

**“Under My Thumb”:  
Female On-Air Personalities on  
Classic Rock and Rock Radio Stations**

**Thesis**

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# **“Under My Thumb”: Female On-Air Personalities on Classic Rock and Rock Radio Stations**

## **Thesis Abstract**

Radio is a pervasive medium, and many formats are targeted toward women. While previous studies indicate women are highly under-represented in radio, no exact figures exist on the total number of female on-air personalities.

Although research into the roles and treatment of women in society is abundant, no previous research has looked specifically at female on-air radio personalities. This thesis used in-depth interviews to examine the roles and treatment of female on-air personalities on morning shows at classic rock or rock radio stations in eleven of the top fifteen U.S. markets.

This study found that, for the most part, women are not faring well in this male-dominated environment. While none of the women interviewed specifically said that they are a victim of gender discrimination, as a group they: make less money than their male colleagues on the morning shows; are far more likely to be the traffic or news announcer rather than a host or co-host of the show; are less likely than the men to be employed by the stations, which provide higher salaries, more prestige and better benefits than the radio services for which a number of them worked; and do not have the same opportunities for outside promotion work or career advancement.

The women provided conflicting opinions about whether females have a harder time than men making it into radio, but most acknowledged that once in the door, few make it into management or the top slots. A number of women noted that they did not aspire to the top job on a morning show because they believed it was too stressful or they felt they could not do it well.

The vast majority of the women – all but one – experienced what many would consider sexual harassment at some point in their careers. Although some of the women interviewed declined to characterize the behavior of their male colleagues as harassment, they acknowledged it could be seen as such by others. However, even those who admitted they were sexually harassed said they did not go to a supervisor or attempt to stop the behavior because of fears concerning how they would be perceived by their colleagues and fears that they would not be able to get another job in the industry.

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# **“Under My Thumb”<sup>1</sup>: Female On-Air Personalities on Classic Rock and Rock Radio Stations**

## **Introduction**

Research indicates that “many people spend more time with radio than with any other medium” (Gill, 1996, p. 211), and many radio listeners are female. “Radio reaches 80 percent of women in all key buying demographics weekly” (Merli, 1998, p. 34), and “females are the primary target for many formats” (Borzillo, 1993, p. 75).

### **Research Question**

This study will look at the roles<sup>2</sup>, status and treatment of female on-air radio personalities using the discourse analysis of in-depth, moderately-scheduled interviews with women in the top shifts at classic rock or rock stations in 11 of the top 15 U.S. markets.

Classic rock or rock radio formats are targeted primarily to males ages 25 to 54, feature mainly male deejays, and play music that is for the most part produced by and for males. The two formats are also very similar in scope and content (*Radio & Records*).

This study will look at the steps those women took to “make it,” as well as how they feel they are treated compared to their male colleagues, and if they feel they experience any gender discrimination while working in a male-dominated field. They will be asked about their history of working in radio, their current job titles and shifts, and about their job tasks and responsibilities. An examination of key phrases mentioned by the women with no prompting will also be included.

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<sup>1</sup> This title refers to the classic rock song of the same name by the Rolling Stones. This chauvinistic song is about a man’s control of a woman.

<sup>2</sup> The term “role” is being used in both the dramatic sense – that of a part to be played – and the sense of a position in a social structure – i.e. the role of a deejay at a radio station. A discussion of roles is in the literature review.

Despite the importance of radio as a medium, women are grossly under-represented in the industry as on-air personalities<sup>3</sup> and in other capacities. “On commercial radio, more than any other widely used medium, women remain the silent majority” (Tillotson, 1997, p. 06F).

Stone (1995a) estimated that within 5,500 newsrooms in commercial radio stations in 1994, only 31 percent of the personnel were women (Stone, 1995d). Research conducted four years later by the Radio-Television News Directors Association (RTNDA) and Ball State University similarly found that 31 percent of the people in radio news were women<sup>4</sup>, while 28 percent of news directors were women<sup>5</sup> (Papper & Gerhard, 1998b)<sup>6</sup>. In 1999, they found that the percentage of female news directors had dropped to a low of 20 percent (Papper & Gerhard, 1999a, p. 28).

In 1987, a mere three percent of the radio stations in the United States were owned and controlled by women (FCC Initiatives, 1999).

Kamins noted in 1992 that 50 of the National Association of Radio Talk Show Hosts’ 900-plus members were women (p. 29) – slightly more than five percent. That number has improved slightly. In 1997, 150 of the 2,000 association members were female, slightly more than seven percent (Tillotson, 1997, p. 6F). *Talkers*, a magazine that covers talk radio, creates an annual list of the 100 most important talk show hosts. The 2000 list included only 16 women (Ahrens, 2000, p. C02); that’s three fewer than in 1997 (Tillotson, 1997, p. 6F).

*Broadcasting & Cable Magazine’s* 2000 list of the top 25 media conglomerates includes mega-companies such as AOL, Time Warner, Walt Disney and Viacom. None of the

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<sup>3</sup> This includes anyone who is actually on the air, whether as a deejay or a reporter. A disk jockey is always an on-air personality, whereas an on-air personality is not always a deejay.

<sup>4</sup> This is the same percentage as 1997, which was a three percent increase over 1996 numbers.

<sup>5</sup> This is a five percent increase over 1997, which was a three percent loss from 1996 numbers.

<sup>6</sup> These statistics are corroborated by Stone (1995).

companies are headed by a woman (McAvoy, 2000). FCC Commissioner Susan Ness, in a speech to the American Women in Radio and Television, said “Of course, *Broadcasting & Cable Magazine* says it all by saying nothing about the absence of women in that cover story” (Ness, 2000). She went on to say:

Women comprise a mere five percent of top executives of communications corporations – that is, positions of Executive Vice President and above. Women hold only nine percent of the board seats of media companies. Women occupy only 16 percent of the board seats of media trade associations and only one in ten of the board seats of telecom trade associations. Two of the three most powerful media trade associations ... have no women board members at all. And women are totally absent from super-panels and plenary keynotes at major industry conferences (Ness, 2000).

Although two-thirds of the Christian radio audience is female, the on-air personalities are overwhelmingly male. In addition, only four of the 30 members of the National Religious Broadcaster’s board are female (Kennedy, 1997, p. 66).

According to a press release and report from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) dated June 23, 1998, female representation in broadcasting has changed only slightly from 1993 to 1997 – increasing by a mere 1.4 percent (from 39.6 percent to 41 percent). In the “upper-four job categories” (defined as officials and managers, professionals, technicians and sales workers), the number of females increased in that same time period by one-half of one percent – from 34.4 to 34.9 percent. The report has no category for on-air personalities, so there is no way of knowing the female to male ratio in those positions (1997 Broadcast and Cable Employment Report). According to the FCC’s Equal Employment Opportunity Trend Report dated June 6, 1998, women make up 41 percent of the staffs of commercial radio stations.

However, women are the majority in just two categories – 53 percent of sales and 87.7 percent of office/clerical workers. Men dominate the remaining categories.

While there are no statistics that specifically detail the number of females who are on-air personalities in music radio<sup>7</sup>, if the available statistics are any indication, women are most likely very under-represented in this category. In addition, although research on the roles and treatment of women in society is abundant, none of it specifically looks at the roles, status and treatment of female on-air radio personalities.

This research will attempt to fill this gap through in-depth interviews with female on-air radio personalities. In doing so, this study will also contribute to the often-neglected field of radio studies. Gill (1996) laments that “radio, as a medium, has been ignored by cultural and communication studies. Research has been dominated by analyses of the visual media [and] radio has received hardly any attention” (p. 211).

According to Wood (1994), one of the ways that the media and images of gender interact is that the media reproduces the current cultural view of gender. “By defining ‘normal’ ... media suggest how we should be as women and men” (p. 231). If we do not hear women on the radio, or we hear them only as sidekicks or support, we may not think that women are capable of leading a radio show, and thus that women are not capable of leading in general.

This thesis is merely a step toward including women in radio studies. Because academia in general, across disciplines, has ignored the roles and status of females in the industry, the area is ripe for research. Studies such as these are necessary to document their status. Without this

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<sup>7</sup> The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) does not compile any such data since there are no longer any regulations requiring them to do so. It is also interesting to note that while the trade organization American Women in Radio and Television (AWRT) calls for “the collection of data on the representation of women in the industry” (FCC Initiatives, 1999), they themselves have no such data on their constituents.

information, it is impossible to know what changes must be made for women to achieve real parity on the air.

## **Literature Review**

### **A Brief History of Women in Radio**

Very little has been written about the history of women in radio. And while this is not an historical study, it is important to review historical information to know the extent of gains – if any – made by women in the industry.

Plus, as Donna Halper, radio consultant, educator, and broadcast historian, notes in an article entitled “Remembering the Ladies – A Salute to the Women of Early Radio”: “Women were involved in broadcasting right from the beginning, although you might not know it if you read the majority of the textbooks” (Halper, 1999, p. 1).

Men and women originally entered radio in the 1920s “without an apparent sexual division of labor” (St. John, 1978, p. 31), but the myth arose and was accepted that people did not want to hear women’s voices (St. John, 1978, p. 32). In addition, “some journalists who believed that radio should be a man’s job wrote columns that were highly critical of women announcers” (Halper, 1999, p. 1).

Halper’s article discussed many women who were involved in the medium early on. For instance, at the age of 19, Eunice Randall was on the air in Boston, and was one of the first women in New England to hold a first-class ham radio license. Randall read stories to children, and “also did the Police Reports, gave Morse code practice, sometimes announced the news, and when guests didn't show up, she and one of the station's engineers would sing duets! She even became the assistant chief announcer” (Halper, 1999, p. 1). While Randall did not stay on the air long – due to financial problems experienced by her radio station – she continued to

work for AMRAD, the American Radio and Research Company, which manufactured radio receivers and various types of ham equipment. She was considered quite an expert on the equipment (Halper, 1999, p. 2).

Bertha Brainard was “certainly one of the first women network executives” – in 1928 “she held the title of Program Manager for the NBC Radio Network, and eventually became National Commercial Manager” (Halper, 1999, p. 3).

Many other women were involved in the early days of the medium – as performers, managers, owners, and even engineers. As Halper (1999) pointed out:

While it is true that many women in early broadcasting were listed as “secretary” or “studio hostess”, a closer look at what they actually did proves their role was far more extensive than just typing letters or answering the phone. Many were doing work we associate with managers – they often produced their own shows, hired the talent, brought in the guests, and even surveyed the audience to find out what topics interested them (p. 3).

The first all-female radio station in the country was WASN, Air Shopping News, which began airing on January 31, 1927. “The station had an all-female staff, from broadcasters to management, and was revolutionary for its time. It was also, very definitely, the first all-female radio station and gave the industry one of the first women general managers” (Graham, 2000, p. 1). The station was dedicated to covering shopping by interviewing store managers and buyers, and talking about the merchandise (Graham, 2000, p. 2). The women who worked for the station also covered the news, did radio dramas and made sales (Graham, 2000, p. 3).

In another rare history of the medium, Smethers and Jolliffe (1998) looked at the popularity and history of homemaking radio shows in the Midwest, an area covering Kansas,

Nebraska, Missouri, Iowa and the Dakotas (p. 147), an aspect of radio history that they claim has been ignored by media historians (p. 139). According to their research:

Teeming with recipes, household hints and other information vital to women who managed rural households, homemaking shows represented broadcasting's initial effort to make radio appealing to female audiences. Shows with such titles as “Domestic Science” and “Visit” were present from the earliest days of stations that signed on in the 1920s and, because of their success, remained a staple of rural radio program schedules for more than sixty years (Smethers & Jolliffe, 1998, p. 138).

Station owners were aware of how important it was to appeal to the women managing rural households, and thus women were the ideal candidates for reaching those listeners. The hosts of these programs were all females from the farm community, most of who had no formal education. “They ... had firsthand knowledge of the effort required to manage a rural household, which gave them a keen understanding of their listeners” (Smethers & Jolliffe, 1998, p. 139). It is interesting to note that the radio homemakers were not paid very well, but worked out of a desire to help the women in their communities – the “grim reality [was] that working in local radio was anything but financially rewarding” (Smethers & Jolliffe, 1998, p. 141).

Another woman working in the radio industry during the early days was an out-of-work writer named Mary Margaret McBride. In 1934 she auditioned for a radio show, was hired and rather quickly became an instant, nationwide success. Using an unrehearsed, ad lib approach, she interviewed many celebrities, talked about her life and was able to sell products to her female audience<sup>8</sup>. Despite her success, her show was still stereotyped as a “chatter program.”

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<sup>8</sup> In fact, McBride was often complimented on her sales ability (St. John, 1978, p. 33).

In 1954, she ended her 20-year radio career<sup>9</sup>, and today, she is “all but forgotten” (St. John, 1978, p. 37).

After McBride’s career, there was little movement in the push for women in radio, and few mentions of it actually occurring. Of the 288 pages in Smith’s (1989) book The Pied Pipers of Rock ‘n’ Roll: Radio Deejaays of the 50s and 60s, only five of the pages mentioned female deejays. He did mention that “In January 1954, *Billboard* writer June Brundy noted that women were showing up throughout what had been a male-dominated business” (Smith, 1989, p. 23).

Smith’s book barely mentioned an interesting bit of history – WHER-AM, one of the first all-female radio stations in the country<sup>10</sup>. WHER was on the air in Memphis, Tennessee, from 1955 until 1971 (Longino, 1999a; Lost and Found Sound, 1999a & 1999b). Sun Records founder Sam Phillips said that he had wanted a radio station all his life (Lost and Found Sound, 1999a, p. 12). When the FCC gave him a frequency, Phillips came up with the idea to employ only women:

At the time, stations had at most one girl announcer. Each woman who interviewed for a job at WHER thought she would be that girl. It wasn’t until the day before the station went on the air that the girls themselves found out the station would be all female (Lost and Found Sound Web site).

The first station manager was female, as were all the copywriters, sales staff and on-air talent (Lost and Found Sound Web site).

In 1975, Russ Tornabene, a spokesperson for NBC, said that he had no women broadcasters on NBC radio (Riegle, 1975, p. 164).

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<sup>9</sup> It is interesting to note that McBride tried to cross over into television, but was unsuccessful due to her “matronly” looks (St. John, 1978, p. 37).

<sup>10</sup> According to the NPR special, WHER was the first all-female radio station. According to Graham’s article, “it’s not true” (Graham, 2000, p. 1).

Another famous female disc jockey, Alison Steele, was on the air at WNEW-FM (New York) in the late 1960s and 70s. She interviewed many of rock's top stars and helped decide what music would get played on the air (Scelsa, 1995; Maeder, 1995; Stout, 1995; Novia, 1995). She is credited with "...break[ing] down walls that had kept other women out, and open[ing] the door for those who would follow" (McGuire, 1998, p. 56). *Rolling Stone* called Steele "the smoke-and-satin-voiced disc jockey who was the first woman to break through the boys' club of rock radio" (Manning, 1995, p. 38). In 1976, she was the first woman to win *Billboard* magazine's FM Personality of the Year award, and she was recently included in a Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame exhibit (Manning, 1995, p. 38). However, despite her popularity, Steele's program aired in the less-than-prestigious time slot of midnight to dawn (Manning, 1995, p. 38).

According to Longino (1998), no females were on the air in the 1960s. "In 1971, prompted by a lawsuit from the National Organization for Women, the FCC issued rules requiring TV and radio broadcasting companies to actively recruit women" (pp. L1 & L3).

In 1980, the FCC revised hiring guidelines for radio and television stations, which "helped women get a foot in the door" (Petrozzello, 1994, p. 28). At that time, the FCC established a 50 percent equal employment opportunity rule, requiring "station staffing to reflect at 50 percent parity the number of women and minorities living in the communities they served" (Petrozzello, 1994, p. 28). Stations were required to file reports showing the composition of their staffs by gender, race and/or national origin. In 1975, women held only 13.2 percent of the decision-making positions<sup>11</sup> in broadcasting, but by 1992, women held 32.6 percent of those positions (Petrozzello, 1994, p. 28). However, Longino (1998) stresses that although the new guidelines did make a difference, there wasn't an immediate transformation to equality on the

air. “Female voices began infiltrating the airwaves, first in the news and public service departments, and eventually as disc jockeys. But most were relegated to the role of giggly girl sidekick to a higher-paid and higher-profile man” (Longino, 1998, pp. L1 & L3).

Despite the positive affect of these guidelines, broadcasters are no longer required to file those reports, nor are they required to fulfill hiring guidelines – the EEO rules ended on September 22, 1998 (Papper & Gerhard, 1999a, p. 28).

### **Academic Studies on Women in Radio**

Academic researchers in many disciplines, including communications, women’s studies, psychology and sociology, have all but ignored the subject of women in radio. Lont (1990) is a rare exception to this rule; she looked at how males and females on two Top 40 radio stations in Washington, D.C., were represented in the talk portion of radio programming that is normally dominated by music. Lont argued that the non-music programming does affect listeners, partly because deejays are seen as “authority figures” (p. 662). Her findings indicate that men dominate as deejays, while females dominate as the audience. She notes, “Women as audience pattern the roles prescribed for women in music ... as fans, audience, groupies, or front singers – all passive roles, while males in rock are given active, message-making roles<sup>12</sup>” (p. 667). Lont did not interview on-air personalities, but merely analyzed the content of the radio programming.

Another exception is Gill (1996), who in 1991 conducted interviews with male deejays and programme controllers<sup>13</sup> at two radio stations in the United Kingdom. Her findings indicate

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<sup>11</sup> Defined as general manager, sales manager and program director positions.

<sup>12</sup> Please note that some theorists believe that audiences are in actuality active and involved in the process of creating meaning. According to Littlejohn (1996), “The passive-audience view suggests that people are easily influenced in a direct way by the media, while the active audience view suggest people make more active decisions about how to use the media” (p. 333). For an in-depth discussion of the debate, please see Biocca (1988).

<sup>13</sup> The equivalent of program directors in the U.S.

that “...male deejays dominate the airwaves, outnumbering female presenters by more than ten to one, and presenting almost all prime time shows” (p. 212).

In her research, Gill wanted to discover the reason for the lack of female deejays on the radio. Her analysis identified six main reasons why the men at the radio stations felt there were so few women in the industry: women do not apply; listeners prefer male presenters; women lack the skills necessary for radio; women interested in broadcasting become journalists rather than deejays; women’s voices are not suited to radio presentation; and male deejays are necessary to serve the predominantly female (housewife) audience (p. 213).

### **Other Literature on Women in Radio**

While other types of publications, including radio trade publications, have covered women in radio, this literature is still rather sparse. However, the existing literature echoes the findings of Gill and Lont.

Most women who are on the air have been relegated to the position of sidekick (Stark, 1997; Longino, 1998, p. L3), and stereotyped as “whiskey-drinking, chain-smoking biker babes ... or breathy phone sex girls” (Carter & Schiffman, 1998, p. 71). Women in music radio often provide the traffic, weather or entertainment news (McGuire, 1998, p. 56) – the “softer” and less-important information, due in part to the fact that “Traditionally, women’s speech has been downgraded as mere gossip or babble” (Holland, 1996, p. 196). Longino (1998) adds, “Even though barriers [are] softening, illogical taboos were – and still are – rampant in the industry” (p. L3).

Women are also relegated to the less lucrative dayparts. According to an unscientific survey conducted in 1998 by the radio trade publication *Friday Morning Quarterback*, of 233 women on the air at 106 stations, only 74 of them (31 percent) are in the morning and afternoon shifts (McGuire, 1998, p. 55), which are considered the best shifts because they command the

largest audience and highest salaries. However, this survey did not differentiate between women presenting the news or weather, women in a sidekick or co-host capacity, and women leading the show. It also did not differentiate between formats. When women are on the air in the mornings, “they are often relegated to second-degree status” (Longino, 1998, p. L1). And many women on the air are treated poorly by their peers. “Radio is still often built on misogyny. And sometimes that spills over into the inner workings of business, affecting the way women employees are treated on the job” (Longino, 1998, p. L3).

