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## Contributions of Ethnography to Gendered Sociology: the French Jazz World

### **Abstract**

In the last few years a number of studies have explored the epistemological uses of the ethnographer's gender in sociological research and the effects of gender on research results. These studies aim either to analyze how ethnographers can use their "gender" to open up observational possibilities, or to analyze observations made while maintaining as much control as possible over the conditions of their sociological interpretation. But relatively few papers discuss using ethnography to study gendered social relations. This article applies that approach to the observations made in our field study of the "world" of French jazz. We present here three of the main ways that the epistemological enrichment offered by ethnography may in turn enrich analysis of gender relations: access to "invisible" practices, analysis in terms of "*the arrangement between the sexes*," the possibility of generalization.

### **Keywords**

Ethnography; Gender; Art; Jazz; Music; Work; Ethnography; Epistemology

In the last few years a number of studies have explored the epistemological uses of the ethnographer's gender in sociological research and the effects of gender on research results. These studies aim either to analyze how ethnographers<sup>i</sup> can use their "gender" to open up observational possibilities through a sense of shared understanding, flirtation, or trust, or to analyze observations made while maintaining as much control as possible over the conditions of their sociological interpretation<sup>ii</sup>. The results derive from "reflexive" work (Burawoy 2003; Buscatto 2002; Weber 2001) done at different moments in the research using "gendered" analysis of the relation between the ethnographer and the respondents.

But relatively few studies discuss using ethnography to study gendered social relations. This article applies that approach to the observations made in my field study of the "world" of French jazz (Becker 1998 [1982]), specifically at the link between gender analysis, used here to apprehend the social situation of French female jazz singers, and the use of ethnography in the study. Using ethnography as a primary research method allowed me to identify and explain the marginal, doubly segregated position of French women jazz singers. Ethnography made possible not

only a major generalization—women jazz singers are marginalized—but also the analysis of the social processes that produce and legitimate this gender-based marginalization.<sup>iii</sup>

## **Two types of gender-based hierarchical ranking in the world of French jazz**

Four years of fieldwork<sup>iv</sup> in the world of French jazz revealed major forms of gender-based differentiation<sup>v</sup>. French jazz is a man's world—more than 90% of musicians are men—but about 65% of singers are women.<sup>vi</sup> And even the French women singers receiving the most recognition from colleagues, audiences and critics never make their living fully from their art, but are situated in the lower spheres of the “informally recognized ranking of these jobs—taking account of the income involved, the hours of work, and the degree of community recognition of achievement felt—(which) constitutes the scale by which a musician measures his success according to the kind of job he usually holds.” (Becker 1963: 103-4).

I thus identified a hidden phenomenon—the negative hierarchical position of French women jazz singers—and revealed three social processes that produce and legitimate this “gendered” hierarchy. Male instrumentalists and female singers are distinguished by gender-specific conceptions of music. Singers want to produce a melodic, textual interpretation of songs, often standards composed by others; instrumentalists dream of composing their own songs and associate women singers with commercial jazz, which they denigrate. Furthermore, “male” conventions—social, language-related and musical—shape work relations, making it difficult for female singers to get into and stay on the jazz music market. Lastly, stereotypes of women shared by most male musicians reduce women jazz singers' employability and confine them to less esteemed musical positions. A conflictual hierarchical ordering of women singers and men instrumentalists is thus observed, even though most of these musicians would prefer an experience of harmonious equality.

How did ethnography help me develop such an innovative view of this question?

