West Coast representative for an artist management firm.

Not all print media saw the Peggy Muck incident as a symptom of a greater problem worth pursuing aggressively. An article by Chris Morris and Phyllis Stark (1991) in *Billboard* seemed to sugar-coat the issue of sexual harassment in typical showbiz style. Although the article cited quotations from female victims that read like indictments of the music industry in general, the journalists apparently felt a need to cushion those revelations with their version of "boys will be boys." Morris and Stark generalized, "Many observers believe that, while sexual harassment does take place within the music industry, it is no more prevalent there than in any other sector of American business." They seemed to echo Irving Azoff, president of Giant Records, who responded to the *Los Angeles Times* article by saying, "I'm astounded that they chose to limit the story to the record business. As usual, the record business is low

man on the totem pole, and we get hit first." But the ultimate head-in-the-sand award goes to Sammy Hagar, of the group Van Halen, who gave his true feelings about sexual harassment in the music business during a backstage interview. Hagar told a reporter, "Can you blame 'em? They hire fine secretaries, then harass 'em. It's a man's nature, I'm sorry" (Willman, 1992).

Perhaps the saddest epilogue to the 1991 *Los Angeles Times* article would be a status report on the three record label executives whose harassing actions were the focus of the article. After leaving Geffen Records in the shadow of sexual harassment charges, Babineau opened an independent record promotion company, MJB & Associates. His first projects as an independent promoter were allegedly records released by Geffen Records and Radio Active Records, two labels distributed by MCA. After leaving RCA with a presumably lucrative cash settlement, Jeff Aldrich began to freelance as an A&R talent scout. RCA hired him several weeks later to work for them as a consultant. After leaving Island Records, Mike Bone was hired by Def American Records, a Time Warner subsidiary. Bone was hired in spite of protests from several of Def American's twelve female employees.

EQUAL PAY

Even though many women are able to find the job they want in the industry and endure nonsupportive work environments, they are often faced with discrimination in the form of the pay they receive. There is general suspicion among women that men earn more money for doing essentially the same work as their female counterparts in the music industry. It is difficult to conduct salary equity studies in the music industry because most firms are tight-lipped about any personnel information. Therefore, reviewing national data for all types of employment is currently our only alternative.

Because it is a less obvious, but a nonetheless painful, problem for women in the workplace, salary disparity is often overlooked. When music industry companies are asked about gender issues, they typically point to the number of females in their "workforce" and present deceptively impressive statistics for percentages of females hired in recent years. Unfortunately, the number or percentage of female employees does not answer the important question, Are women paid fair and equivalent salaries? If women are locked-out of upper-level positions in the music industry, one would expect average pay for males to exceed that of females. If women are pigeon-holed into vocational specialties that are low paying, it is likely that average earnings for women executives in the music industry are even lower than those of females in other industries.

One would expect that after almost twenty-five years of living under the Civil Rights Act, American women would enjoy salary equity. Unfortunately, the disparity in pay between men and women is quite pronounced. In 1998 the median weekly earnings of females working full time were \$456, whereas their male counterparts earned \$598 (*Monthly Labor Review*, 1999). Those data translate to women earning 76 percent of what males do.

When the variable "ethnicity" is entered into the equation, the comparison is even less equitable. African American males earned \$468 per week; black females earned \$400. Clearly, females, and especially African-American females, are still fighting for pay equity in the workplace. This unfortunate phenomenon might be explained by the low percentage of African American females in senior-level positions. The combination of historical discrimination against African Americans plus gender discrimination puts female minorities in the "most underrepresented" category of the national workforce.

Dyana Williams, president of IAAAM, points to the need for a study of African American women in the music industry. "How many African American females head a record label? How many engineers or producers are African American females?" asks Williams. Dyana often speaks to young African American women who aspire to leadership roles in the music industry. She emphasizes the importance of being prepared through education and networking. She asks, "Is it a coincidence that Sylvia Rhone, who is African American, studied business at the Wharton School of Business and later became the only female to assume the role of label chairperson?" She concludes, "Be informed; knowledge is power" (Williams, 1999).

There is a glimmer of hope for the younger generations of females entering the workforce. Women's average earnings, as a ratio of males' earnings, appear to be changing for the better with each emerging generation. When the population of working women was divided into three age groups (25-34, 35-44 and 45-64), the youngest group fared much better than the other two. The youngest group of females with bachelor's degrees in accounting earned 91 percent of what comparable males earned; the older groups earned 80 percent and 64 percent respectively. The youngest group with bachelor's degrees in business earned 86 percent of what their male counterparts earned. The other groups earned 77 percent and 66 percent. One might conclude that the struggle for salary equity is making incremental gains with each successive generation of educated females.