Excuses for not having women on the air have ranged from an absence of qualified women to tradition – “it’s just the way things are” (Riegle, 1975, p. 159) – an excuse still being used today (Ahrens, 2000, p. C02). Programmers, even those in the 1920s (St. John, 1995, p. 32), have also used the excuse that women’s voices are of low quality and thus that people don’t like to hear them on the air (Borzillo, 1994, p. 85; Carter & Schiffman, 1998, p. 71; Isber & Cantor, 1975, p. 51; Riegle, 1975, p. 160; St. John, 1978, p. 31). Macdonald (1995) puts it this way: “Women, thought to be more skilled in flaunting their bodies than their verbal wit, are still perceived to be ill-suited to the role of repartee leader” (p. 51). Program directors and other people in the industry have used these myths as an excuse to not hire women personalities. But Borzillo (1994), writing for *Billboard* magazine, emphasizes that “listeners don’t have a gender preference when it comes to radio personalities” (p. 85).

Due in part to the myth that people don’t want to listen to women’s voices, many stations will not program women personalities in back-to-back shifts. But that seems to be changing, albeit slowly (Borzillo, 1994; Longino, 1998, L3).

If a woman is on talk radio, she is more likely to be offering advice than debating current events (Kamins, 1992, p. 29). “Nowadays, women’s ‘authority’ seems to be relegated to nurturing: women as therapists are big on radio” (Flanders, 1996, p. 74). Tillotson (1997) adds,

“When it comes to running news, talk or music programs – in other words, being considered authorities on topics besides adultery, child-rearing and cellulite - the paint-by-numbers guys like to stick with their proven stable of opinion spouters: conservative males” (p. 06F).

Women in talk radio, to some extent even more so than women in music radio, have also had to fight gender discrimination and negative stereotypes to get a show and garner listeners.

According to Petrozzello (1994):

Some [women on talk radio] say they had to overcome “bimbo bias” and found that some program directors and producers wanted to either steer them clear of radio or downplay their ambition to do political or financial talk shows. Others found that some of their listeners did not take them seriously because of the topics they discussed on-air (p. 27).

Tillotson (1997) says that radio is “the most intimate of media – too intimate for the delicate psyches of people uncomfortable with authoritative women” (p. 6F). Although people accept female television news anchors and newspaper reporters, some “draw the line at listening to a woman tell them what to do on the radio” (Tillotson, 1997, p. 6F).

Female on-air personalities are often judged by their looks, whereas the male personalities are not (Kamins, 1992). Kamins (1992) notes that many print media profiles of female on-air radio personalities focus on their looks, which is a “...neat way to neutralize her thoughts. Regardless of what they have to say, women are constantly judged by their looks” (p. 29). For example, a Texas entrepreneur created a 1998 pinup calendar of female radio personalities wearing revealing garments, and the calendar editor said he had to turn down some stations because their personalities “were not suitable” (Merli, 1997, p. 89). Novia (1995) adds, “Aside from nude shots in ‘Women in Radio’ pictorials, women are rarely brought to the

industry's attention as talents in their own right" (p. 28). In a recent article in the *Washington Post*, Ahrens (2000) wrote:

Just last week, an e-mail knuckle-dragged its way into my basket. Someone had "rated" the best-looking female deejays at radio stations around the country and provided the Web addresses of their stations, so you could look at their pictures. Funny. I've never seen such a list for male deejays (p. C02).

The females who are "lucky" enough to be on the air are paid relatively poorly for their services. "Nearly everyone concedes that salaries are still largely disproportionate between men and women in the industry" (Longino, 1998, p. L3). According to Papper and Gerhard's most recent research (1999b), the average salary for radio news directors in major markets is \$40,000; for news anchors, \$30,500; a news reporter makes an average of \$32,000 per year (Papper & Gerhard, 1999b).

The 1999 salary survey conducted by *Radio & Records*, the industry trade publication, found that there is a widening gap in pay between the major and medium markets (Rodrigues, 1999, p. 1), as well as a widening gap between salaries in the top 15 markets and those in the rest of the country (Rodrigues, 1999, p. 1). The median salary for morning drive talent in the top 15 markets is \$122,132; the median salary for a news reporter is \$41,600. News directors average \$65,000 a year (Rodrigues, 1999, p. 42). However, morning drive talent for rock stations in the top 30 markets make a median yearly average of \$276,731 (Rodrigues, 1999, p. 47). Salaries for traffic reporters and news reporters were not included in the study.

Women working in radio are slowly getting more notice in the mainstream press – it's news when a woman holds power in the radio industry. For instance, the "Women to Watch" column in the August/September 1999 issue of *Ms.* features radio personality Nanci Olesen. Olesen has been on the radio since 1991 with a show called *MOM-bo*, a talk show for mothers.

It was syndicated by the Pacifica Radio Foundation in November of 1998 and is being aired on eight Pacifica stations (Edut, 1999, p. 10).

Nanci Donnellan, who works for ESPN, is the only female with a nationally syndicated radio sports show. She has garnered attention in such magazines as *Working Woman*. “In marketing herself as a sports talker, Donnellan breached two male domains – sports and talk radio” (Petrozzello, 1994, p. 27). Berkman (1995) notes, “Broadcaster Nanci Donnellan dubbed herself the ‘Fabulous Sports Babe’ before any guy could put her down” (p. 22).

The June 2000 issue of *Mode* featured four female radio hosts – Wendy Phillips, a personality in Philadelphia; Meg Griffin, who works at a public radio station in New York; Christine Nagy, a personality in New York; and the Fabulous Sports Babe.

In July 1999, *Atlanta* magazine writer Jessica Harbour profiled Leslie Fram, program director at alternative WNNX. Harbour writes, “Don’t make the mistake [of] assuming she is some radio bimbo” (p. 50), and goes on to discuss her numerous awards, including *Billboard* magazine’s 1998 Program Director of the Year. “Her ear for hits, coupled with her drive to succeed, have helped her become, arguably, *the* most important female in American radio” (Harbour, 1999, p. 52; italics hers). She adds, “Fram’s behind-the-scenes power is a rarity in the male-dominated radio industry, one that some have had trouble adjusting to” (Harbour, 1999, p. 55).

Yet, even as more women break into radio, change may be slow. As McAdams (1995) points out, “It’s no secret that in radio, as in most industries, the balance of power has long been held by men” (p. 92). Baehr and Gray (1996) add: “Both in terms of overall numbers and of distribution across and within specific occupations, women media workers are at a distinct disadvantage compared to their male counterparts” (p. 165).

More female voices than ever before can be heard on the air, yet women are still not in decision-making positions (Baehr & Gray, 1996, p. 167). And when females are given positions of authority, the messages are still dominated by the male viewpoint. Baehr and Gray (1996) found that studies of the media have reached similar conclusions: “Males dominate media content” (p. 1):

Many early studies on representation put forth the view that the employment of more women in positions of great authority in the media would lead to a change in media content. ... However, the assumption that there is a direct correspondence between women working in the media and the representations produced has proved oversimplistic. ... It does not take account of the institutional and professional constraints on women working in a male-dominated media industry (Baehr & Gray, 1996, p. 165).

Consolidation – started after deregulation was made legal by the Telecommunications Act in 1996 – is also making a difference for women in the industry. According to Ahrens (2000):

Radio has been in a wild boom since consolidation began in 1996. Last year, commercial radio stations billed \$17 billion. Wall Street puts pressure on radio companies to grow – hence the mega-mergers between huge chains. ... When there’s that much money at stake, the obligation to a company’s stockholders is to continue making money, not take chances (p. CO2).

Longino (1999b) agrees. “There is phenomenal pressure on general managers to produce revenue” (p. A12). She is somewhat critical of this trend, saying that consolidation creates “a volatile radio landscape that can leave the listener confused when deejays leave overnight and programming changes without notice” (p. A12).

## Definition of Role

The concept of role has been used and studied in many different disciplines, including sociology and psychology, and much has been written about the roles of people in various positions in the workforce (DiBenedetto & Tittle, 1990; Eccles, 1987; Gerdes, 1995), and the roles males and females play in their family life (Harris & Firestone, 1998; Kandel, Davies & Raveis, 1985; Matthews & Rodin, 1989).

Despite the attention given the topic, the concept of role is still vague (Jackson, 1972, p. 3). The general idea borrows from the “analogy of theater” (Jackson, 1972, p. 3), “...where it means a part in a play” (Berger, 1991, p. 47) – a part that is to be learned and then performed (Turner, 1968, p. 553). As Sarbin (1968) put it, “...following the implication of the dramaturgical metaphor, an actor assigned to the position (or part) ... is expected to enact the *role* of [that part], the role being characterized by certain actions and qualities” (p. 546; italics his). The same goes for people in certain positions in a company or social structure – they are “similarly expected to enact the *role* of [that position], characterized by certain typical actions and qualities” (Sarbin, 1968, p. 546; italics his). Each person’s role is thus “a character played out in accordance with the expectations of an audience” (Jackson, 1972, p. 3).

Turner (1968) says the definition of role includes the following elements:

it provides a comprehensive *pattern* for behavior and attitudes; it constitutes a *strategy* for coping with a recurrent type of situation; it is *socially identified*, more or less clearly, as an entity; it is subject to being played recognizably by *different individuals*; and it supplies a major basis for *identifying* and *placing* persons in society (p. 552; italics his).

Role is a tool used by society to control the individuals within that society. “The normative constraints of society are thus tangibly represented in a system of roles for performance in which the individual is socialized, which subsequently define his rights,

privileges and social relationships” (Jackson, 1972, p. 1). Other individuals in the society can thus predict the behavior of their fellows based on each person’s role. “It is precisely on the basis of such predictions regarding (normal) behavior ... that the possibility of enduring social relationships rests” (Jackson, 1972, p. 3). These expectations are based on each individual’s position within a group or organization. “A role is generally understood to mean a persistent pattern of conduct that is always connected with a particular situation” (Berger, 1991, p. 47).

Roles also “help confer identity” (Berger, 1991, p. 50). “The primary way that a person comes to see the self as others see it (possess a self-concept) is through *role taking* or behaving as others behave” (Littlejohn, 1996, p. 162; italics his). Thus, roles are comprised of “(1) *expectations* (i.e., beliefs, cognitions) held by certain persons in regard to what behaviors are appropriate for the occupant of a given position, and (2) *enactments* (i.e., conduct) of a person who is assigned to, or elects to enter, a given position” (Sarbin, 1968, p. 546; italics his).

Roles are – and can be – learned. The person in a social position “...must know what obligations, privileges, rights, and duties are the defining characteristics of each position he may be called upon to occupy” (Sarbin, 1968, p. 547). If those accompanying behaviors are not performed according to societal expectations, the person may be “judged as inept, invalid, improper, antisocial, or illegal” (Sarbin, 1968, p. 547), and may not “...survive as a member of a society” (Sarbin, 1968, p. 547).

The behavior of the individual is central to the concept (Sarbin, 1968, p. 546). “By *role* we mean a collection of patterns of behavior which are thought to constitute a meaningful unit and deemed appropriate to a person occupying a particular status in society ..., occupying an informally defined position in interpersonal relations ..., or identified with a particular value in society” (Gordon, 1972, p. 74).

## **Roles of Women in Society**

Thus, women – and men – are subject to societal expectations based on their gender roles. Reskin and Padavic (1994) point out that the idea of gender is “a classification that societies construct to exaggerate the differences between the females and males to maintain sex inequality” (p. 3) – a social construct created primarily to “maintain male advantage” (p. 5). They also point out that “gender depends little on people’s biological sex and mostly on how societies embellish it” (p. 5). Duncombe and Marsden (1995) argue that gender does not have fixed attributes or roles, but should be seen “as qualities that are constantly re-enacted and sustained in and through everyday relationships” (p. 151).

Society’s construction of gender roles includes stereotypes of the characteristics men and women are supposed to hold. Hill (1993) defines a stereotype as “how people think about women and men and how their perceptions (and expectations) influence social behavior and hence reality. Sex stereotypes dictate the characteristics of each sex and behavior appropriate for men and women” (p. 28). Perkins (1996) argues that, in some ways, stereotypes are actually credible:

They are often effective insofar as people define themselves in terms of the stereotypes about them; ... they are structurally enforced; ... they refer to role performance and so on. However, having said all this there are important senses in which stereotypes are inaccurate or false (Perkins, 1996, p. 22).

In general, men are stereotyped to be competent, strong, independent, active, competitive and self-confident. Women are thought to be just the opposite – incompetent, weak, dependent, passive, uncompetitive and unconfident (Hill, 1993, p. 28). Among other things, males are supposed to exhibit authority, control and assertiveness, traits that are considered necessary for a leader (Leonard, 1998, p. 74), while women are not supposed to have

or display these traits. People in management are expected to display masculinity (Leonard, 1998, p. 71), which is characterized by independence, competitiveness and self-confidence (McCreary et al, 1998, p. 82). Men are supposed to make better leaders, a “view ... more often held by women than by men” (Denmark, Novick & Pinto, 1996, p. 106). Society tends to value achievement, a trait associated with men, more highly than nurturance, a trait associated with women (Hill, 1993, p. 28). In studies of gender stereotypes, Powell (1988) concludes, “men were seen as being more competent than women but as being less warm and expressive” (p. 51).

Spielvogel (1997) lists the following characteristics associated with leaders: strength, vision, intelligence, rationality, commitment, independence, competitiveness and charisma – characteristics that “more closely approximate the stereotypic view of male rather than female traits” (pp. 190-191). She also says that men tend to have a “command-and-control” type of leadership style, while women tend to have an interactive style (p. 192). Women who try to develop a “male” leadership style are often punished, albeit in covert ways:

Stereotypic views regarding female gender roles persist and continue to exert a powerful influence on the formation of the female persona in today’s society. Working women continue to be perceived as less family oriented, more selfish, and less sensitive than women who work solely within the home (Denmark, Novick & Pinto, 1996, p. 104).

A man’s primary family role has been to provide economic support, while a woman’s has been to provide emotional support and a well-kept home (Simon, 1995, p. 186). Women are characterized “as too emotional and sensitive to function outside of domestic roles” (Valentine, 1998, p. 920). Duncombe and Marsden (1995) contend that until men are as responsible as women for the emotional side of a relationship, gender inequality will continue. “To the extent that men’s role as breadwinner becomes their central life interest (they become ‘workaholics’), women are left with *emotional* responsibility for the private sphere, including the performance

of the ‘emotion work’ necessary to maintain the couple relationship itself” (Duncombe & Marsden, 1995, p. 150; italics theirs).

In addition, research indicates that when men have something to say, people listen; but when women have something to say, it is generally deemed unimportant. “Women’s speech, too, is beset by difficult problems, problems which, like those around the imagery of women, are linked to the very construction of femininity itself” (Holland, 1996, p. 196).

Williamson (1996) points out that the stereotypes associated with femininity should be looked at closely. “One of the most important aspects of ‘femininity’ in mass culture is not what they reveal, but what they conceal. If ‘woman’ means home, love, and sex, what ‘woman’ *doesn’t* mean, in general currency, is work, class, and politics” (Williamson, 1996, p. 24; italics hers). She goes on to say, “Women, the guardians of ‘personal life,’ become a kind of dumping ground for all the values society wants off its back but must be perceived to cherish” (Williamson, 1996, p. 28). Powell (1988) says that beliefs about masculinity and femininity “have been unguided by the facts about sex differences” (p. 49).

In an interesting study, Young and Harris (1996) analyzed the selection of people included on the Most Admired Men and Women polls conducted by Gallup and Good Housekeeping. They wrote, “Every society has its heroes, persons who are admired for their accomplishments, altruism, courage, and embodiment of society’s ideals. Yet across a variety of cultures, the names of heroes and idols are primarily male” (Young & Harris, 1996, p. 363).

In their analysis, Young and Harris found that men were more likely to be admired for working in the arenas of military, politics, religion or economics, while women were more likely to be admired based on their family, or their work as activists or in entertainment and culture (p. 363). This finding perhaps denotes limited opportunities for women in certain fields (p. 372), and suggests that the acknowledgement of women’s achievements is based “either

totally or partially because of their relationship to others, as opposed to achieving fame based solely on their own accomplishments” (Young & Harris, 1996, p. 365). “These stereotypes imply that men exhibit and are expected to exhibit achievement-oriented, power-oriented, agentic characteristics, whereas women possess characteristics such as interpersonal warmth and communion” (Young & Harris, 1996, p. 364). Thus, “the kinds of positive characteristics for which women are admired, such as niceness and nurturance, may lead to their exclusion from high status leadership roles that are believed to require aggressiveness and toughness” (Young & Harris, 1996, p. 364).

In 1988, Powell reported that “beliefs about sex differences appear to have remained essentially the same since the late 1960s, despite the increased attention given to gender stereotypes in the popular media since then” (p. 52). Powell (1988) added, “Until recently, according to public norms, adherence to traditional sex roles was seen as one of the best routes to happiness and harmony with nature” (p. 61). But more recent studies find that attitudes toward the roles women are supposed to take in society are changing (Loo & Thorpe, 1998, p. 903). Loo and Thorpe (1998) report “a significant liberalization in attitudes for both genders since the mid-1970s and a narrowing of the gender gap in the 1990s” (p. 903). They note that this trend is for both men and women (p. 910). Harris and Firestone (1998) concur that there has been a shift toward more egalitarian attitudes about gender roles (p. 239). They add, “...public acceptance of nondomestic roles for women has increased substantially” (p. 243). Yet women still have a long way to go to reach equality with men. As Spain and Bianchi (1996) put it:

So many of the overt barriers to women’s full participation in society have been eliminated that it can be hard to remember that women have been able to vote only since 1920, legally guaranteed the same wages as men in the same jobs since the 1960s, and

able to choose abortion as a way to limit their fertility since the 1970s. Yet in the 1990s, women still are not fully represented in public office, employed women still earn less than men with comparable credentials, and reproductive rights are under attack (p. ix).

### **Women and Work**

Statistics on the number and percentage of females in the labor market vary, but all agree that females constitute more of the labor force than ever before. “Since 1950, the participation of women in the labor force has increased at least 170 percent. Today, more than half of adult women work” (Women, work, and health, 1998, p. 339). Spain and Bianchi (1996) point out that “the number of women in the paid labor force has increased dramatically – from about five million women in 1900 to more than 60 million by the mid-1990s” (p. 79). Reskin and Padavic (1994) estimate that by 2005, 47.4 percent of the labor force will be female (p. 171). Another estimate, by Denmark, Novick and Pinto (1996), posits that 60 percent of all women presently work outside the home, and that 45.3 percent of America’s labor force are women (p. 101). According to Tisdale and Sofge (1998), three quarters of women of reproductive age are in the work force (p. 652), and nearly half of the American work force is female (p. 651).

Hill (1993) claims that there are three main reasons why women are more accepted in corporate America than they used to be: economics, moral or altruistic reasons, and the high legal costs for not hiring women. “The fact is that business needs all the talented women it can get. In order to fill the economy’s need for labor, we must rely more and more on women and minorities for our skill base” (Hill, 1993, p. 26).

Although larger numbers of females work outside the home, and society is becoming more accepting of females who chose to do so, those females who do work face significant barriers to equality in the workplace. According to Hill (1993), “The key barriers to change [for

women in the workplace] are...: cultural stereotyping of women; historical recruitment/promotion practices; reluctance to change/fear of diversity; lack of a network for women; lack of mentors for women and historical opportunity” (p. 28).

A fundamental feature of work is the sexual division of labor (Reskin & Padavic, 1994, pp. 6-7). “All societies delegate tasks in part on the basis of workers’ sex, although which sex does exactly which tasks has varied over time and differs across the countries of the world” (Reskin & Padavic, 1994, pp. 6-7). “The segregation of workers of different sexes and races into different and unequal jobs is, at the same time, both invisible because we are used to it and one of the most striking features of the workplace” (Reskin & Padavic, 1994, p. 79). In fact, according to Reskin and Padavic (1994), the workplace is one of the main areas of society that perpetuates the differences between males and females:

The workplace is an important arena for sex inequality in our society. First, the workplace maintains sex differentiation by concentrating women and men in different settings and assigning them different duties. Second, sex differentiation in jobs leads to unequal earnings, authority, and social status for women and men, because jobs are the main way through which most adults acquire income and social standing. Finally, interactions at work subject women to subtle and not-so-subtle expressions of inequality – from paternalism to sexual harassment, from invisibility to ostracism (p. 31).

In American society, men are valued over women (Reskin & Padavic, 1994, p. 5), as demonstrated by the fact that “a sex difference in wages exists within almost every occupation, with men tending to hold the higher-paying jobs and to earn more than women for the same job” (Powell, 1988, p. 79). According to Reskin and Padavic (1994), in hard numbers, “women’s wages average only 70 percent of men’s” (p. 85; also Spain & Bianchi, 1996, p. 108).