## **Privileged access to “invisible” realities**

Ethnography makes it possible to learn about “invisible” practices of *in situ* actors (Becker 2002; Cefai 2003; Morrill and Fine 1997). An ethnographer who observes a group for a long time—and this may include becoming an active member of that group—can observe and identify moments, discourses, and behaviors inaccessible to a “stranger” researcher using interviews or questionnaires. This material may consist of taboo practice (e.g., the sorcery practices observed by Jeanne Favret-Saada 1977). Ethnographers can attain to private or public life moments hidden from “strangers”—“squares,” to borrow the term used by the dance musicians Howard Becker studied (1963). Or they can reveal incommunicable, floating or contradictory practices such as “natural” body practices (Faure 2004) or the variability of principles of action by context (Grimaud 2004). This special access to low-visibility social practices allows the identification of multiple kinds of rationality underlying individual actions and the way they are constructed in the action.<sup>vii</sup>

## ***The desire to investigate***

My position as an amateur singer triggered my desire to investigate this subject. I have been singing jazz since 1993, and in 1998 my progress in music and a certain amount of free time led me to participate in a jazz singing workshop at a jazz school in Paris where most of the participants were women who were professional singers or becoming so. The rest were amateurs with solid experience, like me. I also participated in an intensive jazz-singing master class with professional and semi-professional women singers.

In the instruction and advice given by the teachers, themselves well-known professional jazz singers, and in the anecdotes exchanged among the singers during breaks, friendly gatherings or work sessions, I learned about the tensions, conflicts and other negative experiences they had with instrumentalists. Without being fully part of this social world, I was also beginning to note experiences similar to their “stories” in my regular interactions with instrumentalists—in jazz singing workshops, for example, and vocal jam sessions (Buscatto 2003b).

My decision in June 1998 to keep an ethnographic journal was directly linked to my desire to study this conflictual situation—unpleasant and musically sterile for the women singers—sociologically. The first lines of the journal read:

Just finished my class at School X, am full of experiences and vague ideas about relations between singers and musicians. Free-ranging discussion on the difficulty of finding musicians, making music with them.

After noting a few negative anecdotes (the first in a long series), I laid out a few concepts that would guide my future research strategies: “trajectories,” “images of woman,” “social behaviors,” “conceptions of music.”

Ethnography gave me full access to the conflict that marks the daily life of women jazz singers and men jazz musicians. I could have detected the difficult relations between the two parties by reading jazz magazines and conducting formal interviews with jazz musicians of both sexes, and I have sometimes used those means to collect denigrating remarks about “not very serious” singers or those with “risqué necklines,” denunciations of tactless musicians, and to learn that musicians often only collaborate with women singers in order to get jobs so that they can make ends meet. But this material would not have been enough to identify the systematic nature of this behavior and the way it affects all French jazz singers regardless of technical level, musical style, “appearance,” social origins and mode of expression.

## ***Identifying the negative hierarchical position of women jazz singers***

Ethnography let me deconstruct the discourses produced by these men and women, and thus explain the conflictual relations between women singers and male instrumentalists. It also let me redefine the object of study, shifting focus from those conflictual relations to the negative hierarchical ordering experienced by all French women jazz singers I observed, a focus that revealed the gender-based differentiation at work in the jazz world. My first fundamental result due to ethnography is that French women jazz singers occupy the lowest levels of the musical hierarchy regardless of technical level, artistic reputation or musical style.

Even the most renowned singers, those most fully recognized by their peers and the critics - those who receive positive reviews when their discs come out, are openly complimented in private discussions, and/or are programmed for renowned festivals or clubs - never fully make their living from jazz. Main reason is that they are

very seldom hired as “sidewomen” by instrumentalists. Their position enables them to do no better than steer clear of “side” jobs - teaching, peripheral music, choir-directing, running music workshops, cultural entertainment, etc. - that are the common lot of relatively unknown musicians of both sexes. Making one’s living from jazz implies playing in around ten groups a year, only two or three of them led by the same musician (Coulangeon 1999; Buscatto 2004). The fame of foreign jazz singers - Diana Krall, Norah Jones, Stacey Kent, to cite only the most renowned - and the relative ease with which a “group with a woman jazz singer” may get hired to perform at private parties or in clubs or cafés, makes people think that “serious” women jazz singers do well, or even better than men instrumentalists. These experiences mask these women’s low degree of integration into musical networks, a situation that leads to their “exclusion” from the most comfortable musical positions, reserved for more renowned instrumentalists, those who make their living “exclusively” from jazz (Buscatto 2004).

