Liv Quist Christensen

"You should look more cute, you know"

A critical analysis of negotiations of power, *kawaii* behaviors and gender performance in jazz music in Japan

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NTNU
Norwegian University of
Science and Technology

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A critical analysis of negotiations of power, *kawaii* behaviors and gender performance in jazz music in Japan

Master's thesis in Equality and diversity
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Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Faculty of Humanities
Department of Interdisciplinary Studies of Culture

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Science and Technology

Likestilling og mangfold

Læringsutbytte

En student som har fullført programmet, forventes å ha oppnådd følgende læringsutbytte, definert i kunnskap, ferdigheter og generell kompetanse:

Kunnskap

Kandidaten har:

- avansert kunnskap om det tverrfaglige kjønnsforskningsfeltets sentrale teorier, debatter og kontroverser
- spesialisert innsikt i så vel historiske som samtidige endringsprosesser knyttet til likestilling og mangfold i det norske samfunnet, i lys av internasjonale og globale kontekster
- kunnskap på høyt nivå om hvordan kjønn som sosial og symbolsk kategori kan virke sammen med andre sosiale og symbolske kategorier og fenomener.

Generell kompetanse

Kandidaten kan:

- gjennomføre et selvstendig, avgrenset forsknings- og utredningsarbeid i tråd med gjeldende forskningsetiske normer
- anvende sine kunnskaper og ferdigheter på nye områder i tverrfaglig dialog og samarbeid med andre eksperter
- formidle resultater av eget faglig arbeid muntlig og skriftlig på en selvstendig måte både til eksperter og allmennhet

Ferdigheter

Kandidaten kan:

- identifisere og arbeide selvstendig med praktiske og teoretiske problemer knyttet til likestilling og mangfold i konkrete samfunnsmessige sammenhenger
- vurdere og benytte relevante metoder og teorier for undersøkelse og analyse av kjønn og eventuelt andre sosiale kategorier i spesifikke empiriske problemstillinger på en selvstendig måte
- analysere og forholde seg kritisk til problemstillinger knyttet til forståelser av kjønn, likestilling og mangfold på ulike samfunnsarenaer og derigjennom se og anvende flere tilnærmingsmåter

Abstract

Jazz has for a long time been a male dominated field and is to a great extent produced as a hegemonic masculine project still today. In this thesis, I offer a feminist, humanities-based voice to the historical and musicological discourse surrounding jazz. Through a qualitative study in the form of in-depth interviews, this thesis explores how certain jazz practices are described from a musician's perspective, and how these narratives structure understandings of gender in jazz practice in Japan.

The theoretical approach to this project is grounded in discursive psychology and Butler's theory of gender performativity. Using the concepts of interpretative repertoires, ideological dilemmas and subject positions, I analyze participants' possibilities to their identities within Japanese jazz practices and how they make sense of their experiences. Within this framework, I map women musicians' experiences with societal expectations concerning the ideal 'jazz diva'. While this study shows that such a gendered perception creates a highly rigid scope within which female musicians can negotiate their positions, they also engage in processes that reconstruct what it means to be a jazz musician, providing new meanings in jazz. These female musicians' perspectives bring to light issues of gender, identity and musicianship that are currently lacking in the literature, a gap this thesis aims to fill.

It is my hope that shedding light on alternative stories of musicians in jazz can help expand the scope for musicians in the genre which I argue will benefit not only women, but all musicians, regardless of gender identity.

Sammendrag

Jazz har lenge vært et mannsdominert felt og er i stor grad stadig videreført som et hegemonisk maskulint prosjekt i dag. I denne oppgaven vil jeg gi en feministisk, humaniora-basert stemme til den historiske og musikkvitenskapelige diskurs som finnes rundt jazz som sjanger. Gjennom en kvalitativt studie i form av semi-strukturerte forskningsintervju, vil denne oppgaven undersøke hvordan visse jazzpraksiser beskrives fra musikeres perspektiver, og hvordan disse narrativene strukturerer forståelser av kjønn i jazzpraksissene i Japan.

Den teoretiske inngangen til dette prosjektet tar utgangspunkt i diskurspsykologiske tilnærminger og Butlers teori om kjønnsperformativitet. Jeg vil med bruk av konseptene fortolkningsrepertoar, ideologiske dilemma og subjektposisjoner, analysere deltakernes muligheter til å forhandle identitet innenfor de japanske jazzpraksiser, og hvordan de gir mening til sine opplevelser. Med dette rammeverk vil jeg kartlegge kvinnelige musikeres opplevelser av samfunnsforventninger rundt 'jazz diva'-idealet. Studien viser at bestemte kjønnsforståelser begrenser musikernes muligheter til å forhandle sine posisjoner, mens den samtidig hentyder at de engasjerer seg i prosesser som rekonstruerer hva det betyr at være musiker, og dermed skaper nytt meningsinnhold i jazzen.

Det er mangel på litteratur om problematikker knyttet til kjønn, identitet og musikerskap. Ved å fremheve kvinnelige musikeres perspektiver relatert til disse spørsmålene, søker denne studien å være et bidrag til kunnskap om de dimensjoner som omhandler kjønn og identitet i jazz. Gjennom å sette lys på alternative historier av jazzmusikere, søker studien å bidra til å gi musikere er større spillerom for musikalsk utfoldelse innenfor denne sjangeren. Jeg argumenterer videre for at dette ikke bare vil komme kvinner til gode, men alle musikere, uavhengig av kjønnsidentitet.

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Preface

Writing my master's thesis has been a challenging and lengthy journey in the midst of a pandemic. Completing it has been made possible by some of my favorite people, whom I would like to express my gratitude to.

First of all, I want to thank my wonderful participants who let me into their world, sharing experiences and giving me their trust to write about their stories. I also wish to thank those who helped me reach out to the participants, especially Mizuki Tanigawa, Riko Wedum, and Lo Ersare, who showed to be true heroes when my trip my Tokyo was cancelled.

I owe a special thanks to my supervisors, Siri Øyslebø Sørensen and Jennifer Branlat. Two academic role models whom I deeply admire. Thank you for trusting me in this project. Your ability to give new and inspiring perspectives in every single supervision, all your expert language advice and support along the way has meant the world to me.

I want to thank the organization Women in Music Japan (WIMJ), with a mission to advance the awareness of equality, diversity, heritage, opportunities, and cultural aspects of women in music, for inspiring me in my project. Professor Marie Buscatto for providing literature on gender and music in Japan.

The Department of Interdisciplinary Studies of Culture (KULT) and my peers at the master's program in Equality and diversity deserves a special thanks for providing a fun and inclusive study environment, and for timely advice and moral support. Thank you for showing me the true meaning of what a safe space is. To Mari: may we remain forever on the same page, even when playing Codenames.

Thank you Rikke Solbjørg for stepping in as an excellent proofreader when I realized I needed one in the last minute.

A special thanks to my lovely family and friends in Denmark for your support and encouragement. To Freja, for sending a thesis aid kit with all the essentials when most needed, and for always reaching out when it has been too long.

Finally, I wish to thank my beautiful partner Amund and his family for supporting me during the ups and downs of the roller coaster this writing process has been.

Liv Quist Christensen

Trondheim, May 20th 2021

Table of Contents

Note on naming

The names of references are listed according to Western naming convention, with given names preceding family name, irrespective of nationality. Japanese names are given according to the Japanese convention, family name preceding given name, with the exception of the interviewees who are anonymized and given pseudonyms. I recognize these inconsistencies but want to acknowledge that as researchers we participate in a global intellectual venture that has to incorporate numerous cultures of naming.

1 Introduction

> **Aoi:** As a singer, I want to be more the jazz musician type, not just a 'queen' or 'diva', you know? It's not my style, but of course I need to – not pretend – but I need to act like a kind of a leader on the stage proclaiming 'hey, I'm a diva' I have to do that too as a part of my job. But my core is more united with the jazz instruments.

Aoi's statement above calls our attention to her experience of feeling obligated to perform in line with certain cultural norms and assumptions about what is required of a 'jazz diva'. She seems to be especially aware of a split between her core, which is connected to instruments, and her exterior, which is used to mobilize the gaze.

There have been and continue to be many obstacles preventing women from pursuing careers in jazz and in music in general. Most have been institutional, where women have been denied the access to musical training and professional connections (McClary, 1991). As Susan McClary notes, "[women] have been assumed to be incapable of sustained creative activity" (McClary, 1991, p. 18). A multitude of women have faced embedded subconscious attitudes, which restrain them from achieving the career success experienced by men (McClary, 1991). The relationship between jazz and gender, particularly the position of women within the field of jazz music, is historically and culturally variable. The jazz field is constantly changing, and more and more women are emerging in this genre. The dynamic nature of the field is also why we cannot allow future history writing to reproduce myths about jazz as a singularly masculine form of expression. In the initial phases of my project I found that female role models seemed to be prevalent in Japanese jazz for both men and women, and I was intrigued to investigate whether this was a coincidence. In recent years, I've also noticed that more and more women of Japanese descent have appeared on the covers of internationally recognized jazz magazines, leading me to wonder about these emerging feminine presence in Japanese jazz.

This study's primary focus has been on the forms of negotiations and positioning related to complexities of subjectivities and agencies in a social context of music rather than music itself. By conducting in-depth interviews with jazz musicians, my aim is to provide insights into the lived experiences of Japanese women in jazz, how they negotiate gendered expectations concerning performance and authenticity in both Japan and abroad as jazz continues to become an increasingly international phenomenon.