Paying women less than men is nothing new – according to the earliest records of employment, which date from the fourteenth century, employers paid male workers more than they paid the females (Reskin & Padavic, 1994, p. 101). In early America, female workers were given special treatment simply because they were women:

In 1908, after years of striking down protective labor laws, the Supreme Court finally upheld a state maximum-hours law because the law applied only to women; and women, everyone knew, needed special protections to fulfill the “benign and noble office” of motherhood to which history had “destined” them (Stone, 1997, p. 78).

Today, it is against the law to pay different wages for the same work. According to the Equal Pay Act of 1963, an amendment to the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 (Reskin & Padavic, 1994, p. 126; Karsten, 1994, p. 50): “Men and women must be compensated equally for jobs that are alike in content and that require similar skill, effort and responsibility, and are performed under similar working conditions” (Karsten, 1994, p. 50).

Despite the law, pay discrimination still exists – the wage gap has been narrowed but not eliminated (Spain & Bianchi, 1996, p. 107; Powell, 1988, p. 79):

In the 30 years since the 1963 Equal Pay Act outlawed unequal pay for equal work, the pay gap has declined by just a dime. In other words, women have been catching up with men in earnings at a rate of one-third a percent a year. At this rate of progress, the sexes will receive equal pay in the year 2083 (Reskin & Padavic, 1994, p. 126).

In 1991, “for every \$10,000 that employers paid the average man, they paid the average woman only \$6,990. To put it another way, for every \$10,000 the average woman earned, her male counterpart received \$14,306” (Reskin & Padavic, 1994, p. 104). Hill (1993) found that women earn an average of 46 percent of the pay that men earn. “The closest earnings parity by educational level comes at the master’s degree level, where women earn 70.3 percent

of what men earn. For those not finishing high school, women earn only 30.8 percent of what men earn” (p. 26).

Several factors have contributed to this disparity. According to Reskin and Padavic (1994), “Three components of Western gender ideology have contributed to pay discrimination: the assumption that men’s needs are greater than women’s, the belief in female dependence, and the tendency to devalue women’s work” (p. 113). Spain and Bianchi (1996) agree, and say that women earn less than men because of “occupational and job segregation, lower human capital investment, the possible devaluation of women’s work, and discrimination in the workplace” (Spain & Bianchi, 1996, p. 140).

The segregation of men and women into different careers is another cause of the pay gap – men and women tend to do different jobs and work in different sectors of the economy (Spain & Bianchi, 1996, p. 90 & p. 125). For instance, more females work in service occupations than do males (Spain & Bianchi, 1996, p. 91). In addition, “...the more women in an occupation, the less both its female and male workers earn” (Reskin & Padavic, 1994, p. 9). Some would argue that both men and women can choose the career field they go into, but Spain and Bianchi (1996) contend that gender segregation in the workplace is due in large part to societal expectations:

If the reason for gender segregation is choice, then the choice results, in part, from lifelong socialization that attracts men and women to different jobs. The occupational goals of boys tend to be more highly sex typed than those of girls (pp. 92-93).

Powell (1988) argues that unequal earnings between males and females isn’t the only disparity female workers face:

Women also experience less career mobility than men. Female-intensive occupations typically have few opportunities to move from entry-level to advanced levels of pay and status. Women receive less on-the-job training so they have fewer resources than men to

advance their status and wages. In female-intensive occupations, workers achieve their maximum status in a relatively short period of time. As a result, women tend to gain less occupational status over the course of their careers than men (p. 79).

Reskin and Padavic (1994) agree, and point out that “men who enter traditionally female occupations often rise to the top, despite being outsiders in a mostly female environment. Women, on the other hand, typically remain in the lower echelons, whether their occupation is mostly female or mostly male” (p. 81).

The work done by women is also not as valued as the work done by men, and the perception exists that the work done by women is inferior (Valentine, 1998, pp. 920-921).

“Enduring cultural attitudes that devalue women are expressed in the lower value that employers, workers, and whole societies place on the work that women usually do” (Reskin & Padavic, 1994, p. 9).

The lack of promotions for females is just another form of discrimination against women (Reskin & Padavic, 1994, p. 84). “Discrimination is a major problem faced by women on the job, often manifested in the tendency to underrate and under reward women compared to men with identical credentials” (Denmark, Novick & Pinto, 1996, p. 105). Valentine (1998) says that discrimination has limited the employment opportunities for women and created a variety of challenges for women who do work. “Treatment of men and women has differed, with women sometimes being improperly placed, denied job status and authority, and flagrantly segregated from men” (Valentine, 1998, p. 920). Melia (1988) puts it this way:

If talent, hard work, and proof of skill (certification) are the key, why don't more talented, hard-working, educated women get to the top? Most of us have noticed that professional women, when competing against men, often outproduce them in both quantity and quality of performance (p. 9).

The women who are promoted into positions of greater authority are often victims of “tokenism<sup>14</sup>.” As Powell (1988) defined it:

Tokens are not merely people who differ from other group members along some particular dimension; they are people who are categorized on the basis of an easily recognizable characteristic. ... This characteristic carries a set of assumptions about the traits and expected behavior of people in the category. Tokens exist only in small numbers, and the rest of the group puts them in the position of representing their category, whether they want to or not (p. 112).

Since tokens are a minority in their group, and by their nature different from the rest of the group, they are often faced with additional performance pressures (Powell, 1988, pp. 112-113), which may be often detrimental to their ability to work. Powell (1988) said this pressure affects tokens in several ways. “First, because they are highly visible, tokens face additional performance pressures. Second, the differences between tokens and dominants tend to be exaggerated. Third, the characteristics of tokens are often distorted or misperceived because of the dominants’ tendency to stereotype them” (Powell, 1988, p. 112).

Token females are allowed to stay in power, but only as long as it remains beneficial to the males who put them in power, and as long as they “support and enforce male priorities” (Melia, 1989, p. 28). Melia (1989) notes that token females have specific functions:

1) to follow the dictates of men, and by so doing extend male power; 2) to give other women in the organization a perception of sexual inclusion at the top (thereby gaining for the organization the loyalty, cooperation, and hard work of female employees); 3) to try out new ideas and policies which may backfire, thus protecting the male supremacy; and

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<sup>14</sup> A token is someone who is the underrepresented person in a skewed group with a very large proportion of one gender, usually one female in a group of males (Powell, 1988, p. 112).

4) to create an expendable executive resource whose skills and talents may be an asset to the organization today – and disposable tomorrow (pp. 30-31).

Reskin and Padavic (1994) argue that inequality of the sexes is due in part to the fact that men, who are currently in the “advantaged position,” work very hard to retain that position and see women as threats. Thus they tend to exclude women by denying them necessary training so they can advance in their careers, or by creating a hostile environment for them. Reskin and Padavic (1994) feel that employers are also to blame, for they “hire workers, assign them to jobs, decide whom to promote, and set pay” (pp. 36-37). Valentine (1998) agrees that women have been perceived as a threat – “they take jobs from men, motivate others, and perform well in many upper-management positions” (p. 920).

Another barrier – and another form of discrimination (Denmark, Novick & Pinto, 1996, p. 106) – faced by American women is the threat of sexual harassment<sup>15</sup>. According to Karsten (1994):

EEOC guidelines define sexual harassment as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when (1) submission to such conduct is explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual’s employment, (2) a person’s submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting that individual, or (3) the conduct unreasonably interferes with a person’s work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment (p. 58).

Reskin and Padavic (1994) point out that sexual harassment is a form of power, “a fundamental form of gendering. It differentiates women and men by bringing into the workplace something that is ordinarily irrelevant to it – sexuality” (p. 129). It is insidious in

that it can “interfere with women’s ability to meet financial obligations, block career choices, and may damage self-esteem and personal security” (Denmark, Novick & Pinto, 1996, p. 106).

While the laws are clear on the consequences of sexually harassing a co-worker, women who experience sexual harassment may not necessarily report it. Canning and Kaltreider (1997) report that survey research finds high levels of sexual harassment in the workplace, but individuals rarely report their experiences. “There is a curious paradox in this area. ... The explanation may be in the need for professional women to deny in order to survive in the workplace or in grave concerns about the perception of being seen as a complainer” (Canning & Kaltreider, 1997, p. 242).

Females who manage to break through all the barriers and rise to the top are few and far between – “Women are still disproportionately absent from the top echelon” (Spielvogel, 1997, p. 189). Although the percentage of females in management positions is rising, less than two percent of the top management positions are held by women. “What has changed is that more women are in management. What hasn’t changed is that women are concentrated in the lower levels of management and hold positions with less authority overall than men” (Powell, 1988, p. 13).

According to an article in *Fortune* published in 1990, very few women are in the top ranks of corporations:

Just wait, was the old excuse. A decade ago even women’s staunchest male advocates said time had to pass; women lacked the seasoning and seniority to run the show. Today that explanation rings increasingly hollow. Women have gained access to virtually every line of work and are bulging in the pipeline: The U.S. Department of Labor says

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<sup>15</sup> Men have also reported instances of sexual harassment, but such cases are a rarity.

they make up to 40 percent of a loosely defined demographic category of managers and administrators (Fierman, 1990, p. 40).

In that 1990 study, *Fortune* looked at the proxy statements of 799 public companies. Of the 4,012 people listed as the highest paid officers and directors of their companies, only 19 were women – less than one-half of one percent (Fierman, 1990, p. 40)<sup>16</sup>. *Fortune* also looked at the names listed in 255 annual reports – of the 9,293 names, a mere five percent were women (Fierman, 1990, p. 40).

In a companion study, *Fortune* polled almost 250 CEOs; nearly 80 percent said identifiable barriers kept women from the top. According to the respondents, “women do not lack the technical skills to make it.” Instead, the CEOs say the problems “are stereotyping and preconceptions” (Fierman, 1990, p. 42). “Women point to the persistence of [stereotyping] as the most pernicious example of discrimination in the workplace. If they are too feminine, they are viewed as softies; too masculine, and they’re abrasive” (Fierman, 1990, p. 43).

According to a recent study by Georgia’s Board of Director’s Network, while 205 men serve as the Chair of the Board of Directors of public companies in the state, there are only two women in those positions. The same goes for the position of chief executive officer – a mere one tenth of one percent in each case. The number of women serving as chief financial officer, chief information officer and general council are similarly low (Cracks in the Glass Ceiling, 2000, p. 23).

This barrier to the top ranks, or the “glass ceiling”, is still a part of the American work force. Bass and Avolio (1994) say that top management is still a men’s club:

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<sup>16</sup> *Fortune*’s 1978 study found only ten women out of 6,400 officers and directors working at 1,000 industrial and 300 service companies (Fierman, 1990, p. 40).

Although many expected this barrier to be obliterated with the large influx of women entering the work force over the last two decades, little change has actually occurred in the most senior ranks. In most sectors, women still comprise less than five percent of board directorships and corporate officerships (p. 549).

Spielvogel (1997) says that this lack of female representation in top leadership positions is due to a variety of complex reasons. “Stereotypical role expectations prevent women from learning ‘how to play hardball’. Women are not afforded the same support and welcome as male leaders. Women with equal work achievements receive fewer promotions and financial rewards” (p. 189). Denmark, Novick and Pinto (1996) point out that professional women are faced with role-related conflicts due to sexual stereotyping – “desirable female behavior” often conflicts with “desirable management behavior” (p. 107). “Taken together, these findings also reflect the paradoxical situation of a woman in the workplace: she is criticized when her behavior is ‘unfeminine’ and as such, cannot express those ‘masculine’ traits required for her to advance in her profession” (Denmark, Novick & Pinto, 1996, p. 107).

While the literature indicates that women generally are not able to advance to the top ranks in their chosen professions due in large part to role-related conflicts, the question remains whether this applies to women in classic rock and rock radio – in particular women who have seemingly “made it” in the industry by having advanced to the most desirable and prestigious time slot in what is the most male-oriented program format.

Just what are the roles and expectations of women in classic rock and rock radio? Are they, as the literature suggests, only sidekicks? Do they feel they are pigeonholed into one stereotype or another? Do they have the same career opportunities and options as their male colleagues? Are they paid the same as their male colleagues? Are they allowed to be assertive, and do they hold real power?

## Methodology

This study explores the status and treatment of female on-air personalities in morning shows on classic rock and rock radio stations, and the roles these women play at their stations. It utilizes the discourse analysis of in-depth, moderately-scheduled interviews with women in the top shifts at classic rock and rock stations in 11 of the top 15 U.S. markets. This study looks at the steps those women took to “make it,” as well as how they feel they are treated compared to their male colleagues, and if they feel they experience any gender discrimination while working in a male-dominated field.

An examination of key phrases will also be included. Phrases included in the discussion were terms brought up without prompting by the women. To be included in the discussion, they must have been used by at least five of the women, though most were mentioned by half of them or more.

A pilot study was conducted in April of 1999 with four female on-air personalities on morning shows in four of the top five markets. The pilot study was used to verify that questions were understandable and produced the appropriate answers.

The top 15 markets are included because they generate one-third of all radio revenues and 40 percent of the industry’s cash flow, with a growth rate of 15 percent per year, compared to only nine percent growth in markets 16 through 30 (Rodrigues, 1999, p. 62). Furthermore, according to a 1999 salary survey by the trade publication *Radio & Records*, salaries in the top 15 markets are generally much larger than salaries in the rest of the country (Rodrigues, 1999, p. 1). The top 15 markets are also considered to be “major markets” – those with one million or more listeners (Papper & Gerhard, 1998d). Thus, the audience is larger, and stations in major markets presumably have a greater effect than stations in smaller markets. Likewise, the top markets set the standards – smaller markets follow their lead in promotions and programming,

and deejays aspire to work in a top market. In addition, these markets are spread across the United States, which allows this study to transcend geographic biases.<sup>17</sup>

Classic rock and rock were chosen because they are very similar in scope and content, and both formats are targeted primarily to males ages 25 to 54<sup>18</sup>, feature mainly male deejays, and play music that is for the most part produced by and for males (*Radio & Records*). In addition, according to *Radio & Records* 1999 salary survey, when broken down by format, morning drive talent on rock stations in the top 30 markets make an average yearly salary of \$176,000 more than all other formats listed<sup>19</sup> (Rodrigues, 1999, pp. 44 & 47). Thus, it is important to look at how women are faring in this male-oriented environment, both in terms of treatment and salary.

This study focuses on females who work on morning shows because that is the most prestigious time slot, has the largest audience, highest revenues and highest potential salaries. “Radio stations can earn up to half of their revenue from ads sold during the morning drive time period” (Ahrens, 2000, p. CO2).

The on-air personalities must have been working on air in the radio industry for at least two years, whether they work for a broadcast service or directly for a station, to be included in this study. People who have not been in the industry very long may not have a good grasp of the business or how women are treated. According to Cannell and Kahn (1968), everyone responds to interview questions based on their frame of reference (p. 555). A personality who

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<sup>17</sup> This study does not look at race but rather attempts to discern how women in general are treated. Minorities make up a mere 11 percent of radio news personnel (Papper & Gerhard, 1999a, p. 28); according to Stone (1995d), only six percent of the radio news work force is minority women. There are no statistics on the number of minority females working as on-air radio personalities. According to the FCC Equal Employment Trend Report, in 1997, only 17.6 percent of all staff members at radio stations were minorities. In 1993, minorities made up 16.5 percent of radio staffs.

<sup>18</sup> Please note that this target age can vary somewhat; some stations target males as young as 18 years of age, though the top age is generally 54.

<sup>19</sup> The other formats included are AC, Alternative, CHR, Country, News/Talk, Oldies, Spanish and Urban.

has only been in radio for a few months will have a very different frame of reference than someone who has been in the industry for much longer<sup>20</sup>. If they have worked in the industry for less than two years, they are also in what may be termed a “honeymoon period” – a job may be generally great at first, and it can be easy to overlook flaws.

Radio stations and formats are listed on the <broadcast.com> Web site and were verified on the Web site of the trade publication *Radio & Records* (<rroonline.com>), which lists radio stations by format. A total of 13 classic rock stations and nine rock stations are in the top 15 markets.

The radio stations were then researched via their Web sites and phone calls to the stations to learn if females worked on the morning shows. Not every station features a female in the morning, so ten classic rock stations and five rock stations are included in this study. This means that three classic rock stations and four rock stations in the top 15 markets do not have any female representation on their morning shows.

Females working at these stations were then contacted to verify job titles and years in the industry, and their willingness to participate in the study, before an interview took place.

The markets included in this study are: New York, New York (#1); Los Angeles, California (#2); Chicago, Illinois (#3); Dallas, Texas (#6); Detroit, Michigan (#7); Boston, Massachusetts (#8); Washington, DC (#9); Houston, Texas (#10); Atlanta, Georgia (#11); Seattle, Washington (#14); and San Diego, California (#15).

San Francisco, California (#4); Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (#5) and Miami, Florida (#12) were not included because they did not have women who met the qualifications for this study. Puerto Rico (#13) was also not included. Although it is a commonwealth of the United States, and does share some common characteristics, its different culture, language, and set of

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<sup>20</sup> This finding was verified in the pilot study done for this thesis.

norms and mores for treating women could mean that information gleaned in an interview would not be reflected in the other interviews.

### **Interviewing as Research Technique**

Interviewing a select population to learn something about that population has been a social science research technique for many years. Cannell and Kahn (1968) point out that “much of the data of social psychology is generated by means of the interview” (p. 529). They define a research interview as a “conversation with a purpose” (p. 530) and as “a two-person conversation, initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information, and focused by him on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction, or explanation” (p. 527). Seidman (1998) argues that you cannot truly understand something (such as a process or an organization) without understanding the experiences of the people involved (p.4). “Interviewing provides access to the context of people’s behavior and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behavior” (Seidman, 1998, p. 4).

The primary function of an interview is to gather information. The interviewer is a seeker of information, while the participant is the provider of that information (Schiffrin, 1997, p. 77). More specifically, interviews are used to learn the experiences of the participant, that person’s feelings and the meanings they construct toward that experience, as well as how they feel about the other people and organizations important in that event (Whyte, 1984, p. 120; Seidman, 1998, p. 3). According to Whyte (1984), experiences and perceptions are filtered not only through the participant’s personality and character, but also their position in the social structure (p. 127). Interviews also provide clues useful in assessing “(a) the informant’s *current emotional state*...; (b) the *values* of the informant...; (c) the informant’s *attitudes* or *sentiments*...; and (d) the informant’s *opinions* ... on the subject” (Whyte, 1984, p. 121; italics

his). Berger (1991) points out that since in-depth interviews are highly focused, they are useful for discovering “hidden feelings, attitudes and beliefs that respondents may not be aware of or that are only dimly in their consciousness” (p. 57).

An important issue for the accuracy and validity of interview data is the motivation of the respondents, which is in turn affected by the content of the material sought (Cannell & Kahn, 1968, p. 545). Background factors, such as the race, age and sex of both the interviewer and the respondent, can affect the outcome of the interview (Cannell & Kahn, 1968, pp. 550-551). Participants may be influenced to participate in an interview due to ulterior motives, the desire to please the interviewer, or idiosyncratic factors (Whyte, 1984, p. 122). Another important issue in interviewing is the rapport between the interviewer and the participant. Without that rapport, the interviewee may not provide accurate information (Frey et al, 1991, p. 195).

In-depth interviews are highly focused and function as a way to get information beyond that which is just on the surface (Berger, 1991, p. 57), some of which might not be discovered using any other research technique (Berger, 1991, p. 59). In-depth interviews are also useful for collecting large amounts of information (Berger, 1991, p. 59).

Interviews are structured in a variety of ways, depending on the results desired and the arrangement of the questions (Frey et al, 1991, p. 110). Moderately-scheduled interviews, such as those conducted for this study, allow the researcher to ask follow-up questions and pursue topics of interest (Berger, 1991, p. 59; Frey et al, 1991, p. 110), and are most useful for determining what individuals think and feel about a topic, while assuring that all participants are asked the same basic questions (Frey et al, 1991, p. 110).

Participants in this study were asked general questions about their job titles, shifts they work, and the primary listening audiences at their radio stations. Interview questions probed for

information on their history of working in radio, as well as details of their current positions, including job tasks, responsibilities and salaries. They were asked to compare their job tasks and salaries with those of their male counterparts. They were also questioned about how they feel they are viewed and treated by management, the male disc jockeys at the station, and by the listening public, as well as their perceptions of career opportunities and changes in the industry.