This empirical observation, which has since been regularly corroborated by the actors involved and other singers and instrumentalists I have had occasion to present my works to either orally or in writing, nonetheless always at first astounds my musician interlocutors and sociologist colleagues.<sup>viii</sup> Ethnography alone gave me the elements and perspective that made it possible to get beyond this first mistaken assumption about the situation of women jazz singers, an idea fueled by repeated daily experience, i.e., the fame of foreign jazz singers and the relative ease with which jazz groups with a woman singer get work performing in “commercial” contexts.

The result was only conceptualized in this form at the end of the writing process, in response to a comment from the manuscript reviewer at the *Revue Française de Sociologie* who, after reading a first version of my academic article, asked me to clarify the terms of my understanding and suggested the concepts of segregation and discrimination. This remark was an incentive for me to formalize the gender-based differentiation that is actually operative in this art world and to finalize my first analyses around the concept of social hierarchy. But only by systematically gathering a significant amount of information relative to the work situations experienced over time by women singers and men instrumentalists, their social characteristics (age, training, musical style, appearance) and their private-life (marital situation, living arrangements, birth of a child) was I able to identify and prove that contrary to common understanding, all women jazz singers (not just the least serious among them) are subjected to negative hierarchical ranking.

The interviews were conducted during a limited time period and at a specific moment in each respondent’s trajectory and therefore, produced only partial information, limited in time and partially incorrect about the different components of respondents’ occupational activity and how their informal social networks were organized. I systematically reconstructed these professional activities and trajectories by cross-checking the information transmitted to me in the interviews conducted in 2001 with that collected in the course of my observations over four years: informal discussions, reading of performance programs, participation in musical events, etc.

As mentioned, ethnography makes it possible to gain privileged access to “invisible” body or discursive practices, whether they be “natural,” taboo, incommunicable, contradictory or simply not very well known to the actors who engage in them. Identifying these practices then influences the way that unsuspected social phenomena are identified—i.e., negative hierarchical ranking of women jazz singers—and the way the modes of producing and legitimating them that are operative at the very heart of social interaction are analyzed.

## ***“The arrangement between the sexes” as point of entry into the analysis***

Likewise, the observations I was collecting soon moved me to discard a first approach, despite its being the one generally used to explain phenomena of gender-based differentiation in artistic fields. The approach I did not choose is concerned above all with artists' socio-occupational trajectories, trajectories usually reconstructed by means of life-story narratives or non-directive interviews. That approach is quite efficient in apprehending moments—in childhood, at school, in the course of a career, for example—or social beliefs—e.g., a gender-based understanding of a particular instrument and the practice of playing it—that underlie certain gender-based differentiations. It sheds light on the fact that women are less likely to be present in the artistic field, as shown by Dominique Pasquier (1983) for painters or Hyacinthe Ravet for orchestra musicians (2003). And it explains the most important form of gender-based differentiation operative in jazz: women sing, men play an instrument. I have recently used this approach to better apprehend the minority situation of women instrumentalists in the world of French jazz (Buscatto 2007).

But that approach does not apprehend the process by which the hierarchical order in this music world is produced and legitimated; it does not enable us to understand how women jazz singers get situated at the lowest levels of musical renown and job conditions. Reformulated in the terms that define my object of study - namely, the conflictual relations between women jazz singers and men instrument players—this approach did not capture the reasons underlying this patent mutual rejection and denigration. I therefore chose an interactionist approach, where the understanding is that musical interaction between these two categories of musicians - “the arrangement between the sexes,” to borrow Goffman's expression - is where the observed gender-based hierarchical ordering is most likely to be realized, expressed and negotiated: “It is here that sex-class makes itself felt, here in the organization of face-to-face interaction” (Goffman 1976-77: 208). It is in this encounter that both the rules governing collective relations among musicians and the terms defining “good music” are negotiated. Just as those musicians' music is constructed when they play, so the esthetic, musical and social conventions that orient relations among musicians are defined in the moment of interaction. It is at the very heart of musical practice that I identified the modes of producing and legitimating the “naturally” practiced hierarchical ranking of women jazz singers and men instrumentalists on the French jazz scene.