In this study I argue that the work of these musicians broadens the range of possible music, as it comments both on assumptions of more traditional procedures and on the problematic position of a woman artist attempting to create new meanings within an old genre. The analysis is to a large extent based on statements of women jazz vocalists,

since the predominantly part of my interviewees were vocalists. This indicates that I acknowledge the limitations of my project rather than a lack of commitment to the importance of analyzing such.

I realize that some readers will find my own credibility for this project lacking. What perspectives do a master's student of Danish heritage living in Norway have to confer on Japanese jazz artists, or even to interpret the ways in which musicians negotiate their jazz practice? To study different aspects of music and gender in a culturally sensitive and contextualized way while maintaining awareness of one's own gender position is indeed a great challenge. 'Situated Knowledge' is a term coined by the feminist theorist and historian Donna Haraway to underline that we are understanding and analyzing from a partial perspective (Haraway, 1988). Situated knowledge refers not only to the active instruments that produce knowledge, but also reflects what Haraway refers to as the "apparatus of bodily production" (Haraway, 1988). Bodies and objects do not have an independent existence, and Haraway's objective figure, situated knowledge, acts as a point of view where you are situated, embodied, partial and accountable (Højgaard, 2007). With this in mind, my own study gives a situated, partial viewpoint and although limited will hopefully open up for more knowledge production on this very important topic.

I believe that even though I am a Danish researcher and I will never fully understand the experiences of my informants, as a master's student in Gender Studies I can point to how power operates in a critical social sciences perspective. Developing a greater critical insight about the hierarchies and forms through which power is deployed contributes in a complementary way to the larger project of questioning and unsettling those modes of power. With an outside look, and not belonging to the dominating actor (the U.S. jazz scene) in the genre of jazz, I hope to contribute with a wider understanding of how jazz both acts to maintain certain structures of power currently operating in Japanese society *and* provides a vehicle for changing these same power structures.

Before presenting the background of my study, I want to signal my difficulties with the terms "Western" and "Other" that are used in this thesis. I accept that writing even a self-critical account might tend to reproduce the very hegemony it sets out to deconstruct. However, I wish to distance myself from the traditions of analysis which have taken such a category for granted, privileged it or both. I use "Western" to denote Europe and North America. By using this term I have to address its opposite, namely the term "non-Western", which implies as though the rest of the world is a kind of non-West. The term "Other" has been widely used in a number of critical fields, particularly in feminism and postcolonial studies. Given that my critical intentions are hopefully evident, I have chosen not to use quotation marks after the initial appearance of "Western" and "Other".

To place this thesis in a wider context, I will describe the background of my study and the current literature about jazz in Japan. The literature on jazz music is vast, but I will limit my review to studies that relate to the history of jazz in Japan, and the different

axes of power in Japanese jazz communities that I have identified in my material. I will give a short overview of the Japanese jazz community and the term *otaku,* and introduce the existing research about jazz and gender, before presenting my research question. Lastly, I will provide a reading guide for my thesis, which includes a short introduction to each chapter.

1.1 Jazz in Japan

Jazz first came to Japan in the mid-1920s, and it was only with the cultural transformation triggered by the Great Earthquake of Kantô that the genre became audible as part of a more general process of Americanization according to professor in musicology Shūhei Hosokawa (2016). E. Taylor Atkins argues that even though jazz was a quite marginal form of cultural expression, it became the heart of the entertainment industry in Japan, and as a commercial product, transformed the Japanese society into a consumer culture. Although jazz was banned during the war, it never stopped thriving (Atkins, 2001, p. 46). Yet, a limited number of Japanese musicians have attained a high degree of stature and acceptance. The reason for the rarity of successful Japanese jazz musicians is according to Atkins (2001) due to a widespread dilemma in Japan's jazz world, posed as a question of "authenticity". As he demonstrates, the obsession with authenticity leads to the insistent refrain, "But can Japanese really play jazz?" (Atkins, 2001, pp. 11-12). In line with Atkins' argument Molasky further challenge the idea that jazz is something uniquely American, and points out that if the language of jazz must be spoken in an American accent, "how can a Japanese ever hope to be more than a skilled mimic, fervently praying that his or her foreign 'jazz accent' goes undetected?" (Molasky, 2003, p. 204).

Atkins' study *Blue Nippon* (2001) mainly focuses on the identity crisis and the conflict between American music and the national consciousness inside the local jazz community of musicians and journalists, critics, and audiences. In contrast, Hosokawa's study *Key Tunes at the Heart of Japan's Jazz Age: Americanism and its Indigenization* reveals the mass culture that emerged from this niche community (Hosokawa, 2016).

1.1.1 The jazz community and notions of belonging

The term 'jazz community' was coined by jazz sociologists Alan Merriam and Raymond Mack in 1960 and encompasses audiences as well as performers (Atkins, 2001; Merriam & Mack, 1960). Given that jazz remains a foreign genre to most mainstream Japanese audiences, the jazz community represents a subculture of specially interested musicians and listeners. Japan's culture industry makes it easy for consumers to cultivate and engage with specialized niches, with the increasing prevalence of fan clubs and idol culture. The Japanese jazz community provides a collective identity for musicians and jazz aficionados. The community communicates ideas of *otaku*, cultivating an image as an eccentric, obsessed with an all-consuming hobby. *Otaku* is a Japanese term once used as a description for socially inept and hobby-obsessed people with consuming interests and only a tenuous grasp of reality (Vartanian, 2005). My informants use the term in different ways, to underline their affiliation to Japanese culture.

A collective identity and the understanding of home and belonging is connected to music communities. Yet, the notion of 'home' can also be a problematic term for people outside of their community of origin, or as my interviewees with various backgrounds explained as a feeling of being different, and deviating from societal expectations and norms. Tina K. Ramnarine (2007) uses the term 'diaspora' to ask questions about home, homeland, bound cultures and fixed identities. Ramnarine argues that "both diaspora and home can be places of unease, of not quite fitting in, of difference" and challenges the traditional understanding of national belonging (Ramnarine, 2007, p. 25). According to her, music can help change ideas about the hybrid perceptions of belonging and can give us an understanding of how diasporic music and transnational genres incorporate stories of multiple identities and homes.

Born and Hesmondhalgh (2000) discuss how music plays a formative role in the construction of identities. They consider that identity marks and reinforces boundaries of sociocultural categories and groups, suggesting that identity is imaginary, and that "musical imaginary works to reproduce, reinforce, actualize, or memorialize extant sociocultural identities, in some cases also forcefully repressing both transformation and alternatives" (Born & Hesmondhalgh, 2000, p. 36). They argue that the musical representations of sociocultural identity come to be reinterpreted and out of this process "reinserted" as representations into the changing social-cultural formation.

1.1.2 The japanese jazz audience

Japan's jazz audience is according to Atkins (2001) comprised of Japan's most elite: the urban salaried worker, the educated professional, the self-styled cosmopolitan. Atkins argue that the genre of jazz is only inclusive to the extent that its performers and advocates will allow. In order to address the practice of jazz in Japan, it is relevant to look at the gatekeepers who determines access and support in the jazz community. From its original formulation by Kurt Lewin (1947) the concept of 'gatekeeper' has been used extensively to analyze processes of evaluation and selection within the arts and cultural fields. Gatekeepers are thus particularly interesting as they control the social and aesthetics. In my study the concept is used to describe the position of the audience, functioning as the jazz musicians' worst critics, but also determining which musicians get support in their musical career.

As Atkins argues and my interviewees affirm, jazz aficionados have advanced education and are affluent enough to be able to afford access to the entertainment venues and enjoy a hobby that confers a degree of sophistication and status (Atkins, 2001). Although the jazz audience represents an affluent part of Japanese society, the audience revel in their own marginality. In contrast to elite culture, subcultures exist in unambiguous opposition to everything for which the hegemonic society stands. Subcultures have the potential to challenge dominant culture, but it is dangerous to understate a subculture's extensive economic, cultural, political, and social stakes and connections in the power structure (Atkins, 2001).

Some people are clearly more marginal than others, finding personal liberation from the rigid hierarchies and expressive constraints that modern capitalist society imposes (Atkins, 2001, p. 7). Why jazz is considered 'high-class' (though not exclusively) in a Japanese cultural context might be due to Japanese adoption of American culture in the wake of the Second World War. As Atkins notes, Japan's most elite classes circulated Asian and European classical music exclusively among themselves to signify and reinforce their separation from the non-elites, while jazz was imported and promoted both by non-elites but also by mass media who reached the urban middle classes (Atkins, 2001).

Jazz has since become an integral element in narratives concerning American ingenuity and creativity; throughout its history, Japan's jazz community has had to locate itself in an aesthetic hierarchy that explicitly reinforces asymmetries of power and cultural prestige in the Japan-U.S. relationship by placing American jazz artists as 'innovators', and non-Americans at the bottom as 'imitators' (Atkins, 2001, p. 11). Discourses of authenticity are essential to the musicians' social positioning, artistic development and to the cultural identity crises that mark twentieth-century Japan.