### **Discourse Analysis**

Discourse, or the use of language, can be defined as “social practice” (Gill, 1996, pp. 211-212; Fairclough, 1995, p. 7) – people use talk as a way to “perform social actions” (Gill, 1996, p. 212). Littlejohn (1996) also defines discourse as action, and says “it is a way of doing things, usually with words” (p. 84). Jacobs (1980) says that language is a “communicative action” (p. 450), and van Dijk (1997) calls discourse a “communicative event” (p. 2).

Discourse analysis thus starts with talk, and then looks at how that talk is used and the structure of those messages (Littlejohn, 1996, p. 84; Gill, 1996, p. 211). According to Gill (1996), discourse analysis “is concerned with the way discourse is used to constitute or construct particular versions of reality” (p. 211). Fairclough (1995) defines it as the “analysis of how texts work within sociocultural practice” (p. 7), and a framework “for studying language in its relation to power and ideology” (p. 1). Jacobs (1980) points out that discourse analysis is useful when looking at the intersection between language, communication and social relations (p. 459). Van Dijk (1985) adds that “discourse cannot fully be characterized in terms of an isolated, abstract verbal object but also requires analysis in terms of its relations with various contexts” (p. 11).

A systematic analysis of text is needed to reveal the underlying meanings of that text and to explore the structures and strategies of the text (Meyers, 1997, p. 13). To conduct discourse analysis, interviews are transcribed and closely examined to discover commonalities and

relationships between those interviewed (Berger, 1991, p. 64). According to van Dijk (1997), discourse analysis should also focus on structure, such as the grammar used and the sequence of sentences, and “should spell out the various relations and conditions” of the discourse (p. 5) and context (p. 19). The discourse must be studied at the micro level, which van Dijk (1997) defines as “relations between propositions of discourse” (p. 9), and the macro level, which looks at the “meaning of discourse as a whole” (p. 9), and the topics or themes addressed in the discourse (p. 10).

When conducting a discourse analysis, van Dijk (1997) says the following basic principles must be considered: naturally occurring text and talk; the context of that talk, including settings, participants, roles, structures, etc.; recognition that discourse is social practice; the sequentiality, meaning and structure of the talk; the rules governing the discourse; the strategies employed to produce effective discourse; and the role of cognition, the mental processes necessary to produce and understand the talk (pp. 29-31). As van Dijk (1985) points out, “In its full richness it involves all the levels and methods of analysis of language, cognition, interaction, society, and culture” (p. 10).

Social discourse analysis looks first at the structures and language use of the discourse, but then looks beyond those structures. “We need to account for the fact that discourse as social action is being engaged in within a framework of understanding, communication and interaction which is in turn part of broader sociocultural structures and processes” (van Dijk, 1997, p. 21).

Critical discourse analysis in particular is concerned with pointing out ideologies, power and dominance, and finding a way to change them for the better (Fairclough, 1995; Hammersley, 1997, p. 238). As Kress (1996) put it:

Critical studies of language ... have from the beginning had a political project: broadly speaking that of altering inequitable distributions of economic, cultural and political

goods in contemporary societies. The intention has been to bring a system of excessive inequalities of power into crisis by uncovering its workings and its effects through the analysis of potent cultural objects – texts – and thereby to help in achieving a more equitable social order (p. 15).

Critical discourse analysis is thus useful in a study that is interested in discovering inequalities between males and females in the same industry. According to van Dijk (1996), critical discourse analysis is vitally concerned with the relationship between discourse and power – namely those who are controlling the texts of the dominant ideology and abusing the power to control others (p. 84). Van Dijk (1996) continues:

Through special access to, and control over the means of public discourse and communication, dominant groups or institutions may influence the structures of text and talk in such a way that, as a result, the knowledge, attitudes, norms, values and ideologies of recipients are – more or less indirectly – affected in the interest of the dominant group (p. 85).

According to Hammersley (1997), critical discourse analysis is useful in a number of ways. First, it can help a researcher understand a particular event within its wider social context. Second, it is useful in revealing what the dominant ideology obscures, and thus it is challenging the status quo. Third, it “not only produces knowledge which enables us to understand who society *is* but also how it *can* and *ought* to be” (italics his). Finally, using that knowledge, the researcher can help “change the world for the better” and “eradicate oppression and emancipate all human beings” (p. 238).

### **Grounded Theory/Constant Comparative Technique**

Discourse analysis will be supplemented by grounded theory, which is also known as the constant comparative technique. Originally developed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967, the

technique involves constantly coding and comparing the data, and putting it into various categories, the number of which are expanded as more comparisons are made (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; and Strauss & Corbin, 1994). It is "...a way of thinking about and conceptualizing data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 275; italics theirs). According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), "...the constant comparisons force the analyst to consider much diversity in the data. By *diversity* we mean that each incident is compared with other incidents, or with properties of a category, in terms of as many similarities and differences as possible" (p. 114; italics theirs). The analyst can thus discern relationships and themes among the categories (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000, p. 107), and through this systematic coding, a theory will emerge (Glaser, 1978, p. 16).

### **About the Participants**

This study includes interviews with a total of 15 women. All but one of the females who met the criteria for this study was interviewed<sup>21</sup>. Ten of the women work directly for a station, while five are employed by a broadcast service. Three of the women are co-hosts. Four of the women serve as news director, while two are news and public affairs directors, and one is a news reporter. The remaining five women are traffic reporters.

The interviews were conducted between April 7 and May 26, 2000. All interviews were audiotaped. Fourteen of the interviews were conducted by phone, while the fifteenth was conducted in person due to the proximity of the participant. Three women from the pilot study met the research criteria for this thesis, so follow-up telephone interviews were conducted with them during the same period<sup>22</sup>. The interviews ranged in length from 27 minutes to two hours

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<sup>21</sup> The female who was not included never responded to requests for an interview during the two months that interviews were conducted.

<sup>22</sup> The interviews for the pilot study were conducted between March 9 and April 16, 1999.

and fifteen minutes, for a total of 16 hours of interviews. The interviews averaged 56 minutes long.

The women included in this study have over 223 years combined experience in radio, and have been in the industry an average of 14.8 years. Only three of the 15 women have less than ten years of experience. The woman with the least amount of experience has been in radio for four years; the female with the most experience has been in the industry 25 years.

All of the radio stations included in this study have Web sites, and most of them include background information about their on-air personalities. However, women who work for a service instead of directly for a station frequently are not listed on the station's Web site, unless they are considered an integral part of the show. When available, these biographies were used to help shape the questions in the research instrument so that they more accurately reflected the specific situation of each participant<sup>23</sup>. Brown (1995) also points out that "the more knowledge we have of the speaker, the more confidently we feel able to interpret what the speaker says appropriately" (pp. 219-220). This knowledge was useful in interpreting and analyzing the responses.

The women who participated in the study were promised anonymity. The pilot study found that the women were afraid of repercussions if they spoke frankly and on the record. Without a promise of anonymity, the women would not have been as open and willing to talk. The names of the participants have been changed to provide this anonymity, and the cities they work in are not identified. In addition, where applicable, the names of co-hosts and the names of cities where the female has worked have been changed in the participant's commentary.

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<sup>23</sup> Please note that station Web sites did not always include bios on the women, nor were they always helpful. For instance, Shawna's Web page says only "Does the news on the show. Often brings in food."

**The participants are:**

1. **Alex** works for a service as a traffic reporter, and does traffic for a rock station, as well as for two other stations in the market for morning and afternoon drive. She has been with the service for two years, and in radio for 20. She was fired from her full-time position at the rock station, where she had worked for 13 years, but now also works for it as a part-time deejay.
2. **Angie** was the co-host at a classic rock station and billed above her male partner. Because her station came under new ownership, at the time of her interview she had just gone to another format in her market, where she is again a co-host. She had been at the classic rock station for three years, and has been in radio for 11 years.
3. **Brenna** is an anchor/reporter and has done news on a rock station for a year, but is employed by a sister station that does only news. She has been in radio 14 years.
4. **Cheryl** has worked in radio for 11 years. When the pilot study was conducted, she was working at a service as the morning news and traffic reporter on a classic rock station, where she had been for two years. She recently quit her job and left the industry because the service was requiring her to work six days a week, as well as additional hours with no additional compensation.
5. **Deanna** is a morning show personality/traffic reporter on a classic rock station, but is employed by a broadcast service. However, she physically works at the station, and does not have to be on air for any other stations in the market. She has been in radio four years, and with the classic rock station almost three years.
6. **Drew** was recently promoted to co-host of the morning show at a classic rock station. Previously she was the news director for the station, where she has been for four years. She has been in radio 25 years.

7. **Heather** is the news director for a rock station, though her title has varied – she has also been the traffic reporter and producer for the morning show. She has been at the station for five years, and in radio for 17.
8. **Kamila** is co-host of the morning show at a rock station. She has been in radio 12 years, and at the station for one year.
9. **Karen** is the news director/public affairs director for a classic rock station. She has been with the station for 13 years and in radio for 16.
10. **Lisa** has been in radio 23 years. She was the co-host of the morning show and the news and public affairs director at a classic rock station when the pilot study was conducted, but has recently retired. She had been with the station for six years.
11. **Patty**, an anchor/on-air personality, has been in radio six years. She is employed by a service but physically works at a classic rock station, where she does traffic and is part of the morning show team. She also serves as the traffic reporter for afternoon drive, and is in charge of the public affairs show for the classic rock station and a sister station in the market. She has been with the station for two years.
12. **Shannon** was a reporter/producer for a service, and did traffic on a rock station, as well as traffic on several other stations in the market for both morning and afternoon drives. When the interview was conducted, she had just lost her job due to the merger of two broadcast service companies. She has been in radio five years, and had done traffic for the rock station for one year.
13. **Shawna** has worked for three years at a classic rock station, where she is the news director. She has been in radio 21 years.
14. **Stacey** is the news director and a morning show personality for a rock station, and has been there for eight years. She has 18 years of experience in the industry.

15. **Tina** has been in radio for 20 years, and with the same morning show team for ten years. She is the news director and co-host at a classic rock station, where she is billed with her two male partners.

## **The Interview Responses**

Participants were asked about their history of working in radio, as well as information on their current position, including salary and benefits. They were asked to describe their job tasks and responsibilities, and to compare their job tasks and salaries to those of their male counterparts. They were also asked questions pertaining to how they feel they are viewed and treated by management, the male disc jockeys at the station, and by the listening public. This study thus addresses the women's perceptions of how they are treated.

### **General Characteristics**

The women range in age from 27 to 49 years old. The average age is 39. Thirteen of the women are white. One is black, and one is part Cherokee, although she describes herself as "Caucasian". This study does not look at race as a factor in treatment. The fact that only two of the fifteen women in this study are a minority could be due in part to the formats and target audience – that of young, white males. The low percentage of minorities in the industry could be due to the fact that minorities either do not feel drawn to be on-air talents or do not feel welcome in the industry. There is no way of verifying this theory.

Five (33 percent) of the women have children. Their children range in age from ten to 28, with five sons and two daughters among them. One female was pregnant at the time of the interview.

Eleven of the women have bachelor's degrees in a related subject – broadcast journalism, speech, theater, English, radio/TV, or mass communication. One woman has a

degree in elementary education. Of the remaining three women, one is just shy of an associate's degree, and the other two women are a few credits short of their bachelor's degrees. None of the participants have advanced degrees, although one female had just begun to work on a master's degree in a non-related field. Thus, while it appears that a college education is useful, it is not necessarily a requirement to get a job in the radio industry.

Twelve of the participants have each worked in four markets or less. The other three women have worked in seven, six, and five markets, respectively. Four of the women have worked in only one market, while another four have worked in two markets. Three women have worked in four markets, while the remaining female has worked in three markets. Combined, the women have worked in a total of 45 markets, for an average of three markets each.

The fourteen women make a combined yearly salary of over \$1 million<sup>24</sup>. The women working for a service are paid much less than the women working directly for a station. The four women who work for a service make an average of \$36,000 per year. The female with the highest salary at a service makes \$40,000; the woman with the lowest salary is making \$32,000. The females working directly for a station make an average of \$85,000 per year. Of these ten women, two make less than \$40,000 per year; one makes \$45,000; and one makes \$65,000 per year. The remaining six women make over \$100,000 per year. However, none of the women receive salaries of more than \$150,000 annually.

Twelve of the females work morning drive only, with very similar on-air hours. The most common shifts are: 5 a.m. to 9 a.m., with two women; 6 a.m. to 10 a.m., with two women; and 5:30 a.m. to 10 a.m., with three women.

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<sup>24</sup> One of the females working for a service declined to reveal her salary. The other 14 participants either disclosed a range or their exact salary. If a range was provided, the middle number was used to make these calculations.

The remaining three women work split shifts, which means they work both the morning and afternoon drives. Their morning shifts are identical – 5:30 a.m. to 9 a.m. The afternoon shifts vary somewhat – one woman works 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., one works 3:30 p.m. to 7 p.m., and the remaining female works 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.

However, all of the women work additional hours to prepare for shows, interview guests and record commercials, as well as to do periodic appearances.<sup>25</sup>

All of the stations are targeted primarily toward males, although two of the stations target “adults” and one station also targets women<sup>26</sup>. The stations are targeting males in the same general age group, though the actual range varies somewhat – two of the stations target the younger demographic of 18 to 34, while two other stations target 25 to 34 year olds. Six of the stations specifically target men ages 25 to 54. Three stations target the older demographic of 35 to 54.

All of the stations mainly feature male deejays, though at the services the reverse is most often true. According to the participants, a total of 94 males work on-air at the 15 stations, while there are a total of 45 females, for a ratio of almost two males to every female.

### **Career Opportunities**

Several factors must be considered when looking at career opportunities for women in radio, including getting hired and fired, access to prime time slots, and whether they feel they have opportunities for career advancement. Another important factor is how the women feel they made it to their current positions, and if they think that females can make it in the industry.

***Getting hired*** – Seven of the women think it is more difficult for females to get hired for on-air positions, while eight of them feel it is not harder. It is generally harder for a woman to

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<sup>25</sup> This is also true for men.

<sup>26</sup> According to the deejay, women make up 40 percent of her station’s audience.

get hired unless the station needs a female to balance the male personalities, or attract female listeners; or unless the woman has an exceptional or unique talent the station has not found in male applicants.

Those who feel it is harder say that is because there are few positions open for women, though tokenism does work to some extent in a female's favor – the stations want at least one female voice on the air.

Cheryl said it's difficult to get hired "if there's a lot of women on the station." She was once told by a program director that he couldn't hire her because he "already had too many women" – which turned out to be a total of four. Heather agreed and said it's harder to get hired "because there aren't that many [jobs] for women, whether radio wants to admit it or not."

Karen said it can be more difficult for women to get hired "because I think that it's still run by men and that it's more comfortable for them to hire what is like them." However, "I think initially you can get on because people are hungry to get a minority, A, and a woman, B, on the air."

"You're going to be slotted in where you're best suited for the gig," said Lisa. "If you're not a strong enough personality, no one should put you on the air just because they're trying to fill some kind of quota for you being a chick and you having a job." Lisa, who is black, said that being a woman did not affect her getting hired so much as her race did. She feels affirmative action is no different from the "good ole' boy network":

[It] opened the door for me in some areas, but once I got there, I had to stay there. ...

Once you get there you've gotta make it work because there's fifty million people out that door. And all the company's ever gotta do is say "Well, you know, we hired her, but, you know, she just didn't fit in." And they've met their quota, okay, and you're

gone. And here's somebody else slotted in your place. And that might not be a black chick, it might not be a chick!

Stacey said that it is harder for a woman trying to get a job in rock radio, but "if you're going for the spot that you're expected to go for, I think it's not." Brenna agreed, and said, "I think when a station needs a woman, no. ... I don't think just because you're a woman it's harder to get [hired], I think it depends on what the station needs at that time."

Patty said, "I don't think that it's harder for women to get hired for on-air positions – I think it just varies from format to format and PD<sup>27</sup> to PD and market to market." She added, "I don't think in our market that it matters one way or the other whether you're male or female."

Kamila does not think it's harder for women:

I think it all depends on the number of men and women that they've got at the station that you're trying to get a job for. I don't think that just because there is a morning shift open that it's nine times out of ten gonna go to a man. I think, you know, if they've got a bunch of guy jocks that maybe that might be a slide in the woman's favor, in that they don't want ... every shift [to] be manned by a guy.

Shawna feels that it is not difficult for women to get hired because "it's just a standard to have women on the air" and that program directors will hire "a good disc jockey or a good news person. They want somebody who can carry it off, somebody who's got the right voice, who's got what they want," regardless of gender.

Alex feels it is not more difficult for women to get hired, and that in fact it might be easier. "You have an advantage as a woman 'cause they need women," she said. "I don't think that many women go into radio compared to men and I think they need good women."

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<sup>27</sup> PD stands for program director.

Angie agrees. The problem, she feels, is the lack of qualified women. “I think ... if you’re talented and you’re good ... the door’s wide open for you, ‘cause there are so few [women] that have strong presence, that are confident enough to be able to drive the ship on their own.” She added, “I just think that the opportunities, if you get your chops up, are just huge. You can go take it anywhere.”

***Getting fired*** – Six of the women have been fired, while many of them have been on shows where on-air talent has been fired. Getting fired is not necessarily a gender issue – some of the women were fired because their station was sold or merged with another station, or simply went out of business. There are a few instances when the firing was gender-related.

Cheryl said, “I’ve had friends who lost their job because the company didn’t want to pay for them anymore. It’s easier for them to give up commercial time to a traffic and news service than to pay you plus your benefits.”

Tina was fired from a morning show a year and a half into it:

I was the lead person with a woman, and we were billed “The Ladies of the Morning”.

So we had that, you know, risqué, double entendre element to it, and ... the woman I worked with was very difficult. ... The sales people hated her because she was just tough, and she was demanding and ... the typical prima dona. And to tell you the truth, she’s the reason we got fired.

“I don’t have a problem with saying fired ‘cause everyone in radio gets fired,” said Alex, who was fired when her station’s ownership changed. She said that many of her co-workers at the service have been fired from their radio jobs:

You can be competent. ... Like when they fired me, I was competent. ... But if they want something different than what you offer, you’re gonna lose your job. ... You don’t need a reason to get fired in radio. ... And if you wanna sue them for firing you without

cause [because] you didn't fuck up, well then you can burn a bridge with a company, I mean, so most people know better than to do that. I always knew from things I saw happen the first year I was in radio that you probably are gonna get fired. Everybody I know in radio does ... it's just the nature of the business.

Drew is on a show where a number of on-air staff was fired, leaving her and one male partner. "This has all changed so radically for me. The show was five people six months ago and one by one they fired everyone and decided this really was the makeup that they wanted, the two of us." While she is glad to now be billed with her male partner, she is also somewhat skeptical. "I think that they're ... holding themselves open in case anything goes wrong, you know, someday like, 'Well, it was an equal show, that's the name of it, you named it'."

*Access to prime time slots*<sup>28</sup> – Eleven of the respondents said women have access to prime time slots, while four said they do not. Of those who feel that women have access, many of them said the access is limited – a female can get a job in a prime time slot as long as she fills certain positions. The participants also feel that the number of positions open to women in prime time slots is limited.

Shannon said, "They have more access if they are co-hosting or side-kicking, or doing the traffic or news, than they would if they were, like, the host of the show."

"I was the first woman on the air during the daytime in [a market I worked in]," said Alex, "and it almost didn't happen because they almost gave it to a guy, simply 'cause he was a guy."

Angie also does not feel that women have access to the prime time slots:

Here's what they do, they will ... typically look for a male/female morning team, they will look at a female for the middays, they'll go for male in afternoon drive, and then

nights it can be anybody. But ... when they say middays, boom, a female comes up so quickly. ... Afternoon drive, for some reason, it's the guy's spot.

**Career advancement** – While all the women are in top markets in the top time slot, only three of them are in charge of the morning show. They hold differing views on options for career advancement, although they agree that women don't have opportunities to advance into management.

Cheryl feels that women who want to advance have a difficult challenge – “You have to work quicker, harder, and smarter.” Angie agreed that women do not have the same opportunities for career advancement. “I think if they are looking for an assistant program director, somebody in the authoritative role, they usually tend to lean toward the man.” Brenna added, “I think if I wanted to get into management it would be a lot tougher for me than for somebody who were a male.”