In 1999 I began the long labor of integrating myself into the world of men instrumentalists, an undertaking that influenced the way I handled the investigation. During the first two years that I kept my field journal, my principal concern was learning how to relate to the instrumentalists so I could make progress in music (at the time, I was doing research on organizations; jazz was my secret garden) and trying to understand the situation from these men's point of view. I enrolled in an “instrumental music class” at another Paris jazz school. There I was the only woman - and an amateur jazz singer to boot - in a class of men instrumentalists, professionals or in the process of becoming so (the teacher was also a male instrumentalist).

Class session after class session, rehearsal after rehearsal, I experienced precisely what my fellow woman jazz singers had related. But I also became familiar with a more “male” conception of jazz. For example, while jazz-singing training sessions were fundamentally (though not solely) devoted to interpreting old standards, instrument workshops made no mention of standards and focused instead on improvisation (result published in my 2003 demonstration). The first social process

underlying gender-based hierarchization is therefore that the “male” gender-based notion of music is the dominant, more legitimate one in the jazz world.

This experience also accustomed me to new ways of communicating. “Doing your improv” and “asserting yourself as a leader” became standard expressions, and exchanges were about keys and chord sequences—instrumentalists get annoyed when indications about how to play are not given in formal technical terms. My hesitations provoked silence and annoyance with them, whereas with my jazz singer colleagues they elicited encouragement and discussion. On the other hand, my energetic “improvs” elicited encouragement from instrumentalists whereas they were generally ignored by my women jazz singer colleagues. Gradually, a second hypothesis emerged, later examined and confirmed by means of complementary research techniques: the social, language-related and musical conventions (Becker 1982) that organize relations among jazz musicians are all gender-related, and the dominant conventions are once again “male.”

I also observed that the only women singers who manage to hold their own in the jazz world are those with a male instrumentalist partner. Not only does a male partner, regardless of his age, provide access to a more open, regular network, but he is very likely to manage his partner’s group, directly (by composing arrangements or managing relations with the musicians) and/or indirectly (by handling the singer’s reputation, for example). Such a partner seems a necessary source of assistance in daily interactions and plays a fundamental role in keeping these women relatively present on the weak job market. All women singers who tried to penetrate that market or stay on it while having a love relationship with a non-musician partner failed in their endeavor. Breakups were often costly. I was only able to reach this conclusion thanks to long, careful observation of women singers in professionalization spaces such as vocal jams in Paris cafés and music centers (2003b; 2006b).

The eminently “male” character of the French jazz world may be qualified thus: men define good music and the social conventions attached to women singers. But this kind of functioning and the imaginary that goes with it are in turn linked to broader social functioning, and this allows for a fuller demonstration of ethnography’s generalizing capacity.

### **Ethnography’s capacity for generalization**

By giving us access to low-visibility social worlds, ethnography provides a privileged view into “micro” realities. But thanks to the multiplication of “games of scale” (Revel, 1996), it can also enable us to identify broader social phenomena (Burawoy, 1998). In other words, ethnography also proves a useful tool for identifying the wider movements that produce and transform social relations, and for describing them down to their finest realities. I was able to link the social and musical situation experienced by women jazz singers to broader analysis in terms of gendered social relations. Vocal jazz is clearly defined as “a woman’s job.” Women jazz singers experience all the social realities of this, from “invisibility” of their vocal and stage know-how to the use of denigrating representations of female seduction.