1.1.3 Imitation and authenticity

Jazz music is both national, trans-national and defined by degrees of authenticity in the different jazz communities. Imitation and originality are key, somewhat contradictory elements in jazz practice. Even the most 'original' of jazz artists have been influenced by somebody, and every jazz student begins their study of the genre by listening, transcribing, analyzing and replicating improvised solos (Atkins, 2001, p. 35). This has always been the foundation of jazz education, formal or informal. There is a power in knowing and being able to imitate the influential role models in jazz from the past.

Although there is power in being the perfect 'imitator', notions of authenticity and originality are also dominant in the aesthetics of jazz, often intertwined with issues of power and race. The obsession with identifying the 'authentic', and the lines between 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' often correspond closely with markers of race and ethnicity. The irony here, is that such racialist conceptualizations of 'authenticity' undermine the music's pretensions as a 'universal language':

> Authenticity in jazz, as in other folk arts, implies that the artist must possess specific qualities – educational background, life experience, ethnic heritage, motivations, or artistic vision – which confer upon the artist the right not only to work unchallenged in a particular medium, but to establish the standard by which all others working in that medium will be judged. Those who are influenced by such work may be deemed 'authentic' or 'inauthentic' depending either on how closely they adhere to the aesthetic standards enshrined in the 'original', or how closely their personal profiles match the specific experiential, ethnic, or motivational qualities of the original's creator (Atkins, 2001, p. 24).

Although the standards for determining authenticity may vary over time and location, some standards have remained in play. Their power is significant and in this way the genre thus privileges one voice as more legitimate than another. Authenticating strategies are crucial to Japanese conceptualizations of jazz, but also a crucial part of social positioning and artistic and cultural identity.

The 'authentic' seems to work in retail terms as a redescription of the 'exotic'. Simon Frith argues in *Western Music and Its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music* (2000) that:

> On the one hand it can be doubted whether there is such a thing as an "authentic" – autonomous – musical form in the first place; on the other hand it is apparent that authenticity here functions as an ideological construct – a construction of commercial (and academic) discourse. It describes a process of music appropriation rather than music-making (Frith, 2000, p. 308).

Here, the difference at stake is not between "Western" and "non-Western" music, but rather the musical true and musical false, between authentic and inauthentic musical experiences. The offensive stereotype that Japan is a 'nation of imitators' still remains powerful today in the United States. The 'imitator' stereotype also imply that the 'West' owns originality in music, which hardly does any justice to Japanese musicians and their artistic legacies and prevents musicians who are creating original music from being credited for it. Further, this leads to the musician's evolving different strategies to navigate in jazz communities outside of Japan, which I will get back to in the first analysis chapter.

1.2 Current literature on jazz and gender

Jazz is often portrayed as a genre about taking chances, mastering challenges and risky tasks - about daring, fighting and winning (Annfelt, 2003). Trine Annfelt, a former researcher at Centre for Feminist and Gender Studies, NTNU, has studied what she refers to as "jazz as masculine space". A key element is that men often play instruments while women sing. Despite great examples in vocal jazz, women's role in jazz has often been to interpret and convey lyrics, and not to improvise. Annfelt emphasizes in her study that gendered roles in music are present in most cultures. In similar ways, struggles have been fought over the distribution of roles and meaning in jazz. Although there are many exceptions, according to Annfelt, there is good reason to pay attention to the ranking of jazz songs and jazz music (Annfelt, 2003). In today's jazz, there is a greater focus on experimentation with vocal improvisation, and the gender-based differences are first and foremost articulated as a historical backlog. Annfelt has studied jazz as a gendered discourse and studied why jazz to a greater extent than classical music helps to maintain gender roles. Annfelt points out the paradox in the explicit culture of the Norwegian gender equality ideology (Annfelt, 2003).

Regarding gendered perceptions in jazz, professor in sociology Marie Buscatto has conducted research on French women in jazz music. Buscatto (2008) explains in her paper *Feminisations of artistic work: Legal measures and female artists' resources do matter* how women tend to be overrepresented in so-called 'feminine' styles, genres or instruments, while men tend to be overrepresented in so-called 'masculine' styles, genres or instruments (Buscatto, 2018). With reference to Connell (1995), she explains how instrumental jazz is associated with 'masculine' qualities such as technical mastery, virtuosity, virility or self-assertion, while singing is associated with 'feminine' qualities such as grace, softness, emotion, fragility, with an emphasis on relationships (Buscatto, 2018). Buscatto argues further that 'feminine' negative stereotypes limits women's access and recognition as artists, and that musicians as a result develop strategies to gain publicity:

> They also learn to either use 'feminine capital' or 'masculinize' their behaviors in order to be regularly hired and recognized as artists. They are likely to be 'over-socialised' and benefit from family resources – parents and companions – to learn informal skills, build-up efficient networks and feel confident in their artistic abilities. Lastly, female artists may develop feminine-only actions in order to either defend 'feminine' or 'feminist' works of art or to attract producers and the audience's interest for 'female' artists (Buscatto, 2018, p. 34).

Buscatto argues that it is the social processes that foster reproduction of gender-related differences and strengthen and persistence of gender stereotypes. Whether the female stereotypes associated with female artists pertain to sexuality, seductiveness, or motherhood, female artists have difficulty performing and being valued as 'universalist' artists (and not merely 'feminine' ones) (Buscatto, 2018).

In *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction*, Ingrid Monson (1996) argues convincingly for a view of jazz improvisation as a complex social process, which is both a technically specialized and a multi-dimensional form of communication. The work is empirically grounded in interviews with musicians and close analysis of a set of carefully chosen musical examples. Monson juxtaposes musicians' talk and musical examples to ask how musicians go about "saying something" through music in a way that articulates identity, politics, and race. Through interviews she develops a perspective on jazz improvisation that has "interactiveness" at its core, in the creation of music through improvisational interaction, in the shaping of social communities and networks through music, and in the development of cultural meanings and ideologies that inform the interpretation of jazz in twentieth-century American cultural life (Monson, 1996).

Jazz provides an ideal and fascinating case study for the assimilation, adaption and rejection of American popular culture and the negotiations of identity such processes provoke. Unlike the handful of previous stories of jazz in Japan, my study recontextualizes the existing terms in which female artists perform. Individuals learn how to be gendered beings through their interaction with cultural discourses such as music. As Susan McClay notes in *Feminine Endings*, "music does not passively reflect society; it also serves as a public forum within which various models of gender organization (along

with many other aspects of social life) are asserted, adopted, contested, and negotiated" (McClary, 1991, p. 8). Meanings of femininity and masculinity change over time, but some perceptions regarding gender have remained constant throughout the stretch of history. Studying music can in that way provide insights into social history itself, insofar as repertoires testify eloquently to the various models of gender organization available at any given moment, whether these are hegemonic or resistant (McClary, 1991).

So far, the studies done about jazz in Japan have evolved around jazz and 'authenticity' and jazz as a 'niche community', and there is a lack of scholarship on gender issues in jazz outside of the so-called Western countries. My theoretical base is a conception of gender as a realm of contestation and negotiation, where producers and consumers, artists and audiences confer and dispute identities, subject positions and aesthetics. This approach provides not only new perspectives on major themes and issues women in modern Japanese culture encounter, but also a conceptual framework for the study of jazz in other non-American contexts. It is my hope that the result will be a new outlook on the ways in which the power structures that exist in Japanese society also thrive in the jazz community, as well as provide a better understanding of how jazz can be an excellent vehicle for social change if we let it.

1.3   Thesis question

In my study I will examine women's stories and experiences of jazz musicianship. I will analyze perceptions regarding jazz practice and musicians' own narratives of gender, authenticity and musicianship in the Japanese context. I will apply the approach of discursive psychology and analyze my material using the theoretical concepts of 'subject positions', 'interpretative repertoires', 'ideological dilemmas'. Through a gender-analytical perspective I will explore whether notions of gender play a role in performance and if so, in which ways.

My overarching research question is: how inclusive is jazz in a Japanese context when we look at the unequal power relations that determine and confer authenticity? In my analysis I have divided this question into three sub-questions, that represent each analysis chapter:

- How do different axes of power related to the body and gender play out and intersect within the jazz community?
- How does a jazz musician position herself within established musical discourses? What options are available, and what do her choices signify?
- How are repertoires of feminine cuteness, a culturally specific phenomenon in Japan, negotiated in the practice of jazz, and what alternative stories and new meanings are created by musicians' acts of resistance?

My analysis of gender and subject positions in jazz does not involve the music itself. Rather, I focus on how my informants talk about music and their musical performances. In my analysis I use perspectives from discursive psychology to look at how jazz musicians position themselves within established musical discourses operating in the jazz community in Japan and abroad. I will apply the approach of discursive psychology which, according to Jørgensen and Phillips (2002), is based on the social constructionist premise, that the individual self is not an isolated, autonomous entity but rather a constant dynamic interaction with the social world. Another theoretical concept I use in my analysis is Judith Butler's idea of 'gender performativity' (Butler, 1990). The concept is useful as not only does it provide analysis of the different experiences of musicians within the jazz scene in Japan, but it can also reveal the structures and cultures that facilitate the production of these gender and sexuality norms found in jazz music. The analysis entails a consideration of how gender interacts with other social variables, such as class and level of education.

1.4 Reading guide

This thesis is divided into seven chapters that effect a critical study of gender in different discursive domains in jazz in Japan.