Stacey said that in general, she does not feel women have the same opportunities as men – and it's somewhat of a surprise when a woman is given a really good opportunity. “Matter of fact, I just recently interviewed with some people at another radio station, and when they told me that they were interested in me being the primary member of the morning show, I almost fell off my chair.”

Although Lisa was considered a co-host of the morning show, and feels she has advanced pretty far, she was never billed with her male partners. She said:

At one point, I wanted to be. ... As long as I'm being paid what I'm worth, I don't care whether they promote me or not. I really don't. Because I've been in the business for more than 20 years, it's really not an issue of being promoted or trying to develop a

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<sup>28</sup> Morning and afternoon drive are considered to be the prime time slots.

career. I've survived. And ... I've gone through three [male partners] right here at this radio station.

Kamila said her options for career advancement would depend on what she wanted to do. "I think if I turned around and decided hey, you know what, that's it, I wanna have my own show, that it would probably be hard for me." However, she felt it would not be as difficult on a format targeted toward females.

Alex said it is hard for women to advance in their careers because they have fewer opportunities to network with the males who are in power:

It's more difficult as a woman to make the connections with people within the industry. ... I just think there are things, stumbling blocks in your way, because it's a boy's club in a lot of places. And they just don't let the women in, you know, it's tougher to get yourself included.

Tina said there is opportunity for women to advance "because I'm really doing what I wanna do. ... I mean this is kinda the pinnacle of what you do if you're on the air." She feels she could lead a show if she wanted to, but does not have that desire.

***How they "made it"*** – The women mentioned different factors that they feel contributed to them "making it" to their current positions. These factors include being agreeable, luck, talent, getting along with the men, persistence, and hard work. Two of the women credited their "toughness" with how they made it.

Shannon said, "I would never say 'no'. I always said 'yes'. ... I always said 'no problem'." But she also felt she had not truly "made it" because she was doing traffic, and was just "a little part of a morning show." Deanna said that she made it to her current position through a combination of luck and skill. "I was actually, you know, at the right place at the right time."

Patty said, “I owe everything” to the two men on the morning show. “We all hit it off so beautifully immediately and our personalities played off of each other so well.” She added that the station had gone through quite a few female traffic reporters before she came on board. “I think that they were ready, you know, to settle down with someone, and have a permanent fixture on their station, because I know that that’s important for ratings for people to have a familiar voice and name to relate to.” She also said that being herself, instead of being what she thought a radio personality should be, contributed to her success.

Stacey said that several factors were important in her career. “I have always worked very, very hard at this.” She added, “you have to be able to pronounce words ... and be aware of what’s going on.” She said that good chemistry with her co-workers helps also.

“I think it is who you know, I think it’s getting along with people,” Tina said. “I think that really what’s important is knowing how to read a situation well enough to know how you should react, and at the same time, we know each other so well, that our reactions will be very natural.”

Drew said that “first and foremost” she credits her tenacity in making it to her current position, but added that it helped to have the “ability to get along with men, which are the predominant people in our business ... and a good voice and ability to relate to the listeners.” She feels that she has “made it” – “finally, it’s only taken me 25 years what guys got to do right away, which was be the co-host or the host of a morning [show]. You know anybody can generally get an afternoon or midday job, but being considered the equal partner is unusual.”

Karen said she made it to her current position by “just sticking with it. I could have left so many times out of frustration, but I decided to stay through the lean years.”

Brenna feels her years of experience helped her make it to her current job, but added that she works hard and has a nice speaking voice. “So I guess there’s a combination of just born-with talent and a willingness to work hard.”

“Part of it was luck, but I think part of it was also working hard and not saying no, perhaps being introduced to the right people,” said Kamila. She would take jobs that she knew “was nothing that I was interested in, but ... I figured that some way I would be able to weasel my way” into a better position.

Shawna has worked in seven markets in 21 years – her husband was also in radio and they followed his career. She said she was able to find jobs due to “persistence and consistency ... belief in my own talents and the ability to be flexible, and always, you know, best foot forward, and ... an enormous amount of patience, and before you know, it eventually pays off, it just does.” She added, “in this business you have to be creative on your own. And particularly as a woman. You’ve got to figure out ways that you can enhance your position on the air without taking away from anybody else.”

“I would say you have to be real aggressive, very aggressive,” said Angie. She said having a sense of humor helps. “I’ve had other training, as far as improv and acting and things like that that I think have helped me along the way, in the entertainment aspect of it.” She added, “another big thing is just really watching yourself and not burning bridges, because it may seem big because it’s all across the United States, but the way things are now you only have a few companies that own everything.”

Heather said a “bizarre childhood ... gave me a very weird look at the world and allowed me to become creative in that weirdness.” This creativity, she said, led her to get a degree in radio. She added that “developing a pretty decent set of pipes” and “wearing my

ovaries very low to the point where they're almost balls" – in other words, being tough and aggressive – has helped her make it in the business.

*Can women "make it"?* – Nine of the women said it is harder for women to make it in radio than it is for men, while six of them said it is not harder. Most feel it is especially harder for women if they attempt to get a position not normally given to females.

Deanna said, "I think probably as deejays in a huge big market, I think that would be more difficult [for women] just to be [a deejay]", but added that men and women have the same opportunities when it comes to news or traffic.

Stacey feels it's harder for women to make it because program directors "generally worry about how women will be perceived." Alex agreed, saying, "you're held to a higher standard than men are. Just because you're having to prove yourself to a man. And he's not gonna look at the man as much under a microscope."

Brenna said, "I think there's still a ... perception that women can't do the job, or people don't want to listen to a woman in the morning. ... It's not that they're not as good, it's just people aren't used to it." She said that perception makes it harder for women to make it in the industry, but added, "it depends on what you wanna do. I think it's harder for women to do talk radio, [but] I don't think it's harder for women to do news anymore."

Drew said, "I don't think there are as many positions available," which means that as a woman "you're vying for less positions arbitrarily chosen." She added that it's also more difficult for a woman to be a big radio star. "It's a very, very misogynistic business. I don't know, I can't give you any facts why, but it just is a very sexist business."

"I think some women are hired because you need to have a woman on the air, so initially it's easier, but I think once you start to have goals and plans for yourself and you know [want

to] have a morning show or have a syndicated show, it does get harder,” said Karen. “I don’t know how women become managers in this business and still retain their sanity,” she added.

Six of the participants feel that it’s not a problem for women to make it in the industry. Angie said, “I think if you’re good, no. ... There’s so many guys in this business, and so many guys always out there looking for jobs, that the competition’s a lot stiffer [for them]. If the job’s available, then, you know, women have it easier.”

Shawna does not feel it’s harder for women to make it in radio, but cautions: “radio is a type of job that draws strong women. ... It’s there if you want it and you’re willing to deal with everything that comes with the package.”

Tina said it’s “not necessarily” more difficult for women:

I know just as many men who are struggling to make it in radio as any women who try to make it. ... Bottom line is, if you’re able to sell yourself and convince the station owner or whoever it might be or the general manager that you can help him or her make money.

***Job they would like to have*** – Seven of the women said that they currently have the job they want, while the remaining eight want a different job. Of the seven women who are happy with the job they have, three of them are co-hosts. This means the remaining four women are content to be in a sidekick or lesser role.

Kamila said she enjoys being the number two person on a morning show, and would not want to be the number one person – “I like the whole kinda cast type thing.”

Shawna loves being on the air in the mornings – “that’s the place, that’s the prime job. There’s not another one in radio. If you’re gonna be on the air, you wanna be on the air in mornings.” She added, “I like being the sidekick. I did not want to be the one in control and in charge of the whole thing. ... There’s the primary, and then there’s the sidekick, and the

primary wouldn't be as good as they were without the sidekick, and the sidekick really generally can't do it on their own, so it's a complimentary, you know, picture."

Tina thinks her male partner is "a genius." "There were times where I'd get a little bit jealous and go, 'Well, I could be the lead person, I could do that', and it's like, you know what? No, I can't." She added, "Boy, I sure don't want that. I mean, that's a big responsibility, and it's not exactly where my natural talents lie."

Angie, who is a co-host, also has the job she wants to have. "I wouldn't wanna be a program director, I wouldn't ... wanna be the music director, yeah, the morning show is where it's at for me, because that's the entertainment spot."

Of those who want a job different from what they have, five said achieving that position is a realistic goal, while two of them said it is not realistic. One female said she didn't know if it is realistic or not.

Shannon, who has been a traffic reporter, wants to be a sidekick and provide entertainment news, but does not want to be the person in charge. "I'm just here for the ride, I'm your sidekick, you know, come in and do parodies, stuff like that. I would love to do that. That would be a lot of fun." She felt that it is not necessarily realistic for her to become a sidekick because of the competitive nature of the business.

Deanna said, "I've never really had aspirations to be a deejay, but I love reporting, I love doing the news." She added that she would like to work "a more decent hour." Cheryl said that she would like to host a weekend show on a local station, even though "it wouldn't pay hardly anything" – just for the sheer fun of it. She does not want to deal with pressure associated with a show during the week.

"I've always had this fascination with wanting to be in radio," said Patty, who is a traffic reporter and on-air personality. "I have so much fun in the morning, because we're on the air

every fifteen minutes.” She would like to only work the morning show, instead of working a split shift and putting the public affairs show together. She feels it would be a realistic goal only if she left the classic rock station and quit doing traffic.

“I would like to be probably more of a morning host capacity, as opposed to the periphery, one of the principals,” said Heather. She does not feel that is realistic, partly because she has lost the desire and her love of the business due to discouragement over the years, and partly because of her age – at 41, she feels she has fewer chances of getting hired.

Alex said her “dream job” would be to “make six figures and work with [a male deejay in my market] on the morning show and not be a music director, just do the morning show.” She believes it is a realistic goal though she is not pursuing it. “I think anything can happen in this insane world of radio.”

Karen is the only female who wants to lead a show. She said, “I think I’d like to have a talk show about women, women’s issues, or spiritual issues, that people really listen to.” She thinks she could actually get a talk show, but “a lot of it has to do with luck and ... you have to prove that you’re gonna get listeners somehow, and that it’s gonna be a saleable, marketable show.”

### **Job Tasks and Responsibilities**

All of the women said that their job is to gather information, stay informed, and deliver the information in a way the listener wants to hear and can understand. Because they are in radio, they must also present the information concisely in a very short amount of time – usually 60 seconds or less. Many of them feel that part of their job is to bring a woman’s perspective to the otherwise male morning show.

Karen’s job involves “preparing the newscasts ... and also just being a general part of the show, giving ideas, finding good stories to talk about, [and] offering a woman’s perspective.

I'm the only woman on the show, but I do more than just prop up the boys and be a laugh track. I really show my perspective in an open way." She is also responsible for all aspects of the public affairs show – "scheduling, producing, researching, interviewing, [and] putting together the quarterly report ... for FCC regulations."

Heather is on a morning show with ten males, and her job involves "reading headline news at the top of the hour, and that includes weather and traffic every 15 minutes." She is her own "producer, director, talent," and tries "to provide, you know, when the occasion fits, the female perspective." She added, "In news ... you can't just be a liner card jock, you can't just read whatever management wants you to read, you have to think on your feet."

Lisa puts together the newscast and helps out with skits. She said, "I not only do the news but I comment on it. ... Make people think. That's my job." Since she is also in charge of the public affairs show for her station, "I maintain the public files, so I have to make sure public service announcements are up to date." Lisa also creates a quarterly report for the FCC and conducts a lot of research.

While Shawna is in charge of the news for a show featuring two males, "the participation that I have with these guys is all part of a team effort," she said. "There is so much testosterone you could cut it with a knife ... but I get to bring a woman's perspective to it." She is also in charge of the public affairs show, which she enjoys. She said:

I mean a lot of people think that it's a throwaway position in that it's something that you're being punished 'cause you have to do public service. The fact of the matter is ... I take a lot of pride in the public service part of it and it especially makes me happy when I get response from people who said, "Heard the program and really, you know, learned a lot and wanted to participate." And it's a really nice way to give back to the community.

Angie's job involves "finding topics that would interest a man aged 25 to 54." She added that she has to set up interviews and be knowledgeable about the music and artists. She said the most important thing is "really keeping it very local, keeping it so that if you were to tune in and you were to listen to [our station], you'd, number one, know it's a classic rock station, number two, you'd know you're in [our city]."

Tina, who is news director, said her job has "become more of a comedy thing than a news thing. ... I'm in on all the breaks, I do one newscast a morning, and ... that's it." She added, "It really just involves showing up for work, [and] being real in tune with the guy that I work with. ... What he really expects of me is that ... I've kinda got a handle on what the everyday guy might be doing."

*Job tasks and responsibilities compared to the men* – For the most part, the women say they work harder than their male counterparts, except in a few rare exceptions. For instance, Cheryl said that job tasks and responsibilities of males and females at the service are the same – everyone gathers the information and then presents it.

Karen, who is a news director/public affairs director, said she has "like tons" more responsibilities than the men. "Women do have to work harder to be given the same or even approaching the same respect or compensation." Lisa, a co-host, added, "I do far more work than they ever thought about doing."

Deanna said in her original interview that as a traffic reporter for service, she worked much harder than deejays working for a station because she was physically on the air for much more time. Though she is still employed by the service, Deanna now works directly at a station as a traffic reporter and morning show personality. In her follow-up interview, she said:

I've suddenly gotten an idea of the stress involved and the pressure, and it's really a difficult job. ... The guy that I work with has to take all responsibility for the show. If

it's a bad show, then he's responsible, if it's a great show, he's responsible. ... And I think that right now he has a much tougher job than I do.

Shannon said that instead of being given the "big jobs" like the men, she was given menial tasks to do, such as answering the phones. Alex agreed, and feels that when she was employed by the station, she had more work to do than the males, especially "if there was something that wasn't glamorous, you know, like clerical work." She added, "I think more work is foisted upon women in terms of clerical things. ... Bottom line, they just got more work dumped on them."

Stacey said that her job tasks are just different from those of the men. "All of mine is so concentrated ... into ... that news gathering moment. ... And the [men] do put in long hours. But it's time that I would willingly put on the line." Heather agreed that job tasks for men and women were just different, but added that her job was considered to be "far secondary."

Less than half of the women say their duties are exactly the same as the duties of the men, and that they are equally responsible for ratings and the content of the show.

Kamila said her job responsibilities are comparable to those of her male partners. "You're all responsible for putting on a good quality show. And you can be responsible for as much or for as little as you want, really." She added that her partner "probably takes a little bit more of the weight on his shoulders because it's his name" that titles the morning show.

Tina also feels that her job tasks are the same as the males. "I've always felt on this show that what really is important to the lead guy ... is that you be funny ... and we all have that same responsibility." She said that she is equally responsible for ratings, and that her responsibilities have actually decreased since she is no longer in charge of the public affairs show.

**Stress** – Thirteen (86 percent) of the women feel that their jobs are stressful. Factors that contribute to stress include equipment failure, lack of sleep, and the fast-paced nature of the business, none of which are specific to a particular gender.

The job can also be stressful because the radio business is very competitive and women are easy to replace. “This has sorta happened to me three times in the past three years – you go on vacation and you come back and you don’t have a job,” said Cheryl.

“The women can be very, very catty and can be backstabbing. I am watching my back,” said Deanna. “You just never know. You can be let go in a second, and the next person’s in line for your job.”

Tina said her job has gotten much less intensive. “Now it’s just a breeze. You know, it really is. I think it’s ‘cause I’ve gotten used to it and I think it’s also because I’ve proven myself to the guys. They’re like ‘yeah, she’s in the trenches with us,’ and that’s a real nice feeling.”

## **Compensation**

Compensation in radio includes not only a base salary, but also benefits, including perks, and whether or not the personality does any outside promotions.

**Salary** – In all but one of the cases, the women feel they are being paid less than a man employed by their station. Many managers justify paying their female talent less money than their male talent by saying that the male is in charge.

Angie, a co-host, is the only participant who said that her salary is comparable to her male counterpart:

That was a hot topic with me. I’ve made that mistake before, so when I went into this one, I said, “This has to be a negotiation on the same page, same expiration of our

contracts, same salary. ... I need to see that both of them, word for word, are exactly the same”.

Otherwise, she said, “You do get to the point where you’re undervalued.”

The 14 other participants agree that females are paid much less than their male counterparts.

“It is very maddening. We don’t get as much money as we should be paid,” said Cheryl. She mentioned that at a previous radio job, she did all the work, yet the hosts of the show were paid significantly more. She added, “I’ve worked for a company where they will pay the men more money because they feel that the woman’s husband is making the money, why should we have to pay her.”

Drew said that although there is no difference in job duties, she gets paid less than her male counterpart. “They like to give you the excuse, ‘Well, he’s the one at the helm’.” She added, “I have been the co-host of many a morning show, making one-half to one-third, and they would say, ‘Well, that’s because he’s the lead dog.’ But the job description is the same, the duties are the same.”

Shawna said that because she followed her husband’s career, her salary is much less than her male counterparts. She explained, “In searching for jobs ... I’ve had to start at the bottom all the time.” She said when she got her current position, she was told they would pay her the base salary because she was new to the market. She said her lower salary had nothing to do with her gender and more to do with “dumb luck on my part.”

Lisa said her salary was not comparable to the male’s salary “because you’re not getting top billing, you’re not getting THE billing.”

Alex said she would change only one thing in her 22-year career in radio. “I wish I woulda made more money. ... I never made the six figure big bucks that a lot of people did, but part of that’s because I’m a woman, I’m sure.”

“I know that women make a lot less than the men,” said Brenna. She mentioned a female co-worker who does more work than her male partner, but is paid significantly less. She added, “that’s a huge discrepancy.”

Tina said her salary is “absolutely not” comparable to her male partners. “But I don’t know what they make. We all cut our own deals.” She feels it is “pretty equitable. ... There’s not many places I could work four hours a day and make the kind of money I’m making.”

The five females who work for a service said they get paid much less than the deejays who work directly for a station. Deanna said, “They make so much more money than me, it’s unbelievable.” However, she said that her salary is comparable to the males working for the service: “If we’re talking about the males that I work with within my company ... yeah, it would be comparable. ... Really it doesn’t matter between male and female what people make.”

Patty disagreed, and said she has seen instances when the males at the service earned more. “A male had a comparable job for a rock station, he did traffic in the morning and traffic in the afternoon, and he was paid several thousand dollars more a year than me.”

**Benefits** – The women are all offered the same benefit packages as their male counterparts. Cheryl said that benefits and perks are “pretty fair across the board.” Drew now receives the same bonus structure as her male partner, something her management has never done before, and said that benefits have always been the same. Kamila said that although she is not paid the same, her benefits and bonus structure are identical. Tina also gets additional perks – for instance, she does a commercial for a car dealership, and they let her drive a free car.

***Outside Promotions*** – Twelve of the females do outside promotions, a way to generate extra income. The three females who don't do outside promotions work for a service.

Although Patty is not actually employed by the classic rock station, but by the service, she said she usually makes one or two paid appearances a month. "I'm very lucky that even though I'm not a member of the station, they book me for those, just like they do everybody else. I get just as many ... as the two morning guys that are really the stars of the station."

Karen said that although she does some outside promotions, "I have to fight for them."

Lisa said she is able to do promotions "because of my personality. ... It's because people know me and advertisers request me, and that's just because my longevity, my own self-promotion, the kind of persona that I have on the air."

Eight of the women who do outside promotions said they get paid the same as a male.

Drew is paid the same for outside promotions, although it was not always that way. "I've done it at other stations, been the co-host for a morning show, [and] my partner was always paid a little bit more for a promotion. ... Isn't that ridiculous?" She said it does not happen now "because I won't stand for it."

Heather said that doing personal appearances "constitutes about 15 percent of my overall salary." But, she pointed out, "I'll take the crap gigs ... because I need the bucks."

Alex does some paid appearances for the rock station, even though she is now employed by the service. She said that when she was working directly for the rock station, she and another female deejay got fewer appearances than the males. She said:

Whether you blame the sales people for selling the guys, whether you blame the people buying the time that don't want women, whether it's just a conception, perception, misconception that the men are better at it, who knows. But we never got the appearances, the paid appearances, that the guys did.

## **How the Women Feel They Are Viewed and Treated**

Career opportunities and compensation are just two aspects of the roles and treatment of women in radio. How the women feel they are viewed and treated is another important arena, and it is best discovered at the intersection between how they believe they are viewed by management and the other deejays, all of whom are primarily male, and the listening public.

There are extremes in the way the women feel they are treated – some feel they are treated very well, while others feel they are treated differently because of their gender.