### ***Direct access to a “sexual” imaginary: the eternal feminine***

My position as a woman jazz singer awakened a desire among the male instrumentalists to invite me out, in modes ranging from friendly to amorous. The absence of women in these men’s worlds makes women’s presence “pleasant,” according to different male musicians I met with, and changes the “nature” of the evening; e.g., subjects and tone of conversation, jokes (Kaplan-Daniels 1967). But the image of female seduction that the jazz singer inspires also seems to have played an important role in motivating these musicians to invite me out (Ryen 2002; Arendell 1997). I observed this more clearly when the attraction they showed was for my girlfriends - some of whom included me in the “plans” that then took shape—but also when the men were overtly trying to flirt with me.

I then came to note that merely by going on stage and singing expressively, my seductive power increased several times over among both unknown spectators, who sometimes tried to get a date with me after a jam or concert,<sup>ix</sup> and some of my instrumentalist colleagues, often strongly attracted to the “singer.” In the course of jams, parties or training sessions, the way people looked at me varied radically by whether or not I had sung on stage. It often happened that an instrumentalist who had ignored me before I went on stage came up to talk to me and even tried to flirt. There seemed to be an imaginary in which the singer was associated with highly evocative erotic seduction. The fact is that the increased seductive power of a woman singing jazz is associated on different points with the devaluing of her professional abilities.

### ***The invisibility of stage work***

First, singing presupposes a specific kind of stage work in that the singer is the only member of the performing group who is constantly relating and communicating with the public (through eye contact, the lyrics), narrating stories to them. The singer is the only one required to think out her position on stage so as to appear both relaxed and involved (this implies thinking about how to hold the microphone, move on stage, facial expressions, clothes). Both instrumentalists and singers consider this reality a constraint, but instrumentalists think of themselves as invisible on stage. And neither instrumentalists nor singers think of the stage presence and expression just described as full-fledged work. It is understood instead to express the singer’s personality and her “natural” assets, namely physical ones. Stage expression is granted no value in itself because only musical value counts. Though singers consider the musical work involved in interpreting melodies and expressing emotions to be central, they do not speak of the part of the performance involving on-stage gestures and movement as a specific kind of work. These observations have been fundamental in establishing the tie between the “natural” seductive power of the singer and non-recognition of her stage work, that work being perceived as merely a more or less successful expression of her natural ability to please.

The invisibility of stage work thus turned out to be associated with the classic function of women seducing men. The singer is understood to be showing that she has a natural taste for seduction, which she is simply putting in the service of vocal success. She comes to resemble Woman as delivered up to male fantasy, the hetaera so well described in *The Second Sex* (Beauvoir 1949). Her beauty, charm, sensuality, superior eroticism distinguish her from other women and offer her up for the public’s pleasure. A jazz critic writes of the celebrated Canadian jazz singer, Diana Krall: “*She has the new voice of women today. A non-deliberate voice. The*

*virtually non-resonant voice of anxiety-free desire.*"<sup>x</sup> The woman is understood to seduce by way of her natural female charms, unrelated to any work or construction. She expresses eternal femininity, and on stage she is merely serving once again one of the traditional but ambivalent functions of seduction; i.e., being a passive object of the other's desire—in this case the public's—and source of the other's pleasure.

### ***The voice is not an instrument***

For instrumentalists, [the voice] is natural, it doesn't require work, they don't recognize the work. That explains the old cliché about the singer, man or woman: they're not musicians. (a woman singer)

This assessment of the way instrumentalists regard singers was uttered by a musically trained singer who both plays piano and composes. Her skills are invisible to instrumentalists because she expresses them through singing. The voice is not a capacity that may be worked on, it's natural:

Singers want to think of themselves as instrumentalists. But the voice will never be an instrument. It's a more sensitive type of expression, it's part of people. (guitarist)