In this *first chapter* I have presented the foundation for the choice of topic, the background and the wider context of this thesis, and lastly I have presented the purpose of this thesis and the thesis question that I will answer.

Chapter two provides an overview of the analytical strategy more deliberately and the theoretical concepts of gender performativity, subject positions, interpretative repertoires and ideological dilemmas, forming the framework for this thesis. Each theoretical concept is explained respectively, as is why these specific concepts are useful for the analysis.

In *chapter three* I present the research methodology of the thesis. This chapter's purpose is to demonstrate the study's reliability and validity, through thorough explanations of the method used and the choices made during the research process. I will briefly describe my empirical data and some of the main findings, before reflecting on the ethical concerns of my position as a researcher.

Chapter four is the first of three analysis chapters. This chapter aims to investigate how musicians negotiate and deal with different structures of power that operate in jazz communities.

The following analysis chapter, *chapter five*, focuses on cuteness as a coping strategy. This chapter is based on the perspective of one of my key informants, and explores how she positions herself within established musical discourses in jazz.

Chapter six is the last analysis chapter, in which I will analyze how Japanese musicians talk about femininity and masculinity in music, negotiating repertoires and providing new and alternative stories in jazz.

Chapter seven is the final chapter and contains the findings in the preceding analysis chapters. Lastly, some concluding remarks are offered.

2 Analytical framework and theoretical concepts

In this chapter I will give an overview of the analytical framework and theoretical terms that I use in my analysis. As presented in the introductory chapter, the aim of my study is to examine women's stories of jazz musicianship and explore how certain jazz practices are described from a musician's perspective, and how these narratives structure understandings of gender in this context.

Firstly, to analyze how narratives are produced and transformed, the focus of the analytical attention has to be upon people's talk. Moreover, it has to be able to identify the various resources that society makes available for the construction of these musicians identities. By seeing what forms of identities are available, we start to get an insight into the kinds of choices that are being made. To understand how power operates in a community such as jazz, it is also important to look at whose interest are best served by prevailing definitions of certain jazz practices and examine how these are maintained, resisted and transformed. Discourse analysis meets these requirements and this chapter will be dedicated to explaining how these concepts are used in my analysis.

I also draw on ideas from critical discourse analysis that understands hierarchies of power as discursively organized, and further how these hierarchies works to legitimate and maintain social patterns. As Jørgensen and Phillips note, the aim of analyzing discourse is to "demonstrate that the effect of certain discourses is to further a group's interest at another group's expense" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 108). Discourse analysis tells us that people form identities through their positioning within discourses from which they draw on in everyday speech (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Wiggins, 2017).

Discourse analysis cannot account for *why* people position themselves within particular discourses to negotiate power (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). In order to cast light on the questions of gender, power, subjectivity and discourse in jazz music, I will therefore combine discourse analysis with Judith Butler's (1990) theory of gender performativity. The concept is useful as it provides analysis of the different experiences of musicians within the jazz scene in Japan, but it can also provide insight in the structures and cultures that facilitate the production of these gendered norms found in the practice of jazz and in the music performing context. I will also introduce two Japanese terms that are central to my analysis, namely *kawaii* and *burikko*.

Lastly, I will give an overview of discourse analysis, which lays the foundation for my analysis. I will clarify the theoretical concepts of 'interpretative repertoire', 'ideological dilemmas' and 'subject position' and explain more widely how I aim to use these terms. In discourse analysis, theory and method are intertwined and by neither being simply one or the other I understand discourse analysis rather as a whole approach to research.

2.1   Gender Performativity

Performativity in its broadest sense provides an analytical lens to understand how knowledge, meaning and shared reality are constructed through social and embodied practice (Morison & Macleod, 2013). The main premise of performativity is that the nature of subject identity is fractured and unstable (Laketa, 2020). Even though we may have a sense of a 'coherent' self to some degree, this self can be contradictory and even fragmented by the way we interact with people. Butler (1990) extended the notion of performativity beyond speech act to include any form of embodied practice that works to consolidate the impression of a certain gender. Butler sees "performativity as that aspect of discourse that has the capacity to produce what it names" (Osborne, Segal, & Butler, 1994, p. 33). By claiming gender is performative, Butler argues that gender only exists to the extent that it is performed (Butler, 1990). In this way Butler's concept of gender performativity illustrates the ways in which one's learned performance of gendered behavior is an act, or a performance, that is imposed upon us by normative heterosexuality.

I will use the analytical tool of performativity as a form of both discursive and material enactments that constructs subjects and objects in the Japanese jazz practice. Many scholars differentiate between the terms 'performance' and 'performativity', where performance generally roles what we stage and actively play, while performativity means producing effects, as opposed to merely reproducing. Gender performativity means that gender is brought to being through ritualized practices like means of talking, dressing and moving. When analyzing performativity in jazz performance it gets fairly complicated. Here, the word is stretched to its full extent, when analyzing performing artists' performativity in jazz performance.

When Butler talks about gender as performative, she argues that no one really performs gender alone. Gender is always performed for a someone, but that does not mean that everyone is performing it in the same way. The same goes for performance, which Butler implies as being part of the link between them.

> [P]erformance is not the self-constituting act of a subject who is grounded nowhere, acting alone. If performance brings a subject into being, it does so only in terms of the social and material coordinates and relations that make it possible or that form its scene of intervention. The boundaries of the body that establish singularity are precisely the means by which sociality comes into being. For every question of support and tactility depends on a body that is, from the start, given over to the material and social conditions of its own persistence, bound up with that human and nonhuman support without which . . . nothing (Butler, 2016, para. 7).

Here Butler questions the extent to which we can assume that a given individual can be said to constitute an autonomous 'self', and how performance relies on certain boundaries that makes the very performance possible. The concept of gender performativity is useful as not only does it provide analysis of the different experiences of musicians within the jazz scene in Japan, but it can also reveal the structures and cultures that facilitate the production of these gender and sexuality norms found in jazz music.

Gender is not a reflection of an inner female or male core, but it is rather enacted in our everyday (Butler, 1990, p. 33). As Butler argues, the subject is not free to choose which gender to enact, but is faced with limited possibility for action outside of the "meanings already socially established" (Butler, 1990, p. 191). In its discursivity gender tries to be original and stabilizes the way gender is thought of as either one or the other. The subject may thereby occupy various and often conflicting positions, not the least with respect to gender (Butler, 1997). Butler (1997) draws on Althusser's thought of subjectivity - the idea of subject-becoming as simultaneous mastery and submission.

> The more a practice is mastered, the more fully subjection is achieved. Submission and mastery take place simultaneously, and this paradoxical simultaneity constitutes the ambivalence of subjection. Though one might expect submission to consist in yielding to an externally imposed dominant order and to be marked by a loss of control and mastery, paradoxically, it is itself marked by mastery (Butler, 1997, p. 116).

Butler emphasizes the ambivalence between mastery and submission and extends the idea to the realm of doing gender, where it is related to the performing of intelligible masculinities and feminizes as predicated by what Butler refers to as the 'heterosexual matrix' (Butler, 1997). In my analysis I argue that the relation between the jazz singer and audience serves as a vehicle for the 'heterosexual matrix'. Femininity is performed in certain ways in Japan. To understand how the minds, selves and identities are formed and negotiated in the Japanese context, it is relevant to draw in affects of cuteness and the way in which cuteness works in different ways entangled with gendered hierarchies of power.

2.2 *Kawaii*

Before deepening the analysis of the intimacy between the style of cuteness and jazz, it will be useful to dig a little deeper into the material domains of culture in which cuteness always seems more intuitively prominent. While cuteness is arguably a universal phenomenon, it has deep historical roots in Japan. Japanese *kawaii* culture or 'cute culture' has become an important indicator of globalization, from Hello Kitty to manga, anime, cosplay and fashion (Dale, Goggin, Leyda, McIntyre, & Negra, 2016). *Kawaii*, literally means "lovable" or "cute" and usually refers to things adorably diminutive, but the term can also be used more broadly to define anything that draws out empathetic response (Dale et al., 2016; Vartanian, 2005).

Joshua Paul Dale, Joyce Goggin, Julia Leyda, Anthony P. McIntyre, and Diane Negra (2016) demonstrates in *The Aesthetics and Affects of Cuteness* that indulging in and communicating through cuteness provides a important coping strategy for subjects caught up in the precariousness inherent to neoliberal capitalism, and is thus central to the establishment of contemporary subjectivities (Dale et al., 2016). The central concern of the book is to situate cuteness in the complex power relation that comes with a neoliberalizing economy.

Dale et al. explore how the cultural functions of the cute aesthetic and its affects in a variety of ways purport to help people cope with the impacts of neoliberalism and the increasing inequalities and financial instabilities it causes (Dale et al., 2016, p. 5). In my analysis, I draw on Dale's idea that cuteness provides a coping strategy and discuss how cuteness is central in the establishment contemporary subjectivities in jazz. In line with Butler's view on subject-becoming, submission and mastery takes place simultaneously in the cute subject, which constitutes the ambivalence of subjection.

Although *kawaii* is derived from the word pitiable (*kawaisou*) the modern word is, unlike the English word, no longer attached to any negative connotation (Dale et al., 2016, p. 39). *Kawaii* has saturated the Japanese culture to the extent that it has become a standard aesthetic of everyday life.