“You can’t just have a bad day and be a girl,” said Lisa. She added:

You have a bad day, surely it must be [your] time of the month. And I gotta tell you, nothing gets the hair up on the back of my neck more than that reference, only because that’s the only thing they throw out. No one can meet me on an equal footing, you know, when it comes to being, you know, in a bad mood.

Brenna, on the other hand, said she feels “really well” about her overall treatment. “I think I get respect and I think I have good friends in the business and we have a good time. I mean we’re all pretty much friends together.” She added that she did not think her gender affected the way she is treated. “I think probably in the beginning, but then once you get to know people that kinda of falls by the wayside.”

***By management*** – Managements at most radio stations and broadcast services are primarily male, which affects the way the women say they are treated. Nine of the women feel management treats them differently than their male counterparts – that they are not promoted as a lead, that they are not considered an equal, and that they are not taken seriously.

Shannon feels she did not get respect from her managers at the various stations she’s worked for. She said one of her supervisors “was condescending, where with the guys, he would leave them alone.” She feels she was taken advantage of by management, but also feels

that it was not related to her gender: “I think it was just related to me personally because I won’t say ‘no’.”

Stacey said her management does not take her seriously, nor does she feel she can speak out when things are handled unprofessionally. She shared a memo that management had distributed about the roles of the people on the morning show, which said that she was to “continue as the link with the news of the real world and the representative of all women listening to the show” and “re-accent her quote babeness.”<sup>29</sup>

In addition to her salary, which is lower than the males’ salary, Drew said that management treats her differently since she is a woman. “They do not promote you as a lead character or as a lead personality. ... They don’t consider you on equal basis necessarily or, like so many businesses, they always say, ‘Well, the man has to support the family’.” She added that since she is now a co-host in charge of the show, management views her in a positive light, but it wasn’t always that way. “I mean if you’d talked to me six months ago or a year ago, this would all be completely different. But I can’t complain right now.”

Karen said that although her management really depends on her, she’s still “just one of the other on-air people here and ... they find us very expendable, like light bulbs. If one burns out, you just put another one in.”

Heather pointed out that she is not being treated the same as the man she replaced. “And as far as education and talent and experience level, they’re right on par.” She said management does not treat her with respect because “I’m not one of the boys” and “I’m not there kissing ass.” She feels that she is thought of as “a necessary evil.” She agreed that management considers on-air talent to be “expendable.”

Angie said management treats her differently in subtle ways:

Even though I would be 50 percent of the show, hired as 50 percent of the show, and I got paid the same amount as my [male] partner ... if there were a situation or [my boss] wanted to run something by [us], he would call [Steve] at home before he would call me, he would direct certain things at [Steve] before he would do it to me.

She said on a male targeted station, “I think they rely on the guy’s sense of where the direction of the show needs to be because he is a guy.”

Three of the women feel they are treated the same by their management, while three say they don’t know if they are treated differently.

Kamila feels her management treats her fairly and the same as the males. “I don’t think I’ve ever really encountered that, to be honest,” she said. “They consider me to be an important part of the show” and a way to reach the female listeners.

Brenna said that lower pay is the only disparity in her treatment by management, and that they are very happy with her since she does news on three radio stations. She added, “I don’t think that I get assigned to stories because I’m a woman.” That happened to her once a few years ago – a news director wanted her to work on what she termed “a fluff piece.” She added, “I am almost a hundred percent certain that had I been a young male reporter, he wouldn’t have suggested that.”

Deanna and Cheryl agreed that the managements at the services did not treat them any differently from the males working for the services. Deanna feels that she hasn’t been treated differently in a negative way, and that it’s nice to be the only female on a morning show with three males. Cheryl said that she is not being treated differently by her current management at the service because she is a woman, but has been in situations where she was treated differently.

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<sup>29</sup> This was the exact wording of the memo, which Stacey read during the interview.

Patty, who works for a service, said that the management at “the station just bends over backwards, but I don’t work for them,” and that they view her as “important.”

*By the male deejays* – For the most part, the women do not feel that their male counterparts treat them differently because they’re female. Shannon said that because she was a traffic reporter and not actually working at the station, she didn’t feel the deejays paid much attention to her, but considered her “a nice girl, very friendly, nice personality and a nice voice. But that was it.”

Deanna thinks that the male host “genuinely likes the other women” who work for the station. Drew said because she is working on a station with an older demographic of listeners, and because her male partners are also older, she feels that there is “mutual respect.” Brenna said, “I have nothing but a positive feedback from them. They’re just constantly complimentary. ... I think they view it as a really good partnership.”

Lisa said the male deejays at her station think the female deejays are “tough.” “If you were to ask any one of the m to sum any one of us up in a word, it would probably be ‘bitch’. ... That’s their term of endearment for, you know ... we’re good at what we do, they respect it.”

A few of the participants feel that their male peers treat them differently. Stacey said that one of her male partners “kinda views me as competition, I really get that impression.” Heather said that the male deejays she works with also think of her as “a necessary evil” and that there’s no respect.

“I’m definitely not one of the buds, the buddies, you know what I mean?” Karen said. “I’m an independent strong woman, but I’m not gonna act like ... your submissive little adjunct sidekick in order to be treated better. ... I’m probably ... subtly isolated because of my insistence on being just who I am.”

*By the listening public* – Each female’s idea of how she is perceived by the listening public differs. Deanna said she is viewed as an “everyman” and that the public has responded to her jokes and brevity. Cheryl feels that she is characterized as the “likable little sister.”

Kamila said that listeners tell her that she’s “the voice of reason” on the morning show. She’s been told, “you put those guys in their place and that’s what they need to hear, and, you know, they don’t think rationally all the time and sometimes you’ll give them a little push in that direction.”

Drew said that the listeners respect her. “They like me a lot in the sense I don’t play the role that most of the women play in the market, which is the dumb laugh trak.” Heather said that she is “rather liked” by the listening public, “but I’m the ballsy bitch and not the hot rock mama.”

Alex said the male listeners tell her “you’re great, you’re open, you’re open about sex, which is fabulous, you’re wild and raucous but you’re intelligent and you’re wonderful.” She added, “And the women are even better. They’re just like, ‘Thank you for speaking our minds’.”

Lisa said that although the listening audience is primary males, she feels females tune in because “they like the male presence on our show. But I find ... that the women who listen ... kind of like a strong female that they can identify with, someone who doesn’t take a lot of crap on the air.” She added that she hopes the listening public views her as “someone they can be proud of,” and wants to inspire other females to get into the profession.

Angie said she was viewed as the comedic relief on the show, while her male partner was considered the jock. She added, “I guess sometimes, you know, especially on a rock station, they perceive you as the sexy woman.”

Shannon said that because she is doing traffic and is not really part of the show, she doesn't believe the listening public thinks much about her at all – “they usually don't pay you no never mind.”

***Sexual Harassment*** – Ten of the participants (66 percent) say they have experienced sexual harassment in one form or another. Half of the women who have experienced harassment said it occurred early on in their careers, while the remaining five said their experiences were recent.

Shannon, who has been sexually harassed in almost every job, said it “runs rampant” in the industry. She said, “I can't tell you the pigs I've worked with, that would come into my studio and drop their drawers.” One male deejay stripped while she was in the studio and did his broadcast in the nude. Another man grabbed her breast right before she was about to go on air for a traffic report. She has also experienced men slapping her butt, propositions and inappropriate hugs.

A few years ago, Cheryl was on a show with a male host who she said “gets his kicks out of degrading women.” She was forced to talk about her menstrual cycle and what kind of products she used, and the host would call her names and berate her in front of co-workers, thus creating an uncomfortable and demeaning work environment.

Heather said she is sexually harassed “almost on a daily basis” – the show features women who are “completely naked, and involving themselves in lewd sex acts for the sake of the show, and if that's not harassment, I don't know what is, being forced around that and not having any ... sanctuary.” She said she feels powerless to do anything, and that she had to sign a piece of paper “which essentially said you were above it all” – something which she resented.

Stacey recently experienced harassment from a male co-worker, who would grab her butt, sit too close, push himself on her, and say lewd things. She said, “I think the people who

kinda put those things on other people don't see themselves as being as creepy as the people that they're perpetrating those acts on see them as being. You know, they think that that's wild fun."

Tina said she has "absolutely" experienced sexual harassment:

I think that it depends on how you take it and it also never had anything to do with money. ... We're in radio, you're gonna hear filthy jokes, you're going to experience a little slap and tickle once in a while. ... And I've never really felt threatened or felt like money's gonna be taken away from me. I've never been asked to sleep with anyone for compensation, so I guess the worst I've ever dealt with is off-color comments, remarks, jokes, maybe improper advances, that kind of thing. But how would you handle that in high school? How would you handle that in college? How would you handle that in any other job?

She added, "And I certainly think that sexual harassment is a very real problem, for a lot of people, and that there are a lot of ... types out there who think that women just adore that. ... Some women do, and that's what makes it hard for all of us."

"I've not had the direct kind of harassment where you're gonna lose your job if you don't put out, no," said Drew, whose experiences were early on in her career. "I did not have blatant, behind the closed door, 'either you do this or you're fired.' That did not happen to me. ... But I've been propositioned, I've been chased, I've been just about everything."

Patty, who works for a service with all-male management, said that there is "definitely a little sexual harassing kinda going on. And they are very blatant ... when there is [an] attractive female, she definitely gets the better jobs, better stations, she's definitely treated different." She said a boss at a former job subjected her to what she termed "sex talk," which she said made her "very uncomfortable."

Deanna said she has experienced only one instance of sexual harassment, which falls under the definition of hostile talk. She was going on vacation a year ago and a male co-worker said to her, “I don’t understand how you get the money for all these vacations. I don’t understand how you get the money. Are you working on the side? I bet you’re selling your body on the side to get the money to go on vacations.”

Shawna has also experienced only one instance of sexual harassment, which happened early in her career – over 20 years ago. “I was working with this disc jockey and ... he was married and came on to me. I mean he was ready to just go at it. And I looked at him and I said, ‘There’s just, like, no way. No way, goodbye’.” She added that it hasn’t happened again because “I have always considered myself an equal when it comes to the guys at the radio station.”

Alex experienced sexual harassment the first year she worked in radio, which was over 20 years ago, but has not experienced it since. She said she was working at a radio station one evening when:

The general manager ... walks in the room, shuts the door and locks it. Walks up behind me, puts both hands on my breasts, and starts to French kiss me. He stops and says, “Tell me to quit if you want me to”. I said, “Please stop”. He did, so I’m lucky that he did, walked to the door, turned and said, “You should have slapped me”. And walked out. ... Now who am I gonna complain to when I want a career in radio and the general manager did that? I’m gonna call corporate, they’re gonna believe me, a college student? I think I want a career in radio. I don’t think I’m gonna tell anybody. Until now.

Five of the women (33 percent) say they have not experienced sexual harassment in the workplace. Karen said she has not experienced what she would say meets the legal definition of

sexual harassment. “There’s a lot of crap that does go on on the morning show, but I also expect it. ... But I could see someone else perceiving it as threatening.”

“I think a lot of people would consider what I have to go through every day [to be sexual harassment],” said Kamila. “I don’t though. I don’t know if it’s just that it takes a hell of a lot to shock me, or that I’ve always had guy friends growing up and that I was always one of the guys.” She added, “I’m sure if a more politically correct person came in here, they would be filing lawsuits left and right, but I have found that radio is not a politically correct business at all.”

Angie said she has never been harassed by a co-worker, but mentioned that the environment could be somewhat questionable. “You have to have a pretty tough skin to do a morning show, especially on a male targeted station, ‘cause the jokes tend to get blue and the humor, you know, is T&A. ... But you know that going into it.”

Lisa said she has never experienced sexual harassment, although she has received sexual comments and remarks from co-workers, which she “just took care of” by saying “no” to the offender. She said:

I know that it exists, but I’m appalled at the number of cases that come up that don’t appear to be cases to me. I don’t like people that take things and use them and run with them because it dilutes the genuineness of the real cases. There’s only one person who can sexually harass me, and that’s the guy who signs my paychecks – my general manager – and it would never occur to him. ... While it might occur to him with someone else, I think you kind of set the standard for what you’re gonna take and what you’re not, and guys know who they can mess with and who they can’t.

Brenna said she has never experienced sexual harassment from a supervisor, though a colleague slapped her on the butt once. “Then it was like less than a year later he was fired for sexual harassment.”

***Doing something about sexual harassment*** – The women handled their experiences differently, and some felt they could not fight back. Despite the severity of the sexual harassment that Shannon experienced, she was afraid of losing her job if she said anything to management. Cheryl was afraid to confront the co-host who was making her uncomfortable, and afraid to talk to management “for fear of blacklisting.”

Stacey also felt she couldn’t fight the harassment. “Because I was in radio, and in kind of an all-guy situation, I felt like for the longest time that ... I had to tolerate it because it’s part of the game.” She added:

I feel angry at me for putting up with stuff like that and not understanding why I did except for the fact that I thought that it would truly be one of those things where they’d say “Oh, you got a problem? Oh, can’t stand the heat? Get out of the kitchen, sister”, that kind of thing.

Eventually, Stacey talked to her supervisor, and learned other women had complained about the male personality. She sees the need for more education about what females can do to protect themselves if they experience harassment. “Whether it’s your superior or whether it’s someone that you work with,” you need to learn “things that you can do to keep from being personal[ly] vilified for fighting back against that.”

Deanna handled her situation by confronting the co-worker and talking to her boss about it, and said it never happened again. Drew said the way someone handles the situation if she is being sexually harassed is important. “You should be able to carry yourself in such a fashion that, you know, a simple ‘I don’t think so,’ walk away will do most times.”

## **The Roles Women Play in Radio**

According to the participants, females in radio tend to be pigeonholed into one stereotype or another – the sexy party girl, the dumb laugh trak, or the tough bitch were the stereotypes mentioned most.

Cheryl said, “Women [in radio] are the single chick, who’s totally wild and crazy and will do anything.” She said they are also stereotyped to have sexy voices, and to “be the dingbat on the air.” She added that in some instances, women are not allowed to be smart or have an opinion, although she feels that is the role women should have:

Some hosts, and you can hear this up and down the dial, do not like it when their traffic woman or their news woman is funnier than them. So sometimes they don’t want you to be smart. You know, they don’t want you to have an opinion unless it’s their opinion.

Drew added, “the business is so crazy it oftentimes turns women into, I don’t know what – sidekick bimbo laugh traks. I don’t do that. Never have and I never will.”

“I think it’s becoming more equitable now,” said Karen, “but I think that women are very subconsciously and subtly guided into playing roles, whether it’s, you know, the laugh trak or the girlfriend role, or, you know, the minor role.” She said that although things are changing for women, “managers [are] comfortable with the way it’s been for a really long time.” She added:

There are so many voices that should be heard on the air, and I feel like it’s becoming very one-dimensional. It’s all about the white male viewpoint, and it does a lot of damage to the way women in general are perceived, if you’ve heard any shock jocks lately. ... I think that women’s voices have been silenced. And it’s partly our fault because we don’t step out of that and really push the envelope. However, it’s important

for women to retain their jobs, so they can't be too much of a rebel or else they'll shoot themselves in the foot.

Kamila said the perception exists that “the women that you hear in morning radio are co-hosts who are paid to act dumb and laugh,” a perception that she said is “totally not the case.” She thinks it depends on the format, and that listeners of a male-targeted station “may like to hear [a giggle girl] a little bit more,” but “it's being seen less and less, I think. 'Cause I think people don't buy it that much anymore.”

Heather said that women tend to be pigeonholed into one of two roles – “you're either the ballsy bitch, or you're the hot rock mama,” two “stigmas that have been attached to women for so long.”

“I don't think [women] play enough [roles],” said Alex. “I think they're undervalued. I think there is a bullshit theory that women don't like to hear other women in radio.” She added, “Men love women on the radio. I mean, you know, the whole country is based on sex, selling ... so I think it's a win-win situation.”

Tina said that women play an important role because “radio I think is a reflection of life, of the human condition.” She feels that roles for females are becoming more and more comparable to roles for males. “I think that women are being used differently than we were when I was coming up. We used to be kind of the fluff and the giggles that responded to the male jokes.”

Women in radio are also pigeonholed into certain positions – either as sidekicks, news or traffic reporters, or public affairs.

“You just don't find that many women in program director capacities ... [and there] just aren't that many women managers,” said Heather. She said radio stations across formats tend to fill on-air positions in a similar way:

There's a two- to three-member morning show, principals, they're usually all male, always one female sidekick, at least one woman in there for the EEOC. There's a female [in] middays, and she's usually fairly knowledgeable about rock, but safe, usually follows the guidelines of what management wants her to. Then there's a raucous in-your-face party boy in the afternoon. And then a young kid testing the waters at night, male, who works to midnight, the seven to midnight shift; and then any sap they can find to work overnights.

Heather added that in general, women are considered to be “good enough to be Uhura<sup>30</sup> and sit back and ... call up 911 whenever need be, but you're not good enough to sit in the commander's chair. You make a delightful, lovely crew, but you're not good enough to captain.”

“You know, you rarely hear of two women doing a show together, and a lot of times you don't see a woman in the lead role,” said Kamila. “And I don't know if that's because some women are like me and are happy being the co-host ... or if it's just that, you know, they feel like they maybe are hitting stumbling blocks.”

“I think that there's such an opening for women,” said Angie. “But not a lot of them take it, because they ... sort of settle into this niche of the sidekick or the news person, or the traffic girl, and they don't just get out there and think ‘You know what? I could do the show myself. I could do this on my own’.” She feels women do not play enough roles. “We need more women in positions of power, number one. We definitely need more decision makers as programmers, as general managers.” She added, “Women need to ... get out there and say ‘I've

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<sup>30</sup> Lieutenant Uhura was a character on the original Star Trek television series. A token female (and the token black person), she was the communications officer.

got something to say and I'm marketable and guess who spends most of the money in the household'?"

Lisa said that the role a woman plays depends on the show. "Typically, we're relegated to putting the log together, which is the road map that the deejays have to follow with regards to commercials, music. Sometimes we write commercials because we're very creative, you know," she said sarcastically. She said women are often found in sales capacities and keeping the books, but added that more women are becoming general managers of radio stations.

Stacey said that men and women most definitely hold different positions, and she's not sure why. "Maybe we have a late start, or maybe there is a glass ceiling, but I think that it's very often the 'news gal', you know, you're sort of relegated to that position." Leading a morning show is not "anything beyond a woman to be able to do" but that "it's what you get used to doing sometimes, and you kinda box yourself into the niche that is prescribed for you." She added:

My intern, a young man aspiring to do news at a small station in these parts, says he realized that there's reverse discrimination going on. When he applied for a job as a newsperson, he got a funny reaction that he interpreted as "Hey, guys don't do that. We want a girl".

Karen believes there should be more female managers in radio. "I mean women are wonderfully creative and passionate, and we care about music and ... I don't understand why there isn't more of a representation in upper management. That's where we really need to make headway." Kamila disagreed and said that she sees "more and more women moving into managerial positions."

Shawna said that women's roles are not comparable to male roles in radio, "and I don't think they ever will be." However, "there are a number of women who over the years and particularly now that I see who've managed to be the ones in control."

Patty disagreed and said that the roles for men and women in radio are comparable. "It doesn't really matter if you're male or female, it's the time slot that you're in. And it varies from market to market and of course it varies from format to format too. I think the men and women are, you know, pretty equal."

### **How They Look**

Seven of the women said that the way they look has affected their careers in radio, while six said their looks had no effect. Two of the women said they did not know if their looks had helped or hurt them.

"The cool thing is that being – it's weird to say – but being on the radio, it doesn't matter too much [what you look like]," said Cheryl. She added, "I'm sure, if I was a size five, that wouldn't hurt." Shannon added, "I think if I was, like, Pamela Anderson looking, I think it probably would definitely have a profound effect." Deanna said her looks had not affected her, but that she would not let the station put a picture of her on the Web site because she "would rather be anonymous."

Stacey said, "you have more freedom in radio" as far as looks go, and that she did not think her looks had helped or hurt her. But she noted that looks could sometimes make a difference in hiring. She cited one instance where:

Somebody that I never would have expected getting a radio job got one in a smaller market, and I was sort of perplexed. She's like a lingerie model and had long hair and big boobs and was in Playboy, and she turned out ... to be one of the most utterly clueless individuals they had on the air, they had trouble with her from day one. She

was stupid, couldn't pronounce words, and just in general they, I think, they had to make their bed and lay in it with her.