The voice is thus confined to a naturalist image, and this in turn limits women singers' job opportunities. First, this stereotype reduces the likelihood of their being hired to sing with a group because it is extremely difficult for them to win recognition as legitimate colleagues. Women singers are regularly criticized for having insufficient vocal abilities—this is how male instrumentalists understand the extra transposition work they are often asked to do. The fact is that standards are composed in keys that are highly unlikely to work for most singers, sometimes for technical reasons but generally for esthetic ones. Women singers often request transposition into a lower key—just as great women jazz singers have done. The request for a key change is interpreted as proof of vocal weakness and discomfort in musical work, and the understanding is the same even when the singer does the transposing herself.

Another example is the tendency to think of the voice as an occasional instrument for creative musicians. This stance may readily be found among male musicians who improvise a great deal; they are likely to improvise a few melodic phrases in their performance and make all sorts of sounds with their voices. When they sing, they mobilize a number of the musical qualities they have constructed in practicing their main instrument; they say they are satisfied with the new possibilities that singing offers them and feel virtually no need to work on their voice.

Musicians also tend to think it appropriate for only a few traditional functions to be open to women singers; namely, expressing the melody and relating to the public. Singers cannot be trusted with rhythmic accompaniment, sound effects or free improvisation, according to a well-known musician who asserts that singing is exclusively melodic. It is also said to be difficult to hire women jazz singers as sidemen since they are necessarily in a leader position and their very presence can disturb the fragile balance of the group.

It is therefore extremely difficult for women singers to be recognized as professionals with professional qualities, a specific technical skill or ability. Their qualifications are invisible (Maruani and Nicole 1989), and this means they are not considered "real" musicians who deserve to be hired to work in a group. This image of singing directly affects women jazz singers' job possibilities. Those who consider



their voice an instrument and call themselves vocalists complain that it is extremely difficult, even impossible, to find musicians with whom they can fully realize and live out this other definition of the voice. They are seldom hired as sidemen. When they are, the experience is unlikely to be repeated. Not only does it not become regular collaboration with the instrumentalist, but it in no way gives the singer access to his network of musical contacts, in contrast to what happens for other male instrumentalists. “Quality” singers all seem to have realized a major musical project in their career, but the collaboration was not repeated. No equivalent projects followed on the first, even when the leader seemed satisfied with the results. Two of the singers I met with, women whose musical level was equal to the instrumentalists’, did indeed experience success. But they say they felt so pigeon-holed in the role of “the singer” that they quit jazz, one temporarily, the other permanently. Some attempts are being made to combat these stereotypes and thereby enable women singers to find a new place. The French pianist Martial Solal says of his vocalist daughter Claudia:

I think I've written in a really different style. I introduced new arrangements, different ways of playing rhythm ... The group is a kind of trio surrounded by brass: two trumpets, two trombones, a horn, a tuba, plus a voice. It's my daughter Claudia who's going to play this difficult role—I'm talking about a voice, not a singer.<sup>xi</sup>

But this notion of the voice is not widely shared by the instrumentalists I met, and the occasional counter-discourses do not seem accompanied by much in the way of practice, with the notable exception of musicians whose life-partner or daughter (as for Martial Solal) or sister is a singer. Singers of course do manage to construct musical relations with a few musicians, but those relations are occasional, fragile, and characterized by a high level of dependence.