> When cuteness is expressed as an aesthetic by incorporating it into a commodity, a work of art, or a form of entertainment, designers or artists may well attempt to bend the excess affect that often accrues in the subject encountering cuteness towards the object, or create a fantasy scenario in which the cute object seems to have power over the subject. In the aesthetic realm, the subject's fantasy shapes the object in the encounter with cuteness: subsequently, this fantasy rebounds to shape the subject as well (Dale et al., 2016, p. 39).

This is what Dale et al. (2016) refers to as the 'internal instability' of cuteness in operation, which is expressed in the variety by and aesthetic that is different from the English cute. By highlighting the power imbalance between the spectator and the cute object, we can increase the understanding of the aesthetic impact of cuteness (Dale et al., 2016). Tracing how vectors of age, gender, femininity and sexuality shape and are shaped through cuteness, the jazz singer offers a medium for the expression and consumption of cuteness as a means of further understanding this ubiquitous aesthetic and the affects that inform it (Dale et al., 2016). I aim to examine how the internal instability of cuteness is explored by my informants in actions of resistance.

2.3 *Burikko*

While *kawaii* no longer holds a negative connotation, the term *burikko* does and represents a cuteness gone awry. A high-pitched voice is frequently considered a stereotypical feature of the *burikko*, which according to Laura Miller (2004) in *You are*

doing burikko!: Censoring/scrutinizing artificers of cute femininity in Japanese, is a derogatory Japanese label used to describe women who exhibit feigned naivety.

In line with gender performativity *burikko* is a social phenomenon, an 'interpretative repertoire', that arises from situated behavior, and a transgression that reveals some boundaries tied to the performance of cuteness. As Miller points out, some people are dismissed for being *burikko*, while they are in fact simply doing *burikko* - *burikko suru* 'to do burikko' - which indicates that there is an awareness that *burikko* is a gender performance (Miller, 2004, p. 150). Miller argues that the *burikko* designation does not simply reflect the uniform affectation of a childlike persona but rather is primarily established through situated social judgment elicited by a combination of speaker, recipient and setting (Miller, 2004).

A high-pitched voice is frequently considered a stereotypical feature of the *burikko*, and when a woman is performing *burikko*, her pitch will often rise to a level above her casual speech (Miller, 2004). This *burikko* voice, "with its air of ineffectuality" is thought to most often be elicited in the presence of powerful males (Miller, 2004, p. 152). It announces that the speaker is unsure, weak or less powerful. When a woman is regarded as doing *burikko* because she is displaying overly feminine, innocent, or cute childishness in a specific situations, it is because these otherwise valued traits are thought to be inappropriate, Miller argues (Miller, 2004, p. 150). This indicates that there are certain boundaries of the displaying feminine cuteness. Like to Butler's ideas of performativity, *burikko* behavior is situated appropriately in space and time and initiates the process of ascribing gender identity.

2.4 Discourse Analysis

Discourse refers to implicit and often unspoken sets of ideas and ways of knowing that are tied with power. In discourse analysis, the things we take to be common sense are challenged and examined for how they become common sense. There are various branches of discourse analysis, but the shared key premise for discourse analysis is according to Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) how entities such as 'language' and 'the subject' are to be understood and produce power hierarchies. They also have in common the aim to investigate and analyze power relations in society and to formulate normative perspectives from which a critique of such relations can be made with an eye of social change (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002).

My thesis focuses on how people use available flexibility of discourse in creating and negotiating representations of the world and identities in interaction, drawing on the view that "different perspectives provide different forms of knowledge about a phenomenon so that, together, they produce a broader understanding" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 4). The aim is to analyze the social consequences of this and not so much on analyzing the social changes in society's large scale discourse.

These perspectives arrive from the discursive psychology which, according to Jørgensen and Phillips (2002), is based on the social constructionist premise that the individual self is not an isolated, autonomous entity but rather a constant dynamic interaction with the social world. This means that minds, selves and identities are formed, negotiated and reshaped in social interaction (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Discursive psychology thus provides a theoretical framework for understanding discourse and interaction and aims to capture the paradoxical relationship that exists between discourse and the speaking subject. It recognizes that people are, at the same time, the products and the producers of discourse (Billig, 1991). Potter, Stringer and Wetherell (1984) claim that discourse can be said to construct our lived reality and does not describe an external world in stereotypes, but rather creates a world that looks real or true for the speaker.

In my analysis, I use perspectives from the discursive psychology to look at how jazz musicians position themselves within established musical discourses in the jazz community in Japan, what options that are available and what their choices signify. Sally Wiggins (2017) suggests that discourse is situated within social context which implies that when my informants talk, I do not gain unmediated, direct access to their thoughts. Rather, I am able to identify a specific rhetorical framework and situate it within a temporal sequence of interaction, namely an interview. As such we need to analyze it within this context.

As Wiggins (2017) sums up in *Discourse Psychology theory, method and applications*, discourse is both constructed and constructive, situated within social context and action-orientated. It is constructed through words, gestures and expressions, and constructive through the way in which we talk about people and bring particular versions of reality into being (Wiggins, 2017). Whereas discourse is treated as both constructed and constructive of the world, it is also specific in a certain place and time, as situated in a particular context. When we talk or write, we do so in a particular interactional context. Therefore, we need to understand where, when and how discourse is produced and organized, to make sense of it. Lastly discourse is action-orientated, meaning that it acts on and in the context in different ways. The fact that discourse is action orientated means that it is not only about the types of words, but also where they are located in the talk, how they are responded to by other people and what social interaction they are involved in (Wiggins, 2017).

To analyze how discourses within the jazz community are both constructed and constructive, I will use the three analytical key concepts from discursive psychology, namely 'interpretative repertoires', 'ideological dilemmas' and 'subject positions' which I will elaborate in the following section.

2.4.1 Interpretative repertoires

An 'interpretative repertoire' is "basically a lexicon or register of terms and metaphors drawn upon to characterize and evaluate actions and events" (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 138). Nigel Edley (2001) argues that each repertoire provides resources that people

can use to construct versions of reality. In my material I have identified *burikko* as an interpretative repertoire, with its certain features like high pitch, innocence, childishness, cuteness, overly femininity creates meaning in social action with the audience.

The concept of interpretative repertoire is often used instead of discourse to emphasize that discourse is drawn in social interaction as flexible resources for accomplishing forms of social action in talk (Edley, 2001; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Potter and Wetherell (1987) view discourses as interpretative repertoires with the purpose to gain insight into questions about communication, social action and the construction of the self, the Other and the world. In other words, the repertoires are different ways of talking and constructing, that relatively coherent builds a way that is tied to the concept of ideology. Through the mobilization of interpretative repertoires available in the context, the objects are constructed in specific ways.

Like Wetherell and Potter (1987), I am not interested in finding out whether the interpretative repertoire is a true or false reflection of the world, but rather in analyzing the practices through which the repertoires are constructed to appear as true or false. Interpretative repertoire is a tool to understand and analyze speech, and each repertoire provides resources that people can use to construct versions of reality. In line with Wetherell and Potter, I prefer to use the concept 'interpretative repertoire', in order to distance myself from the view of discourse as abstract, reified phenomenon. By using the concept of interpretative repertoires, I aim to place more emphasis upon human *agency* within the flexible resources that are provided by language, rather than viewing people as *subjectified* (Edley, 2001).

2.4.2 Ideological dilemmas
The second analytic concept I want to introduce is 'ideological dilemmas'. According to Billig (1988) the concept refers to conflicting views on the same phenomenon, deriving from understandings of common sense that are drawn upon and recirculated (Billig et al., 1988). Edley argues that the notion of ideological dilemmas contains the possibility that different interpretative repertoires of the 'same' social object are themselves constructed rhetorically (Edley, 2001, p. 204). This implies that the different ways of talking about something develop as opposing positions and contain many contrary or competing arguments. To investigate patterns of ideology, often reveal what is taken for granted as common-sense, but also what is common-sensically left unsaid and assumed to be beyond controversy (Billig, 2001, p. 220). Both ideological dilemmas and interpretative repertoires are seen as language resources that provide material for social interaction, and therefore there is overlap between the two (Edley, 2001, p. 204).

In other words, ideological dilemmas show us that there is no unitary meaning to the common sense and the constructions may often constitute opposing views and thus contradict each other. The indeterminacy of ideologies makes them rich and flexible resources for social interaction and everyday sense-making (Edley, 2001). The ideological dilemmas in my material focused on the relevance of gender revolve around a gender-neutral repertoire and a gendered difference repertoire. A more

detailed examination of how these repertoires are constructed, negotiated and used in the conversations reveals a pattern where discursive devices are employed.

2.4.3 Subject positions, selves and identities

The production of meaning is constrained by the range of discursive resources which are available to individuals depending on their social and cultural position and status. Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) argue that one factor responsible for continuity is that the individual has to present herself in a way which is acceptable and recognizable both to herself and to the people with whom she interacts (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 112). Edley (2001) describes subject positions as 'locations' within conversation and further explains how subject positions are "the identities made relevant by specific ways of talking. And because those ways of talking can change both within and between conversations (i.e. as different discourses or interpretative repertoires are employed) then, in some sense at least, so too do the identities of the speakers" (Edley, 2001, p. 210). In other words, the subject position connects the wider notions of discourse and interpretative repertoires to the social construction of particular selves.