A SUCCESS STORY

In spite of the numerous obstacles that face women who struggle for recognition in the music industry, some women have won the battle for

success. Because it is difficult, and not common, for a female to ascend to the head of a music industry organization, successful women executives shine like beacons of hope for others on their way to the top. One female, Frances Preston, patiently rose from secretary-receptionist to one of the most powerful and influential executives in the industry. Another female executive, Sylvia Rhone, not only ascended to the head of a major record label but also promoted other women to leadership positions in her organization. Their success stories should serve as motivation for other women climbing corporate ladders in the music industry. One must ask, "Why have these women succeeded whereas many others haven't?"

One of the brightest beacons in the music industry is Frances Williams Preston, president and CEO of Broadcast Music Incorporated (BMI). The organization that Preston runs is a performance rights organization. It represents thousands of songwriters and publishers and collects royalties from TV, radio, and live music performances that use music created by BMI songwriters. Because the slightest adverse change in copyright laws could have devastating effects on songwriters and publishers, Preston maintains a close liaison with representatives of the House and Senate to keep track of legislative action. In the course of a day, she might meet with a famous rock songwriter in the morning and a group of senators in the afternoon. She might consider running for a national political office, as many people have predicted, if she weren't having so much fun at her current job!

Unlike many of her male counterparts, Frances Preston started at the bottom of the corporate food chain. She started as a receptionist and worked her way up to a secretarial position. She jokes about her lack of typing skills when she joined BMI, but her communication skills were her obvious asset. Her Ghandi-like persistence to enter the male-dominated ivory tower of music industry leadership was her second greatest asset. In 1986 she was promoted to the top management position at BMI, a role that requires her to maintain dual residences, with a home in New York and another in Nashville.

During her thirty-year rise from receptionist to one of the most powerful people in the music industry, Preston has had her share of problems with the male power structure. "In the old days, guys would even schedule meetings at clubs that didn't allow women," she recalls (Phillips, 1993). Once again her persistence and patience paid off. She was the first female admitted to the Friars Club in New York. Another male-dominated organization she joined was the Country Music Association (CMA), headquartered in Nashville. She is now one of only four people who have been awarded the honor of being "Lifetime Directors" of the CMA.

Although Preston is best known for her executive skills, her most lasting legacy will likely be a result of her philanthropic work. The Frances



Frances Williams Preston, President and CEO of BMI, receives the MIDEEM 1999 "Person of the Year" Award in Cannes, France, January 24, 1999. She is the first female to be honored with this award, and only six other persons have received it. (BMI Archives Photo Collection. Photographer: Yves Coatsaliou)

Williams Preston Laboratory, a cancer research center, and the T. J. Martell Foundation are ongoing fund-raising activities that she pursues with the same vigor as her full-time job. Her charitable contributions have not gone unnoticed. She was selected "Person of the Year" at the 1999 Cannes MIDEEM, an international music industry event. As with many other awards she has received, Frances Preston was the first female to receive this award.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Females are typically underrepresented in record label divisions such as sales, promotion, and A&R. Do you think this occurs because the jobs in these areas don't appeal to women? Or is gender discrimination preventing them from getting entry-level jobs in these types of positions?
2. Females tend to score higher than their male counterparts on the verbal sections of college entrance exams. There is a larger proportion of females in publicity jobs at record companies; however, publicity jobs are usually lower-paying positions than other divisions at record labels. Do you think women are encouraged to apply for publicity jobs and discouraged from others? Or do you think females are attracted to publicity because of the writing skills required? Are salaries low because women accept lower salaries?
3. It is likely that many women experience sexual harassment in the workplace but do not report it. Should women be encouraged to report sexual harassment in the workplace, even if doing so means sacrificing a good job? Do you think that senior-level executives have a tendency to ignore sexual harassment complaints? Do you think sexual harassment is more prevalent in the music industry than in other industries such as banking or insurance?
4. The common remark made to women who report sexual harassment is, "This is the way the music industry is. If you can't take the environment, then get out of this business." Do you think there is validity to that argument? What, if anything, might be done to change tolerance of sexual harassment in the music industry?
5. Frances Preston has been described as the "most successful woman in the music industry." How did her career path differ from that of her male counterparts? What things did she do to succeed? Why have other women failed while she succeeded?

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Organizations to Contact

Catalyst

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Catalyst is a nonprofit research and advisory firm that specializes in women's concerns and needs. It has a dual mission: "to enable professional women to achieve their maximum potential and help employers capitalize on the talents of their female employees."

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV)

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The coalition is dedicated to empowerment of battered women and their children. It is also active in public policy development and advocacy as it relates to violence against women. Song lyrics that glorify domestic violence represent the antithesis of what this organization advocates.

National Organization for Women (NOW)

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NOW is the most famous women's rights organization in the world. They have thirteen key issues that include violence against women, women-friendly workplaces, and young feminism. They are a major force in legislation involving women's issues.