This analysis is based above all on daily observation. Though the points just enumerated do come up sometimes in the course of interviews, they are mentioned in quite general terms. And they are often concealed, particularly by mid-level or marginal musicians who do not want to publicly denigrate their female employer. The various comments, judgments and norms just presented are omnipresent in daily interactions. After a workshop session where I brought a standard I had transposed into another key, an instrumentalist in the workshop complimented me: “At least you know how to transpose,” he said, suggesting his disparaging vision of women singers as unskilled. There was also the repeated experience of being told by instrumentalists during an improvisation session where I'd managed to do fairly well that for me it was easy to improvise because “the sounds come out of your mouth all by themselves”—a remark that reveals a vision of song as emanating naturally from the body. At the end of a series of enthusiastic jam sessions in an intensive summer course, an instrumentalist told me it was nice to play with me because “at least you're not a pain in the ass.” And then there was the time around three in the morning, when a few professional instrumentalists began criticizing some singers they knew for being more interested in their plunging necklines than their musical technique. But above all, the women singers I know—friends, teachers, or simply women I've met—are never regularly invited to participate, whereas my instrumentalist pals, even those who are not very well known, are regularly able to realize projects, and even if they aren't a success they will be invited to play again by colleagues at a similar level.

## Conclusion

I have presented three of the main ways that the epistemological enrichment offered by ethnography—access to “invisible” practices, analysis in terms of “the arrangement between the sexes,” the possibility of generalization—may in turn enrich analysis of gender relations. In so doing I have suggested (though not explored in as thorough detail) ethnography’s epistemological contributions to the study of artistic work in connection with a variety of research concerns: the ability to describe practices (dress, objects, uses of the body, architectural arrangements), as in my work on vocal jam sessions (2003b); the ability to apprehend certain highly personal, private experiences, such as vocal expression (2005b); access to certain closed social milieus such as the jazz world (2004), and identification of biographical trajectory stages and their constitutive elements over time within a given social milieu (2006b).

The use of ethnography in this article is in keeping with the “reflexivity model”; specifically, the feature of an observer embedded in the world she means to study. Avoiding the “trap of overinterpretation” (Sardan 1996) requires using a set of “precautionary” principles, procedures, and techniques at different stages in the study; these bear on observation contextualization as well as on such practices as note-taking, cross-checking, saturation, triangulation, and testing one’s material by submitting it to the observed subjects and to colleagues (Lahire 1996). The researcher’s relation to his or her respondents and object of study can then be established as one of the elements with which to construct the analysis, proof, and demonstration.

Translated from French by Amy Jacobs

## Endnotes

- i “In its most characteristic form it involves the ethnographer participating, overtly or covertly, in people’s daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions – in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research” (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 1).
- ii Examples are Terry Arendell’s study (1997), Arlène Kaplan-Daniels’ (1967), Anne Ryen’s (2002) and my own (2005a).
- iii This article takes up some of the material developed in Buscatto 2006a and 2005a.
- iv The ethnographic study was conducted from June 1998 to June 2002. Taking advantage of my position as an amateur singer, I gained prolonged access to the daily realities of 77 professional jazz musicians playing a variety of instruments and characterized by diverse styles, lengths of time in the profession and reputation levels. So as to better grasp the ways these male and female musicians justified their practices, this ethnographic material was supplemented with systematic reading of the specialized press and interviews of 20 musicians, done in 2001 (Buscatto 2003a, 2004, 2007).
- v Based on *Le Guide-annuaire du jazz 2004*, approximately 2000 musicians considered themselves as jazz musicians in France. While about 8% of them are female musicians, only 35% of singers are men and 4% of instrumentalists are women.

- vi Of a total of 133 singers listed in the *Guide-Annuaire du Jazz en France 2000*, 93 are women.
- vii In addition to being a powerful means of describing the details of daily life (dress, bodily practices, architectural space and arrangements, objects), ethnography helps us accede to both the internal organization of artistic practices and the social logic behind them.
- viii I have regularly encountered this reaction of amazement in research seminars and informal exchanges with my sociologist colleagues and at various moments during my recently completed research study on women jazz instrumentalists (Buscatto 2007).
- ix It also became clear that these invitations “disappeared” when the instrumentalists were there with their women partners.
- x Francis Marmande, “Une plainte sensuelle en dix chansons,” *Le Monde*, Oct. 27, 2001: 33.
- xi “Un Deca pour Martial Solal,” interview with R. Czarnes, *Jazzman* 78 (Mar. 2002): 10.

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