Edley sums up stating that to understand the full, complex relation between discourse and the speaking subject, we not only need to study the way in which people use psychologic terms in an ordinary conversation, but also look at how certain discourses about the mind and 'self' come to structure how we think, act, feel and talk. "When it comes to telling stories about gender identity, it is *not* a case of anything goes" (Edley, 2001, p. 193). Gender is a discursively created 'truth', but discourse analysis also has the ability to challenge traditional essentialist and reductionist understandings of gender (Edley, 2001). Edley claims that on the discursive reproduction of masculinity, the proliferation of discourse-based account of gender constitutes such a powerful challenge to the essentialism and reductionism of more traditional understandings. Discursive psychologists see masculinity and femininity as constantly remade and this, Edley argues, provides not just a radical destabilizing of the assumption that gender is something that is natural or inevitable but also can be changed in a positive direction, encouraging people to tell different stories about themselves and others (Edley, 2001).

While gender is only one dimension of subject positions, it is a central one. Jane Sunderland explains the constitutive gendered discourses, when women and men are represented and expected to behave in particular gendered ways, they are also positioned so. The actual behavior may or may not correspond but either way be seen as taking up particular gendered 'subject positions' (Sunderland, 2004, pp. 20-22). Masculinity and femininity can be seen both as contingent and fluid, and this results in a potential multiplicity of gender identities.

2.5 Summary

In this chapter I have presented an overview of the analytical framework and theoretical concepts that constitutes the grounds of my analysis. Butler's ideas of gender performativity provide an analytical lens to understand how knowledge, meaning and shared reality are constructed through social and embodied practice. I use perspectives from discursive psychology to look at how jazz musicians position themselves and what options are available in the music performing context in Japan. The aim of my analysis is not to categorize people but rather to identify the discursive practices through which the categories are constructed. My analysis centers on how specific discourses or interpretative repertoire constitute subjects and objects with an interactionist focus on the ways in which people's discourse is oriented towards social action in specific contexts. And further, around ideological dilemmas that were pervasive in the sense-making of jazz committed by women in the interviews.

3 Methodological considerations and data collection methods

Empirical research in interdisciplinary cultural studies does not provide definitive or exclusive evidence as to what constitutes 'reality' or claim to paint an 'accurate' picture of the world. Rather it argues for ways of understanding social practices and phenomena through interpretations from a specific perspective. The theoretical framework I have chosen reflects a skeptical attitude toward the possibilities of achieving 'objective' knowledge. This skepticism has implications for how I look at the empirical material in my qualitative study. With this in mind, this chapter's purpose is to demonstrate the study's reliability and validity, through thorough explanations of the method used and the choices made during the research process.

In this chapter I will explain choices I have made in the research process and what implications the choices have for the material and further analysis. Interviewing brings some elements that need to be addressed related to doing research during a global pandemic. I will outline some of the challenges and opportunities attached to interviewing and describe how I have approached the recruitment of interviewees. I will also address ethical considerations and challenges throughout the process, and my reflections on these. Drawing on my learnings from the interviews I will elaborate my subsequent approach to gathering empirical data and discuss concerns of doing qualitative interviewing in a transcultural setting. Based on the discussions around the researcher's positioning and situated production of knowledge, I aim to explore how my changes in position as a researcher and worldview affect the research questions and the theoretical framework during the research process (Sandell, Sager, & Räthzel, 2014, pp. 257-258). The aim is to provide an open and transparent presentation of the project in its entirety to strengthen the study's credibility.

3.1 Interviewing as method

The most commonly used method in qualitative research is interviewing (Creswell, 2007; Thagaard, 2018). The purpose of interviewing is to assemble detailed and comprehensive knowledge of how people experience the themes presented. Interviewing provides a particularly good basis for gaining insight into people's experiences, thoughts, and feelings (Thagaard, 2018). Interviewing are also well suited to unfold multifaceted and often contradictory articulations of experiences, practices, orientation and interpretation (Staunæs & Søndergaard, 2005). Conducting interviews allowed me to get to know how the people being interviewed experience and understand themselves and their surroundings within the jazz community in Japan. Stories presented in the interview can also be considered as a form of social action because people engage in interaction with the researcher when they verbalize their experiences (Thagaard, 2018).

There are several challenges connected with doing this kind of qualitative research during a pandemic where possibilities for travel have been shut down. The first of which is the necessity to conduct digital rather than face-to-face interviews as was initially planned.

My initial plan was to combine face-to-face interviewing and observation in jazz venues in Tokyo. Observation, and especially participant observation, could give me a possibility to observe musical interactions and communication between musicians on stage. Participating observation can give access to some everyday situations and interactions which can be difficult to get described in an interview. The process of gathering information can sometimes help identify and realize some of the structures that are not obvious. By being there, watching, perceiving, and gaining an insight into what is going on, the researcher can help to explain the dominant trends (Helmreich, James, & Paxson, 2012). However, in the midst of a pandemic my only option was to conduct the interviews digitally. In the following section I will shed light on the advantages and limitations of digital interviews.

3.1.1 Digital interview

Digital interviewing has, as every other method, some benefits, and drawbacks. A solid benefit of online interviewing, is that it provides access to people across large geographical areas and enabled me to proceed with my project in spite of countries around the world being in lock-down when my data sampling was planned (Janghorban, Roudsari, & Taghipour, 2014).

Online interviews can be performed both synchronously (real-time) through VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) technologies and asynchronous (non-real-time) via email or discussion groups (Janghorban et al., 2014; Lo Iacono, Symonds, & Brown, 2016). I preferred to use the synchronous approach (Zoom) in order to emulate the face-to-face interview to the greatest extent possible, but in cases where informants were not comfortable in speaking English, the interview was carried out by email. An obstacle when it comes to using VoIP is the access to computer, necessary software, and good internet connection. Fortunately, this was only an issue in a few interviews and was solved before it caused further disruptions. In using web camera and audio, the interaction will be comparable to the onsite equivalent, however there will be limited possibilities to observe the participant's body language due to the "head shot" (Janghorban et al., 2014). Another issue with the use of VoIP technologies is the limited capacity to build trust (Lo Iacono et al., 2016). I have tried to the greatest extent possible to build collaborative conversations and trust, allowing participants to feel able to explore the topics in depth. This is harder when many of the normal social signal systems are absent from the conversations through email (James & Busher, 2006). This is also reflected in my material, where the mail interviewees' response were much more prompt and condensed compared to the detailed and thorough descriptions the conversations with interviewees on Zoom provided.

Valeria Lo Iacono, Paul Symonds and David H.K. Brown (2016) argues that some participants may be more inclined to open up because they can stay in their own chosen

environment, where others may become more reserved or less responsive. The lengthy and in-depth conversations I had with my interviewees on Zoom show that the interviewees felt comfortable being interviewed from home, but it also seemed as if there was a certain trust built between us. Despite the concerns with the medium of web-based interviews, it offers potential for in-depth interviewing when real life contact between researchers and participants is either unnecessary or as in my situation, impossible. While observation in the jazz environment in Tokyo might have built a further dimension in my project, interviewing musicians has the advantage of going in-depth with how they (the musicians) experience the jazz environment, and that is really what my project is all about.

3.2   Recruitment of participants

After choosing interviewing as my method, the next step was to reach out to musicians to interview. The ways in which I recruited the informants influenced who I ended up interviewing, and hence, the knowledge I was able to produce (Kristensen & Ravn, 2015). I have chosen an explorative approach in my interviews, and the insights that came up in the interviews effected by subsequent approach. Therefore, I put a lot of energy and thought into how I approached this particular part of the process.

I used the 'snowball sampling' method to reach out to jazz musicians based in Japan or Japanese musicians based elsewhere playing on an international scene, the point of the snowball being that research participants help recruit other participants, because (in theory) once you have the ball rolling, it picks up more "snow" along the way and becomes larger and larger (Thagaard, 2018, p. 56). However, the method has its drawbacks. One being that the sample may consist of closely connected people within the same community or environment, which might not give me a representative selection of voices from the jazz environment in Japan. Considering how time-consuming it can be to establish contacts, another challenge pointed out by Andrews & Vassenden (2007) is that the snowball might not necessarily roll according to the intentions (Andrews & Vassenden, 2007, p. 161). In my case the snowball not only did not roll according to the intentions but appeared to not be rolling at all.

3.2.1 Difficulties involved in locating participants
The recruitment of interviewees was connected with different complications related to the ongoing pandemic and I had to change my approach of recruitment.

Given the breadth of my initial research question, "How is gender performed in the jazz practice in Japan?" I chose to conduct a small number of interviews, and my initial plan was to use a mediator in the recruitment strategy. This is a well-known recruitment strategy in qualitative interview studies, and the mediator uses their formal or informal position and relationships to facilitate contact between a researcher and potential informants (Kristensen & Ravn, 2015). With assistance from Ochanomizu University, the plan was to identify, contact and arrange a meeting with an academic researcher in the jazz department. This academic contact person in the music department would then help

me reach out to Tokyo-based musicians. My plan was to conduct interviews with male, female and non-binary musicians to get a broad perspective of perceptions of improvisation. The goal was to represent different voices through the choice of interviewees, and therefore use arenas as the structuring elements rather than gender. With the cancelled travel, assistance from the University was not possible. Unfortunately, without the help from my contact at Ochanomizu University, which this far was my only contact in Japan, I found the recruiting of interviewees challenging.