Kamila said that she doesn't feel the way she looks has affected her: "It's good that I'm not in television ... [because] I haven't put on make-up today." She added, "[Looks] can probably open up some doors for you, but I don't necessarily think that looks matter as much in radio."

Shawna said she has been told "you're way too good looking to be in radio" but does not feel her looks have helped or hurt her. "I think it's done nothing because radio is strictly voice."

Lisa said that although her looks did not make a difference in her career, they can have an affect:

You're probably not promoted as much by the station, by the management, unless they feel that they can get an enormous amount of mileage out of it. Having said that, I think that if you look, if you fit a certain profile ... if you've got big breasts, you've got high cheekbones, you're a sultry kind of look, if you've got a look that they think is just va-va-va-voom, they'll throw your butt up on a billboard as big as all outdoors, because, even though it's radio, something about that look ... they think, will make more people wanna tune in.

Half of the women feel their looks have affected their careers.

Patty said that being an attractive female has "definitely helped," and that it is nice when "you can match a voice in radio with someone who has a pleasant appearance." She feels that being attractive is important, but "if you don't have the appearance, it doesn't really hurt you ... if you've got the personality. That's the most important thing." She added that she is "really treated awesome. ... I do think that because of my attractiveness that people probably treat me

like a lady ... but I would also like to think that they do that because, you know, I treat them well, too.”

Drew also said her looks have helped her. “It’s no secret that people who are considered better looking have an advantage getting in the door. Keeping the job is another thing, but absolutely my looks have gotten me in the door.”

Tina said her looks affected her career – “I mean in my twenties I think it helped out a little bit ... but the only thing it did for me was open a door. ... But you know what, looks go away too.” She mentioned, “When we were doing the show [‘The Ladies of the Morning’] and it was two women, you were expected to be pretty, look good, dress right, that kind of thing.” She added:

It’s a good thing and it’s a bad thing because sometimes you get the impression that all you have to do is look pretty. Well, that’s not true. You still have to be able to run the board, you know, have the talent ... you gotta have the mechanics down. ... And I think you also have to have the ability to get along with people, and sell yourself.

Angie said she used to be an entertainment reporter for television, “so that helped quite a bit. ... What happened was a lot of people thought ‘Oh, wow. Well, she can do a cross-over. I mean, if we ever have to get some TV exposure, she’d be the perfect one for the job’.” She added that she feels that being attractive helps since she does so many public appearances. She mentioned that she has been hired for two on-air positions after the program director asked for a photo, but found out later that her male counterparts were not required to send one.

Alex said her looks have helped her, and added that while looks can help, “if you don’t have anything to back it up with, the looks aren’t gonna get you anywhere. But if you are at all good looking, and if you play on that, you’re gonna get farther.”

Heather said her looks have had a negative impact “because I’m not stunning.” “If I were the other classification of hot rock mama, I think I might go further instead of [being] the chunky earth mother, bitch, wise-ass.”

Karen said she did not know for sure if her looks had helped her or not. “I think it does help. ... If you’re viewed as attractive by the general public ... you’ll do better. It’s just a sad fact of life. And I think even in radio, I think that helps.” She added that she does worry since she’s getting older and is no longer “young” and “nubile.”

Brenna also did not know if her looks had affected her career. “I’ve never had anybody say ‘I’m gonna hire you because of your looks’. ... I don’t think it’s hurt me and I don’t think it’s helped me.”

### **The Effect of Children on a Career**

Only five of the women have children, and one is pregnant with her first child. Three of them stated that having children had affected their careers, while the remaining three said that their children had not affected their careers at all.

Drew said that being a mother has “held me back to a degree because I couldn’t ... work the same hours that the guys did. Or I might say ‘I have to be home for my kids’ and they’d go on the golf course and, you know, meet the client.”

“I have to keep in mind every day on the air, just how much of me I wanna bring to the program,” said Lisa, who feels that being a mother has “definitely” affected her career:

I’m the mother of a nine-year-old daughter, you know, [and] a lot of the teachers in her school listen to our show. A lot of the parents listen to our show. They can’t distinguish between what’s real and what’s not. I’ve got to keep that in mind every time I open the mic, every time I say something. I have to ask myself, “Is this something that I want

coming back to my daughter? Is this something that I want discussed on the playground?”

Angie, who is pregnant with her first child, said that her impending motherhood has “softened me up a little bit” and that she became uncomfortable with the content on the show. “I would pull back, and I curbed myself,” she said, “because you know they want you to put it out there, they want you to be a little racy.”

Since radio was a second career for Patty, her son was already grown and did not affect her career. Stacey has an 11-year-old son. She said she did all her moving around while he was quite young, so he did not affect her career and her career did not affect him.

Shawna said being a mother has not affected her career:

I’ve always handled it. ... You know in an emergency situation, that’s different, but baby sitters and time schedules, I always found somebody to watch the kids, you know, that’s just been one of my rules. If you wanna be treated like the boys, in certain circumstances you have to behave that way.

### **Changes in the Industry**

The women all agree that the radio industry is constantly changing, but they don’t necessarily feel it is changing very much for the women involved.

Stacey feels that things have changed somewhat. “I think it’s opened up a little more and it’s become more lucrative ... for women. But then there are times when I think that it’s taken steps backward, to where we’ve sorta reverted to the pre-political correctness way of things.”

Karen had a lot to say on this topic:

I think that it’s changed, but I can’t believe it hasn’t changed more in the last sixteen years [I’ve been in radio], that women are still not in the morning, and women are still

not general managers, and women are still paid, you know, so much less. It's ridiculous. So I think it's very metaphorical how women's voices are not heard, I mean literally the woman's perspective, the woman's voice is not heard on the radio. I mean it's very reflective of the way society still views women. But women have to fight. It's really uncomfortable, and it takes a lot of effort, and energy, life energy, to keep in the business and keep fighting for it, and keep feeling good about yourself.

Kamila said that although she feels there are more women in the industry, "it's not like ... in the last couple of years that there's been this big rush to crash through the glass ceiling or anything like that. I can't see any major changes. I mean radio itself has changed a lot, but I can't see many major changes." Heather said she doesn't think radio has changed at all. "Some complaints that I am voicing to you right now are the very same ones a friend of mine who was [at this station] 11 years ago had."

Cheryl said things have not changed completely for the better because females are always seen as "being a secondary role." She added that the trend toward consolidation means fewer jobs are available for women.

"I think things are changing for women," said Tina:

And I think some of it's been forced because, you know, the corporations have to recognize women and treat [us] as equals. And that's a good thing. But at the same time, you can force somebody to treat you as an equal, but unless you got the stuff to back it up, you're not gonna get anywhere, and that's for a man or a woman.

She added, "I think that what's happened is we have proven ourselves and proven ourselves to be valuable money-making assets for these companies, and they realize that, and so they will invest their dollars in us."

“There are more positions available for women,” said Drew, but “the guy sidekick will always make more than the woman sidekick. And I don’t know why. ... People like me are working to change it every year. And ... every time I break through, someone can say ‘Well, look at her, she’s doing it. I can do it too’.”

Lisa feels that things have “definitely” changed for women in radio: “Women have more access now. We’re definitely not any more talented, we’re not any more creative. We just have more access now, and that is the big change.”

Alex said a big change is that one deejay will serve as the talent for several radio stations – he or she will tape shows to be played in smaller markets, which decreases the number of jobs available. “That’s what [the companies are] gonna start doing ‘cause they save money,” she said. “These big companies ... just want to save money and so if they’ve got a good talent in a major market, they’ll syndicate it, so there will be fewer openings.” But she feels there are more opportunities for women than there used to be. “I think radio’s getting worse. But ... as far as women making progress, I think it’s getting better, I do.”

Brenna, who works for a news station but also does news on the rock station, said that it is a growing trend to have one person do the news for a number of stations. Because women generally do the news, there will be fewer jobs available for women, and there will be more work for those few females to do. She said, “It’s good for the company because then they save a lot of money. ... I’m not sure that it’s such a great thing for people in radio.”

Brenna noted that the industry has become more welcoming to women, and that females have more opportunities. “I think now you wouldn’t even really ever hear ... a top market where they had two anchors be both men. I think it’s always gonna be a man and a woman now.” She said she has noticed more women managers lately, and that her program director is female.

***Broadcast Services*** – The proliferation of broadcast services is another trend in radio.

Five of the participants – one third – are employed by broadcast services rather than by a station. The services provide traffic, news and sports for a number of stations in the area. Generally females work for the services, though management is typically male. Oftentimes the stations will fire their news or traffic reporters, and then hire the services so they don't have to pay benefits.

Deanna said that people who work in the radio business would much rather work for a station than for a service. “The pay scale for the lowest rung on the union scale is almost double what you make at [the service].” She added that those who work for the service also work much harder. “What my company does is they load us up. I switch from station to station to station and do as many stations as I can physically do during my shift.”

Services perpetuate a kind of dishonesty to radio listeners. For instance, although Patty works directly at the station, she is actually employed by the service. “No one really realizes that I don't work for the radio station, which is cool. They think I'm there.”

Deanna pointed out in her original interview that the listener does not know that she is not employed by the station. “And we want them to believe that,” she said. She felt the show loses something that way: it would be better and more fun if she could be in the same room with the person she's interacting with, she explained. She now works directly at the station, which she feels makes for a better show and a more pleasant work environment.

### **Key Phrases**

Phrases or themes included in this discussion were terms brought up without prompting by the participants. To be included in the discussion, they must have been used by at least five of the women, though most were mentioned by half of them or more. This discussion reveals further information about the obstacles faced by women in the radio industry.

**Anonymity** – Half of the women specifically asked if the study was confidential<sup>31</sup>.

Deanna asked, “my name’s not going to be used, right?” before talking about her experience with sexual harassment. Heather was also concerned with sharing her experiences with sexual harassment. She asked, “how safe and secure is what I’m telling you?” and added, “if you’ll buy me that anonymity, I’ll give you honesty.”

Cheryl, who had just left her position with the service, wanted to make sure she was anonymous before sharing why she changed jobs. Patty also asked, “You’re not gonna use me, right? I’m gonna be anonymous.” Stacey verified that the study was anonymous. As the interview was drawing to a close, she asked, “And again, it’s totally nameless?”

Karen said, “Please don’t send this to my boss or I’ll get fired.” A few minutes later she added, “Just don’t tell anybody what we talked about. That’s the only thing.” Brenna said, “Now, are you gonna use quotes and put my name on them? That’s the other thing. I don’t want to get in trouble or anything.” Tina asked twice, “again, this is confidential?” She asked once when she was speaking of her program director, and once when she was talking about her compensation.

**Bitch** – The word “bitch” was used by seven of the women to explain what female personalities are called when they stand up for themselves.

Cheryl repeatedly mentioned this. She said that in situations where she should stick up for herself, and in fact has “every right to ... somehow it’s gonna come back and bite me. ... But when a guy [does that], well that’s ‘cause that’s what a guy’s supposed to do. You stick up for yourself, you’re a bitch. Or it’s [your] time of the month.” She added, “But if it’s a guy, he’s a tough person and tries to get the job done, he may be a jerk sometimes, but he must [be

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<sup>31</sup> Please note that this was stressed when the interview was arranged.

an] intelligent, brilliant person.” She said as a woman, “If you are too strong of a personality, or too strong of a character ... you’re risking being called a bitch.”

Shannon said she was called a bitch by the male co-host on one of the stations she did traffic for, and that he would “get bent out of shape” if she couldn’t do his report exactly when he wanted it. She used the word in another instance when she was talking about the fact that she did not go to management to complain about one of her co-workers who sexually harassed her. “I don’t want to be the bitch. ... I don’t wanna lose my job. ... I don’t want to look like the bad guy here.” She added that it’s tough for women because oftentimes a woman is “known as a bitch and nobody wants to work with you.” She also mentioned that the males often talked about one of her female co-workers at the service where she worked. “They wouldn’t let her do the bigger stations ... because, you know, she was always talking about the union, and she was just crude, and they were always holding that against her.”

Lisa said the word was used “as a term of endearment” because the male deejays respect the female deejays.

***Boy’s Club/Man’s World*** – Over half of the women said that radio is a “boy’s club” or a “man’s world.”

Cheryl indicated that the boy’s club is still in existence and that females in radio have to withstand that environment. She said, “It is a boy’s club ... [that’s] still very alive. And it’s still extremely hard to break that barrier.” She mentioned a female program director she knew, and said, “She’s seen it all and she’s also had to compete in the boy’s club – you know, in those conference rooms ... where it’s all men and her, and she has to have a strong opinion about things.”

Alex agrees that the boy’s club creates barriers for women in radio. She said, “It’s more difficult as a woman to make the connections with people within the industry.” She mentioned

an instance when she was music director at a station. “The ratings came out, and they were really good.” The program director and general manager “went out to celebrate the ratings at [a strip club]” and took the business manager instead of her. “The fact is I wasn’t even invited.” She said things like that happen all the time. “Some women complained in some of the trade magazines that traditionally it was a male thing, and they would all go to a titty club and the women can’t network.” She added, “I think most of it’s subconscious. ... I don’t think there are too many men that are [even] aware of their prejudice against women like that.”

Deanna added that management likes to include women’s voices on the air “to attract the women listeners,” otherwise it “just doesn’t sound right, it’s like the boy’s club.”

Patty was the first female on her morning show, with “a group of guys that have been together for about 18 years in this market.” She noted that although the boy’s club exists, it never affected her directly. “It’s always kinda been the boy’s club on their show, and now all of a sudden they had a female that they had to deal with and it was kind of different, fresh blood to pick on and that sort of stuff.” She said despite that, they welcomed her into the team.

Drew said women have been treated differently for so long “because it’s a man’s world. I don’t know why. If I knew why, I’d change it.” Heather said, “I’m not one of the boys. ... I’ll never be one of the guys. ... Even if I quit, I couldn’t affect change.” Angie added, “I’m sure everybody has their own cross to bear in their professions, but it really is a boy’s club.”

***Male dominated*** – In addition to being a “boy’s club”, the women said that males dominate the industry, and that radio is a “last bastion” of male dominance.

Shannon said, “There’s no women ... running the whole show, running the game, it’s all men still. ... Radio is still a men’s game.” Deanna agreed, and said men “definitely” dominate the field. Patty said it’s changing somewhat, though “it was predominantly a male industry.”

“Our business [is] still pretty predominantly male oriented,” said Drew. “It’s a very, very misogynistic business.”

“I knew in smaller markets women who were program directors. ... It just seems in the stations that I’ve worked at, it’s primarily a male oriented job, with especially talking about PDs and music directors,” said Kamila.

Brenna said the reason salary and benefits are not comparable for men and women is “because it’s still a man’s world and it’s still a mostly male-dominated industry.”

**“Balance”** – Several of the participants feel a woman’s job in radio is to bring some “balance” to what listeners hear. “I work with three men,” said Deanna. “I mean obviously they didn’t wanna have another guy – that would have just been too much – they wanted a girl to sort of ... add a little bit of perspective.” Patty said, “They don’t want a station that has all male or all female, so there’s gonna have to be some balance.”

Cheryl said women who work for a service are there for balance. “I think it’s more women because those roles still need to be filled, traffic and news, and most of the time the radio hosts are men.” Brenna said she feels that women “bring balance, they bring an insight that men didn’t have.”

**Luck/Fortune** – Two-thirds of the women feel that making it in the business is all about “luck”. As Deanna put it, “As far as I’m concerned, not to be crude, but it’s kind of a crap shoot.” She said that while she “pounded the pavement” and “paid her dues,” she also “fell into something and there was a lot of luck involved too.”

Shannon agreed, and said that getting a job in radio is just “chance, like submit a tape and, ‘Hey, you know, we’re hiring’ – you know, luck of the draw.” Regarding her current position as a traffic reporter, Alex said, “I’m lucky that it’s what they want. I don’t really

believe in luck, but, you know, it's meant to be right now because what I'm giving them is what they want, and that's a good thing."

Karen spoke quite a bit about luck, and feels that she is doing "what I'm supposed to be doing in life. ... I was really lucky. I had two amazing mentors when I was 19 and 20, that both happened to be male. ... I wouldn't be ... where I am today if I didn't have these two people early on in my career." She added that advancing her career would also depend on some luck.

Kamila said "pure luck" had a lot to do with her making it to her current position – at a previous job she was asked to fill-in for the host when the regular fill-in couldn't do it, and the station decided they liked her and kept her to cover events. She was able to parlay that experience into her current position.

Shawna feels lucky to be in what she calls "a supremely cool business." "We are blessed and lucky in that way to be able to do something that is interesting on a day-to-day [basis]. ... You just never know what's gonna happen, what's gonna come on." Tina agreed, and said, "I think it's a great, great way to make money. I feel very lucky."

**Ratings** – "Ratings" are also an important component of success. Cheryl mentioned that female on-air personalities in particular have to prove themselves with ratings.

Patty said ratings are better when "people ... have a familiar voice and name to relate to." She feels that opportunities abound for women – if they prove themselves with good ratings. She said, "I've proved myself and ... the ratings are there. ... I have proved to make the station money."

Tina said you have a lot more leverage and leeway when ratings are up. "When you have the ratings you can do anything you want, you know? You can ask for a lot more."

**Voice/Personality/Talent** – "Voice", "personality" and "talent" were mentioned as being very important in the radio business, for a male or female. One needs to have all three to be

successful – a nice sounding voice, which is what you’re born with; an ability to entertain and disseminate information, which is talent; and a unique personality.

Deanna said, “a station either wants a man’s voice or a woman’s voice. That’s it.” She said she was given the opportunity to work for the classic rock station because station management “liked me, they liked my personality and they liked my voice. ... As they told me at [the station], they hired me because my voice cut through.” Tina said, “If you’ve got the talent and you’ve got the sound that the station wants, I think you’re gonna get it.”

Patty said that although a good voice is helpful to be on the radio, “even the people that don’t have the voice, if they’ve got the personality that people will listen to, that’s the most important thing.” Lisa repeatedly said that she’s made it to where she is today based on the strength of her personality.

Shawna said a person’s voice is incredibly important in the hiring process. “A good disc jockey or a good newscaster, they want somebody who can carry it off, somebody who’s got the right voice, who’s got what they want.”

Alex indicated that since the business is focused on talent, it is hard to prove any discrimination. “I mean anything I think that’s talent driven, I think is more difficult ‘cause there aren’t the laws regulating it, like the laws you have at Delta. Or the laws in a bank. I mean granted, there’s sexual discrimination everywhere, but I think there is less enforcement of the rules in showbiz than there are elsewhere.”

Heather feels that although “I think I have every possible talent that one would need” to make it in the industry, because she is a woman, she does not get as far as the men.

***Howard Stern/Robin Quivers*** – The majority of women mentioned talk show celebrity Howard Stern, whose chauvinistic show is targeted primarily toward males.

Deanna mentioned Stern and his on-air assistant, Robin Quivers, when she said that most females are sidekicks to a male lead. Lisa, who was never billed with her male partners, agreed. She justified it by saying, “you know, typically, since that show was kinda like the Howard Stern show, I mean you never hear about Robin in top billing either.” Tina said that although her title is news director, “thankfully it’s a lot more like Robin’s job on Howard Stern’s show.”

Cheryl said that women will never make as much money as men unless they’re in syndication, and that even that arena is dominated by a male: Howard Stern. Alex mentioned Stern when she was speaking of syndication, which she said is a growing trend.

Drew said that no females hold a position equivalent to what Stern holds. Kamila mentioned Stern when she said “the big men who have been successful are, you know, Howard. ... It’s the people who are gonna shock.”

Stacey was especially critical of Stern, and said that his show contributes to an environment that is anti-women. “I think with the advent of people like Howard Stern ... those guys should be in prison somewhere ... for really turning women into this blow-up doll image, not just in radio, but in general ... for the titillation of all, you know, kinda blue-collar men everywhere, who think nothing of calling women bitches and sluts.”

Angie mentioned Stern when she said that his show was competition. “You need to make yourself unique, so that people in [this market] want to listen to you and not maybe Howard Stern or someone like that.”

**Dr. Laura** – Dr. Laura Schlessinger, a talk radio host whose syndicated show is on over 450 stations and reaches 18 million listeners (About Dr. Laura, 2000), was mentioned as a woman who has made it in radio. Dr. Laura dispenses advice to callers, and her show focuses on relationships.