My next approach was to e-mail music organizations and professors whose contact information I have received, drawing on my own personal contacts in the music field, with the hope that they could put me in contact with jazz musicians in Japan. Not being able to travel, the interviews had to be conducted digitally. I broadened the criteria for my interviewees from only Tokyo-based musicians to jazz musicians in Japan or Japanese musicians based elsewhere, which now was possible with digital interviews. However, I wished to keep it as formal as possible to follow the guidance from Ochanomizu University, who had advised me to go through academic contacts to reach out to informants. This approach was particularly dependent on the responses of others, and therefore, as Kristensen & Ravn (2015) point out, partly unpredictable. With no response and no contacts in Japan whatsoever, I had to find a new way to reach interviewees.

Since the predefined selection criteria made it possible to reach participants without formal allowances, my recruitment challenges were mostly related to identifying and motivating potential informants to participate in interviews (Kristensen & Ravn, 2015). My next attempt was more informal, drawing on personal contacts and contacting the musicians directly through social media sources. The number of people I would interview depended on my success in recruiting interviewees through social media, and of course the musicians' availability. With great help from friends and musicians who have toured in Japan, I got in contact with various Japanese musicians, and the recruitment turned out to be a great success. The snowball finally started rolling and the research participants helped recruit other participants. My aim was to have six to ten participants, I ended up having a total of 12 participants.

My concern now was that the sample would consist of closely connected people within the same community, but I soon learned that even though some of my interviewees are acquaintances, most of them were located in different places in and outside of Japan. The jazz society is tight knit, and even thought the informants are based in different places, they have a collective knowledge of the jazz community in Japan. The next issue of my concern was the gender imbalance of my interviewees. There were twice as many women interviewees as men. Denying female musicians to share their stories was not an option, and even though my initial idea was to have interviews with male, female and non-binary musicians to get a broad perspective on improvising, the goal was to represent different voices by the interviewee's was still possible. I therefore decided not to control the number of interviewees from each gender.

3.3 Collecting data material

I employed interviews that began with open-ended questions and were shaped as partially structured conversations. The interview questions covered topics such as experiences with jazz improvisation, role models, and communication in performance. However, some questions were added and adjusted in the process, depending on findings from previous interviews. This shows that interviewing as a method is non-static and a dynamic process that relies on the interaction between the interviewer and interviewee.

This method allowed me to gain insight into how the selected musicians experience and understand themselves and their surroundings in the jazz environment that they are or have been a part of in Japan. One interview was conducted with the help of an interpreter. This interview I found especially challenging, since the interviewee seemed partly skeptical to my questions, and resistant to answer, and I found it difficult to ask follow-up questions. Even though I wanted to use an explorative approach in my interview, I did send the interviewees some of the questions in advance by request. I learned from a pilot interview I did, that some of the questions were hard to answer on the spot, so I decided that it would be rewarding to give the interviewees a chance to reflect beforehand. And increase comfort levels in the digital format by giving them clear expectations.

3.4 Participants and learnings from my interviews

My empirical material consists of qualitative 12 interviews, whereas nine were in-depth interviews conducted via Zoom and three by e-mail. Eight of the interviewees identified as female and four as male. The selection are all professional musicians having completed musical training in Japan or having spent several formative years in Japan. The interviewee's are located in Tokyo, different parts of the Kansai-area and a few are based outside of Japan. Misaki, my youngest interviewee, compares Tokyo and the Kansai area to New York and New Orleans, and explains how musicians in Tokyo are cool, contemporary, hip and laid back, while in the Kansai-area the musicians are more energetic and passionate to support the musicians. The interviewees were all interviewed from their homes, due to the ongoing Covid-pandemic. The Zoom interviews were everything from 45 minutes to almost two hours. The data was anonymized during analysis, and the names are pseudonyms. I will now give a short introduction to my interviews.

My first interviewee, *Izayuki,* laid the foundation for some changes I did in the following eight interviews. I changed the wordings in some of the questions to make it easier to grasp when asked on the spot. Even though there were a few misunderstandings throughout the interview, *Izayuki* was very patient and kindly explained what he meant when he or I had misinterpreted. As Lagesen notes, failure of communication may provide important insights when one starts to reflect on why the efforts failed (Lagesen, 2010). This, I believe my first interview showed me, and made it necessary to reconsider my questions and observations for the following interviews.

The second interview was with *Sakura. Sakura* was very concerned with the lack of feminism in Japan and explained how women do not recognize the problem, and that there is not so much interest in feminism or gender issues. She introduced me to the saké places with vocalist-hostess (which I later learned are called *izakaya*) and emphasized throughout the interview that the gender problem is really deep in the Japanese society. I used the knowledge from this interview to question further interviewees about their experience with saké bars.

Miku was very skeptical to my questions at first, confronted me to elaborate how I got the information, very much challenging the power dynamics of the interviewer-interviewee. The interview was very informative, and she was not afraid of disagreeing with some of the questions, which gave me reason to reflect on my own bias.

Takumi was very talkative and openminded. He was knowledgeable about many aspects of jazz music and shared experiences generously.

Rin was the most experienced interviewee. We had a very comfortable conversation, using metaphors to describe jazz and flow in a very philosophical way. She was well aware of the unjust treatment in society, but also accepting of the current state of affairs knowing that it was about to change to the better.

Nanami taught me that the name of the saké places was *izakaya*, and how women were used as signboards to get men to go to the jazz clubs.

Aoi told the most deliberate stories, giving many examples from her daily life as a jazz vocalist. Aoi is my key informant. She is well reflected, and very aware of her own positioning in the musical sphere both in Japan and in the U.S.

Misaki was the youngest among my informants. The interview with *Misaki* was conducted with the help from an interpreter. This in a way created a kind of a distance to her, when the answers were interpreted and to a certain degree analyzed by the interpreter who sometimes disagreed with *Misaki*.

The final Zoom-interview was with *Ayaka* who shared detailed stories from her educational experience in music, and her fury against the ignorance towards female musicians.

The mail interviews with the pianists *Naomi, Souta* and bass player *Hachiro* did not go as much into detail as the Zoom interviews, but contributed with a wider knowledge of the role of jazz in Japan.

3.5 Ethical concerns

Since meaning is created in interaction between researcher and informant it is crucial to reflect upon the positioning and power aspect of the interview. Dorthe Staunæs and Dorte Søndergaard (2005) states that the meeting between the researcher and the source is characterized by mutual positioning. This is especially important to think about when the researcher comes into close contact with other people, such as during qualitative interviews (Staunæs & Søndergaard, 2005). Feminist methodology challenges us to be concerned about the specificities of the context in which the interactions takes place (Lagesen, 2010). I will use the concept of 'situated knowledge' to further reflect on my position as an interviewer and I end this chapter by deliberating ethical concerns and positioning of the researcher.

3.5.1 Consent and the handling of personal information

Qualitative methods are characterized by an increased awareness of ethical guidelines and practice in their research projects (Thagaard, 2018). The National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH) describes separate ethical measures that apply to studies involving the processing of personal data. My study involves close contact between the researcher and the individual the researcher studies. Since I have chosen interviewing as my method, I got hold of data that can be linked to the people participating in the project. Therefore, I was obliged to notify the processing of personal data and get permission from The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS (NSD) before collecting data (NESH, 2016) to ensure that every individual has the right to privacy and remain anonymous. In qualitative analysis the researcher protects the privacy of the interviewees by changing the person's name, biographical data, date and if necessary external features of the course of events (Skilbrei, 2019). These restraints are often enough to secure anonymity, even though this kind of research is built on a small number of participants.

3.5.2 Positioning as a researcher

To study different aspects of music and gender in a culturally sensitive and contextualized way while maintaining awareness of one's own gender position is a great challenge. The efforts to create the vision of the new places are constantly to be found in research, and it is crucial that the researcher reflects on their own bodily and situated knowledge. Self-reflection about one's own position and role in the research process is therefore important.

Haraway was one of the first to point out that all knowledge is situated or located in a particular place (Højgaard, 2007). Therefore, the researcher can never observe reality as a neutral object. The context within the researcher finds themselves in will shape the understanding of reality and knowledge (Lykke, 2008, pp. 146-147). Using term 'situated knowledge' gives me an opportunity to reflect on ways in which I as a researcher am situated or positioned in the context of the thesis and involved in the creation of the material as well as the ethical aspects of this. Because the Danish gender system is the system I have grown up with is also a part of me and my position in gender analysis.

As an interviewer, I have a responsibility to lead the conversation and to create trust. Regarding power relationships, it is difficult to say to what extent I am in a powerful position in relation to my interviewees. Being an interviewer and thus defining the terms and frame of topic implies a powerful position. However, the interviewees have opportunities to defy my questions, which my pilot interviewee in fact did, or at least answered some of the questions briefly not willing (or able in the moment) to elaborate. Also, I believe having in common that English is not our native language, gives us as a more equal starting point. Lagesen problematizes the idea that being from a Western culture, interviewing one from a non-Western culture always means that one is speaking from a more powerful position (Lagesen, 2010). My situation, in terms of my position, knowledge and experience, influences the entire research process - from data collection to analysis work. I, as an outsider coming in, has some different perspectives to add. I represent a foreigner, and woman.