Shannon said that for the most part, “women really are on the back burner. ... I haven’t heard women [in charge on the air] unless it’s a syndicated talk show like Dr. Laura.” Drew said, “Name me a big radio star that’s a woman other than Dr. Laura practically.” Brenna agreed. “I don’t think there’s ever really been a top woman morning radio host ... I mean other than, like, Dr. Laura.”

Kamila said, “If you look at the big success stories in syndication, you see a lot of men, but you see women too. There’s Dr. Laura who’s done well ... but it’s funny ‘cause it’s like, if you see the women who have succeeded, it’s these maternal, you know, advice-giving women.”

Patty also mentioned Dr. Laura, but said, “she’s a phony. So many things have come out that have exposed her.”

## **Discussion**

The lack of literature on women in radio is just one indication of the overall low status of women in the industry and the lack of priority placed on positions that are primarily filled by women. Since men control the means of dissemination of the dominant ideology, which in this case is the airwaves, it is harder for women to make changes or have their voices be heard.

Although there are contradictions in the experiences of the participants, the overall responses reflect this lack of regard for women working in radio.

Women who attempt to break into the radio industry are trying to get into what is essentially a man’s world. This gender barrier means women cannot network with those in power, making it that much harder for them to make it in the industry. The females who manage to break through and get a job may face sexual harassment. Women in the industry also receive lower pay and fewer options for career advancement.

## **Career Opportunities**

Overall, females in the radio industry have fewer career opportunities than men – it's harder for them to get hired, easy for them to get fired, and they have fewer options to advance their careers. However, there is some parity in their titles – all are general and not gender specific.

Half of the women feel it is more difficult for females to get hired for on-air positions. This indicates that it is not easy for women who want to be in the industry, though it is not impossible. There was a slight correlation between the woman's position and if she felt it was harder for women to make it – the lower her position, the more likely it was that she would feel it is more difficult. Three of the five women working for a service feel that it is harder for women to make it. Of the remaining four participants who feel it is difficult for women to make it, three work in news and one is a co-host. However, some of the participants felt that females can make it if they are good enough and determined enough.

Most of the women feel that getting fired from a radio job is practically inevitable, although only 40 percent of them have been fired. Three of the women are on shows where on-air staff was fired. If a woman<sup>32</sup> is fired from her on-air job, there is nothing she can do, especially since getting fired is oftentimes not dependent upon actual job performance. Consolidation also ensures that women who lose their jobs don't fight back – since the company owns so many other radio stations across the country, fighting back would merely decrease her chances of landing another position. In addition, women are often fired so the company can cut expenses, and then they pay a service to cover the same responsibilities.

The majority of women feel they have limited access to prime time slots. They indicated that as long as they settle for an accepted role or position – that of the sidekick or the

newsperson – they are allowed to work during a prime time slot. However, fewer positions in the prime slots are available to women, and a woman wanting to fill a role different from the norm has a harder time. In addition, although the women are for the most part not in charge of their show, they often feel equally responsible for ratings.

Most of the women feel they don't have opportunities for career advancement – and only one of the fifteen women is in charge of a morning show. Of the remaining women, five of them say they don't want to be the one in charge – they have limited desires, and many of them display insecurity in their talents. There were some indications that surviving is more important to women than being promoted or advancing their careers. As one female said, "it's really not an issue of being promoted or trying to develop a career. I've survived." Only one of the women wants to be in charge of her own show – and she wants that to be a show for women.

Because it is a male-dominated industry, and males are the ones in power, it is harder for women to network, which limits their ability to advance in their careers. It is also harder for women to get into management. News and traffic services are becoming the ghettos for women in the industry.

On the other hand, tokenism works as a slight advantage for females who want to be on air – radio stations do not generally want only male voices on their morning show because they want to appeal to as many people as possible in order to get high ratings.

There does not seem to be a magic formula for women to make it in the industry. Although only three of the participants are co-hosts, and only one of those three is in charge of the show, the participants for the most part feel they have made it. They indicated that success is achieved partly through hard work, and partly through a combination of persistence, luck,

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<sup>32</sup> Please note that this goes for men in the industry as well.

talent and who they know. There are indications that if a female does not get along with her male partners, or acts like a prima dona, she will lose her job.

Most of the participants (60 percent) feel that it's harder for women to make it in the industry. Program directors – the ones with the hiring and firing power – seem to be afraid of how women will be perceived, and so do not place women in positions of authority. In addition, there are not as many on-air positions available for women.

Half of the women want a job different from the one they have, but it appears that many of them have convinced themselves that they are best suited for a lesser role, even though they would prefer to be in charge of their own show. The four women who have the least amount of experience want a job that is different than their current position. However, four of the women who have a great deal of experience are also unhappy with their current job.

### **Job Tasks and Responsibilities**

Thirteen of the women (86 percent) gather information for newscasts or traffic reports. Of the remaining two, who are co-hosts, they still are responsible for gathering information and staying knowledgeable on current events. All the women have to present information – whether it is news, traffic or banter – in a succinct and understandable manner.

Many of the women feel they work harder than the men, but those women also feel that they don't experience quite the same pressure and stress since they aren't in charge. The participants indicated that sometimes men are given the "better" and more prestigious job tasks.

Stress is something that most of them live with – 86 percent feel that their jobs are stressful. They cited the early hours, equipment failures and creative pressures as factors contributing to their stress level. It is interesting to note that although 66 percent of the women say they have experienced sexual harassment, none of them mentioned it as a cause of stress.

Management decisions can also be a factor in creating stress – but it was not cited often. In general, the causes of stress are not gender related.

### **Compensation**

Only one of the on-air personalities said that her salary is comparable to that of her male counterparts. The remaining 14 females say they are paid less. The women who work directly for a station are paid over \$36,000 less per year<sup>33</sup> than the average salary that men are commanding in morning drive. However, in looking specifically at the average salaries for morning drive talent on rock stations in the top 30 markets, the women are making an average of almost \$200,000 less than the men.

The females working for a service make significantly less per year than the women working directly for a station – almost \$50,000 less per year – but they feel the pay disparity is not as great between males and females working for a service.

It was thought that female deejays may make less money than the men since they generally don't move around very much, which can be a way of increasing prestige, as well as negotiating a better salary and title. However, the female who has worked in the highest number of markets is making one of the lowest salaries – because she was forced to take whatever position was available since she followed her husband's career. Also, one of the females who has mostly worked in the same market during her career is making one of the higher salaries.

Predominantly, the women feel they don't get paid the same amount because of the perception that men have a family to support. In addition, because the females aren't getting the billing, and aren't in charge of the show, management can justify paying them less.

One area where there is parity is in benefits, though more often than not the females are

not on the same bonus plan, and in fact may not receive bonuses at all. Another area of seeming parity is in the opportunity to do outside promotions and appearances, which is a way for the women to make extra money. Eighty percent of the women do outside promotions<sup>34</sup>, and 66 percent of those women say they get paid the same as the men. The women indicated that they have the same opportunities as the men do concerning outside promotions.

The attractiveness of a female is not a factor in her opportunities for outside promotions, but instead her position is the main contributing factor – a woman working for a station is practically guaranteed outside promotions, regardless of her job title, while a woman employed by a service may not have any opportunities.

### **How the Women Feel They Are Viewed and Treated**

Sixty percent of the women feel that management treats them worse than they treat the men, and that they do not get respect from their supervisors. This lack of respect is reflected in the lower salary that stations offer women, although some of the participants mentioned that lower salary was the only manner in which they felt they were treated differently. Station managements seem to expect female on-air staff to represent and be a voice for all female listeners, even if there is only one female on a morning show with numerous males. The participants seemed to think that other differences in treatment by managers are fairly subtle.

Most of the women feel they get more respect from the male deejays than they do from management, although they indicated that they risked being called a bitch by co-workers if they stuck up for themselves. Three women indicated that they feel like outsiders and not “one of the boys”. Each personality is viewed differently by her listening public, views that range from “voice of reason” to “balance” to “strong female”.

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<sup>33</sup> According to the 1999 salary survey by *Radio & Records* (Rodrigues, 1999, p. 47).

<sup>34</sup> Of the women who do not do promotions, two work for a service; the third works for a sister station.

Although for the most part the women feel they are treated well, sexual harassment still seems to be a big problem – of the 15 women included in this study, ten of them have experienced it in one form or another. The severity of the harassment varies from inappropriate talk to physical harassment. The women indicated that what they have experienced has mostly come from male co-workers rather than their male supervisors. Many times the women who experience sexual harassment don't do anything about it for fear of losing their jobs.

It is also interesting to note that of the five women who claim they have not experienced sexual harassment, all of them said that some of what they experience could be considered sexual harassment by others. One of the women who said she has not experienced sexual harassment said she is “subtly isolated” by her male peers.

A small minority of the women indicated that those who are sexually harassed bring it on themselves.

### **The Roles Women Play in Radio**

Women who manage to get hired are often pigeonholed into certain stereotypes – they are encouraged to be “wild and crazy” or sexy – while a male is not asked to take on a different personality. The females are also often seen as a sidekick bimbo, with the sole purpose of acting dumb and laughing at the men's jokes. The women are also supposed to “civilize” their male partners and keep them in line.

Many of the women indicated that they are not allowed to play enough roles. This study's participants echoed many of the stereotypes mentioned in the literature. In addition, women in radio are subtly guided into certain positions. Very few women are in charge of a show or in management – but they can generally be found in sidekick, news or traffic positions. Women are also found in charge of midday shows, but not on morning or afternoon drives.

They indicated that this is due in part to the perception that women don't have the skills necessary to be in charge.

### **Other Effects on Women in Radio**

Females working in the radio industry are also affected by how they look and whether or not they have children.

Half of the women say their looks have affected their careers in radio; only one of those women said it was a negative effect. They indicated that even though a radio personality is not seen while on-air, looks could make a positive difference – that an attractive person has an easier time getting in the door, although not being considered attractive is not a detriment. Conversely, it doesn't matter how attractive a person is if they don't have the talent and skills to back it up. The participants felt that women in radio have more freedom and don't have to worry as much about their looks as do women in other media industries.

Only a third of the women have children, and half of those say that being a mother has affected their careers. They said that they can't work the same hours or do the same appearances as their male counterparts – giving the men both more opportunities to network and to make additional money. The women indicated that in order to be “treated like the boys” they could not allow motherhood to interfere with their job.

### **Changes in the Industry**

Although the situation for women in radio seems somewhat bleak, women are much better off than they used to be. They indicated that women are compensated better than they used to be, although still not equally, and that greater access and opportunities exist for women than previously. It is also a given that you will hear women's voices on the air – it's not uncommon anymore. However, they also feel that things for women haven't changed as much or as rapidly as they would expect.

The women mentioned several trends in the industry. Consolidation is a big one – a handful of companies are buying up all the radio stations, which means there are fewer jobs available for women and very little diversity in programming across the United States. The big companies will also use one deejay as the on-air talent for several stations, which also decreases the number of jobs available. The same is true for syndication. If a company has a morning show team that does well in one market, they'll put it on a lot of their radio stations across the country. Generally, those teams are male, not female, which again means fewer positions for women.

Service bureaus are also a growing trend. One-third of the women in this study work for a service instead of directly for a station. Instead of each station having their own news or traffic person,<sup>35</sup> they will hire a service to provide that information, and one person will do the job on several stations. People working for a service get paid less than those working for a station, and they must also work much harder. The listeners have no idea that the person they are listening to is not actually employed by the station. Since women mostly fill traffic and news positions, this means there are fewer jobs available to women, and the jobs that are available do not pay as well. Also, while the women who work for a service may be contributing more to the show than just traffic in the form of jokes and banter, they are not physically at the station, nor do they hold any true power over their jobs or how the morning shows are presented. Their roles are to provide the traffic and then move on to the next station, and then the next, and then the next. In addition, only female on-air personalities work for the services – all the male morning personalities work directly for the station.

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<sup>35</sup> The same goes for sports positions.

## **Key Phrases**

The phrases used by the participants without prompting reveal a little bit more about the obstacles faced by women in the radio industry.

They are afraid to speak freely or risk losing their jobs – half of them specifically asked if this study was anonymous. The women feel they are not allowed to display masculine traits, such as assertiveness, or risk being labeled a “bitch” – whereas a male can get away with the same behavior with no repercussions. Only two of the women really considered themselves to be tough or aggressive – one of them, a co-host, said that helped her make it to her lead role, while the other female, a news reporter, said it has hurt her.

The participants indicated that they are working in a “boy’s club” or “man’s world” – a gender barrier that keeps them out of the lead slots and positions of power. They also feel the industry is the “last bastion” of male domination. However, they feel that women who are in the industry are included for “balance”.

Two out of three participants feel that “luck” is an important ingredient to make it in the business. “Ratings” were also cited as being important – which are driven by a person’s “voice”, “personality” and “talent”.

When speaking of famous radio personalities, many of the women mentioned talk show celebrity Howard Stern. Dr. Laura was cited as a woman who has made it in the business.

## **Conclusion**

Radio is a pervasive medium, and many formats are targeted toward women. While previous research indicates that women are highly under-represented in radio, no exact figures exist on the total number of female on-air personalities. In addition, although research into the roles and treatment of women in society is abundant, no previous research has looked

specifically at female on-air radio personalities. The lack of previous academic studies involving women in radio indicates the lack of regard for this topic.

While the findings of this study are not necessarily generalizable to the entire population of female on-air personalities across all markets and formats, they do give some indications of the status of women in radio. For the most part, the women interviewed are not faring well in the male-dominated, misogynistic environment of classic rock and rock radio in the top markets. While none of the participants specifically said that they are a victim of gender discrimination, as a group they: make less money than their male colleagues on the morning shows; are far more likely to be a traffic or news announcer rather than a host or co-host of the show; are less likely than the men to be employed by the stations, which provide higher salaries, more prestige and better benefits than the radio services for which a number of them worked; and do not have the same opportunities for outside promotion work or career advancement.

The disparity in pay is especially significant – women who work for a service make almost \$50,000 less per year than the women working directly for a station. However, the women who work for a station make significantly less than their male co-workers – an average of almost \$200,000 less per year. Even the female with the highest salary is making an average of \$125,000 less than her male counterpart. The participants indicated that management justifies the lower salary for their female talent by saying the man is the one at the helm, or that the man has a family to support. “It is very maddening. We don't get as much money as we should be paid,” said one of the participants.

These women are working on shows and at stations dominated by male voices – the fifteen stations feature twice as many male voices as they do female. The few women allowed to work on the morning show are asked to be the voice for all women – and to do so they are

asked to play parts that are easily recognized. As one female said, she was asked to be the “representative of all women listening to the show” and play up her “babeness.”

In addition, personal characteristics that should be irrelevant in the workplace can affect a female working in the radio industry: her looks and whether or not she is a mother. The women interviewed all indicated that good looks could make a difference, though only half say their looks have affected their career. Only one-third of the participants have children, but they indicated it can make a difference – they can’t work the same hours as their male colleagues.

The women provided conflicting opinions about whether females have a harder time than men making it into radio, but most acknowledged that once in the door, few make it into management or the top slots. A number of women noted that they did not aspire to the top job on a morning show because they believed it was too stressful or they felt they could not do it well – they have limited their desires and aspirations, and their focus is on survival rather than making it to the top.

The number of positions open to women is limited, and the women who manage to get a job in radio are pigeonholed into certain positions – that of sidekicks, reporters or public affairs – and into playing certain parts. Stereotypes they are asked to play include the sexy party girl, dumb laugh track or tough bitch. They can make it in the industry – and get a job in a prime time slot – if they try for a position that requires a female voice, are agreeable and get along with the guys. They also have to “work quicker, harder, and smarter,” as one of the women stated.

The vast majority of the women – all but one – experienced what many would consider sexual harassment at some point in their careers. Although some of the women interviewed declined to characterize the behavior of their male colleagues as harassment, they acknowledged it could be seen as such by others. However, even those who admitted they were sexually harassed said they did not go to a supervisor or attempt to stop the behavior because of fears

concerning how they would be perceived by their colleagues and fears that they would not be able to get another job in the industry.

The key phrases used by the participants reveal a little bit more about the obstacles and contradictions faced by women in the radio industry. They are afraid to speak freely or risk losing their jobs – half of them asked if the study was confidential. The women also feel they are not allowed to display masculine traits, such as assertiveness, or risk being labeled a “bitch”. The participants indicated that they are working in a “boy’s club” or “man’s world” – a gender barrier that keeps them out of the lead slots and positions of power. Many of them feel that “luck” is an important ingredient to make it in the business. “Ratings” were also cited as being important – which are driven by a person’s “voice”, “personality” and “talent”.

As a group, the women expressed numerous contradictions in terms of their experiences and perceptions. These contradictions likely are reflective of the contradictions in their lives, as well as reflective of the contradictions for women within a dominant ideology which both espouses and denies equality for women. For instance, although two-thirds of the women say they have experienced sexual harassment, none of the women cited sexual harassment as a source of stress. Also, although they said that their male colleagues treat them with respect, most of the sexual harassment has come from their co-workers, and they are afraid of being labeled a bitch if they stand up for themselves.

Because academia in general, across disciplines, has ignored the roles of females in radio, the area is ripe for future research. More needs to be written about the history of women in radio. Quantitative studies could look at the number of men versus women in various job titles, and compare salaries earned by men and women. It would also be useful to compare smaller markets with the top markets, as well as to compare the experiences of women at different formats. Qualitative studies could focus on program directors, since they are the ones

who generally do the hiring and firing for a station. Other research could look at the proliferation of broadcast services and explore the role of women within such services.

Studies such as this and the ones suggested above are necessary to document the status of women in radio. Without this information, it is impossible to know the extent of the gains made by women in radio, as well as what changes must be made for women to achieve real equality on the air.

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**“Under My Thumb”:  
Perceptions of Female On-Air Personalities  
on Classic Rock and Rock Radio Stations**

**Appendix: Research Instrument**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Station: \_\_\_\_\_ Format: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_ Market #: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Employed by:  Service  Station

1. What is your job title?
2. What shifts do you work?
3. Who is your primary listening audience?
4. What is your history working in radio in terms of jobs and stations (here & elsewhere)?
5. What does your job involve?
6. What factors do you feel contributed to you “making it” to your current position?
7. What job would you like to have in radio? (If the job she would like is other than what she has, ask further:) Do you think that is a realistic goal? Why or why not? (Probe for obstacles to achieving goal.)
8. What roles do you think women play in radio? (Probe for more information: i.e. jobs, parts played.)
9. Do you think women’s roles are comparable to male roles in radio?
10. Do you think management treats you differently because you are a woman? Explain.
11. Do you think your job responsibilities are comparable to male DJs at the station? Why or why not? (Probe for tasks and assignments.)
12. Do you think your salary and benefits are comparable to your male counterparts? Why or why not?
13. Do you think it is more difficult for women to get hired for on-air positions? Why or why not?
14. Do you feel you have the same opportunities for outside promotions work as a male would? Why or why not? If yes, are you paid the same as men for these promotions?

15. Do you feel you have the same opportunities for career advancement as a male would? Why or why not?
16. Can you give examples of any ways in which you believe you have been treated differently from the men at the station?
17. Have you ever experienced what you would consider to be sexual harassment? If yes, please explain.
18. What is the ratio of on-air men to women at your station?
19. Do women have the same access to prime time slots as men?
20. How do you think management views your role at the station? Explain.
21. How do you think the male DJs at the station view the female DJs? Explain.
22. How do you think the listening public views you? Explain.
23. Do you think things have changed for women in radio over the years? How so?
24. Do you find your job stressful? Why or why not?
25. Do you think it is harder for women to make it in radio than it is for men? Why or why not?
26. Overall, how do you feel about how you are treated in the workplace?
27. Do you think any of this is related to your gender?
28. Do you think the way you look has affected your career in radio?
29. Do you have children? (Probe for: How old are they? Gender? Has being a mother affected your career?)
30. What is your race? (Probe for: Do you think race has affected your career in radio? Has it affected how you are treated by management?)
31. Level of education?
32. Do you mind if I ask your age?
33. Can you tell me which range your salary is in?  \$30,000 - 40,000  \$40,000 - 50,000  
 \$50,000 - 60,000  \$60,000 - 70,000  \$70,000 - 80,000  \$80,000 - 90,000  
 \$90,000 - 100,000  Above \$100,000
34. Is there anything else you'd like to add about the role of women in radio that I haven't asked?