3.5.3 Carrying out critical research in a culture different from my own

Transcultural interviewing is often seen as particularly challenging in literature about qualitative interviews (Thagaard, 2018). Since my project involves interviewing people from other culture than myself, I want to address some of the challenges and possibilities connected to this.

My aim was to interpret the data based on a consideration of the cultural and social frameworks that the people I study relate to (Thagaard, 2018). Thagaard points out that the biggest challenge in studies of foreign cultures is to get familiar with all the new aspects, while being an 'outsider' also can make it easier to ask questions that is taken for granted by the 'insiders' (Thagaard, 2018, p. 79). 'Transcultural interview' is used by Vivian Anette Lagesen (2010) to designate a specific accomplishment of mutual exchanges and attempts to transcend cultural differences. The term describes a way to do 'cross-cultural' interviews with emphasize on both the opportunities as well as challenges. The main challenge, as pointed out by Lagesen, being the risk of misinterpretations due to the lack of knowledge needed to understand the foreign cultural setting (Lagesen, 2010). Lagesen points out that "we need to be aware that we do analysis in the act of interviewing in order to do better interviews, but it is also important to be aware of the facts that later analysis has to build on the analysis done during the interview" (Lagesen, 2010, p. 139).

One particular issue that came up in interviewing Japanese jazz musicians is that they were eager to tell me how Japanese society differs from other societies that they have encountered through travelling - the US in particular was used as a comparison when talking about jazz. There was a hunger for speaking about the subjects I brought up, and when I found something was unclear, the interviewees were happy to explain. However, I have been fully aware of the fact that no matter how thoroughly I do my research, my analysis will always be affected by my background, and things that might be taken for granted by my interviewees will be different for me and vice versa.

3.6 Summary

In this chapter I have presented the methodological approach for my thesis and considered the methodological issues in using this approach when conducting transcultural digital interviews. I have recognized the contributions and argued how the qualitative method of interviewing brings more opportunities to go deeper into the understandings of jazz and gender in Japan but also discussed what observation could have brought to my project. Conducting interviews allows me to get an insight and explore the language and structure and help me to best answer my thesis question. My difficulties concerning the recruiting interviewees involved me changing my initial strategy to use a mediator. This, I believe have contributed to a more thorough approach, and given me some time to think about how I approached the interviews.

I have presented findings from my interviews and reflected on my positioning and how I as a researcher create the empirical data, and the ethical aspects and considerations around this. Implementing Haraway's idea of situated knowledge I have reflected on my role as a researcher and hopefully provided transparency to my research process.

4 Intersecting hierarchizations in the jazz community of Japan

There are different forms of power in play in the Japanese jazz community: economic power, the power of authenticity and power related to bodies and gender. In this chapter I aim to investigate how these axes interact to create hierarchies that operate in jazz communities. A jazz musician's value is symbolically derived from economic, social and cultural domains of capital. Orders and hierarchies in which the question of value is established through practical negotiations and conventional forms of legitimation procedures. Sakura did assure me that "there is a lot of female musicians here [in Japan], and really good female musicians". This is unquestionably a fact. In the interviews, however, participant narrated their experiences that showed certain restraints and roles concerning gender that were made clear about women in jazz. I will examine how women negotiate and deal with issues and obstacles, highlighting the importance of affect and bodies in women's responses, rather than pointing out the barriers themselves.

When Atkins claimed that the art and culture of jazz is "so potentially inclusive and open to revision that anyone can contribute authentically to it, if its performers and advocates will only allow it be so" (Atkins, 2001, p. 18) he was calling attention to the issue of authenticity in jazz. We also see in Atkins' reflection the notion of a gatekeeper which is a trope that will return throughout this chapter. It is important to underline that power relations are visible in individual stories, and I aim to make salient different understandings rather than generalizations of the Japanese jazz community. How do different axes of power related to the body and gender play out and intersect within the jazz community?

4.1 The Japanese jazz community and *otaku*

The jazz circle appears at an intermediate stage in the trajectory toward more professional music practice and jazz circles therefore serves a key role in the cultivation of emerging generations of jazz musicians in Japan. It is here they get an opportunity to develop their musical repertoire and training. In spite of the fact that most of the jazz musicians I interviewed were very sociable, they present themselves and other jazz musicians as having a reputation of being socially awkward or even weird and obsessed with an all-consuming and alien interest. My informants give the impression that jazz musicianship appeals to the outsiders or *otaku* people. The bass player Hachiro tells me that many universities and colleges have a "modern jazz lover's community, ジャズ研 (*Jazz-ken*) in Japanese". Nearly all my informants discuss how they were introduced to *jazz-ken* in college, where ideas of *otaku* flourish. The *jazz-ken* provides in other words a space for those who want to cultivate their interest for jazz.

With the embeddedness of jazz in educational institutions, admission into prestigious educational sites is arguably becoming more and more important for aspiring musicians. Ayaka tells stories of different situations in which she encountered skeptic notions of her being in the American conservatory's big band.

> *Ayaka:* I was in a very famous big band at the conservatory, concert jazz orchestra. It is a very famous and the students wants to be jazz musicians and they all want to join the band. Fortunately, or luckily I was in the band by accident. So other trumpet students kind of attacked me with questions like "why are *you* in the band?" and "when do you quit the band?". But I got the space, "yeah, sorryyy, wait until I want to leave the band". Anyways, the band was also very tough and sometimes I had to play some improvisational solo. Actually I didn't want to do it. Because I usually played wrong notes and the other members were like "huh" "huh" (sighing)
>
> *Me:* hmm, do you remember like a specific time that happened? At a gig or rehearsal with that band? It is kind of interesting with the other musicians kind of giving you looks and asking questions like that.. did you ever feel like insecure or anything like that when you played?
>
> *Ayaka:* haha, so funny, the director at the faculty, or the teacher he is one of the faculty members of the jazz composition. He is a very famous trumpet player and he used to play in [a famous big band]. He realized that "oh, Ayaka is very afraid of playing improvisation" (laughing) "ok", so actually he just gave me the very easy stuff like blues or very easy chord changes, and he also changed the position the first semesters I was in the second trumpet players positions – it's a very soloist position.
>
> *Me:* ok, but how did you experience him pointing that out? Do you think that it was like nice of him or?
>
> *Ayaka:* hmm, yeah, so when I got the very, very hard song to play solo he sometimes asked me several times "is it ok?" like "Ayaka can you play this, are you sure?" (laughing). But I was like "ok, yeah, I can do it". So I also asked the first trumpet player – he was a very good player so "could you change, could you play the solo for me, because I can´t play this solo very well?" but he said "why? You can do it!" he is very American like "YOU CAN DO IT!" (laughing)

Here Ayaka conveys the narrative that she is not good enough, and not the narrative that something is wrong with the structure in the jazz environment. She says that she was in the band "by accident", and underscores how good the other trumpet players were. The way she describes the conductor gives the impression that she find him considerate, while the things he said contains a level of prejudice about Ayaka's technical skills on the trumpet. Ayaka further explains the difference she experienced in the American versus Japanese jazz community. She describes how in the U.S. there is a tendency to support the musicians in their solo playing even when the solo is not that impressive, while in Japan you are immediately judged for playing a bad solo. This results in beginners often refraining from playing solos and engaging in improvisation, Ayaka says:

> *Ayaka:* Yeah, so I feel improvisation in the U.S. and especially in the college is very kind of tough, but other people are very kind and they are very encouraged players. "oh, you are great, you are so nice and you are a great soloist" even though the solo was bad. But in Japan solo-playing and improvisation bad, like the audience or other members feel "ooh, no". And their expressions come out naturally so the players can easily feel the guys like reactions. So it's so hard for beginners to play solo in Japan.

Ayaka paints a picture of a strict jazz environment in college, but at the same time underlining that the American environment is much more encouraging for new players in jazz than the Japanese audience, who bluntly expresses their dissatisfaction if they dislike a solo. Ayaka precedes by describing how the jam sessions can be particularly anxiety-inducing. She explains why she quit as a jazz musician:

> *Ayaka:* Why I quit to be a jazz musician, or why I didn't learn jazz at the American music conservatory: there are lot of very talented students in the school and they are so amazing. And also I think that improvisation is kind of like.. to open myself, but I can't be open – I'm so afraid of making mistakes, being wrong. Playing the wrong notes. Yeah, so jazz is very strict, in my opinion, very strict, improvisation is very strict for players and it requires of the players to learn a lot of things, listen to a lot of stuff and sing a lot. Also like, uhm it is very tough. It is a very long way to become a good player, so I quit it.

There seems to be a competitive nature in jazz, and trying to play faster, higher and louder than each other. Women are often ridiculed, while men are expected to skillfully operate instruments. The question that the Ayaka is met with is not whether she can play as good as her male colleges so much as why she is in the band at all. As a result, women tend to be missing from the mainstream narratives about jazz musicians. When my youngest informant, Misaki, was asked about the musicians she admires, she mentions a saxophone player who has been a role model for her:

> *Misaki:* She is a funky saxophone player. And despite that she is female, she really plays funky and energetic. Kind of, masculine is not a good word, but really powerful, and very popular. Everybody reach out to her because they want to play with her, or share the stage with her.

The interpreter highlights that Misaki keeps saying *despite*, or *although* the saxophone player is female she is really powerful and she is called by everyone to play together, and share the stage. The *despite*, tells us that even in the younger generation in Tokyo, prejudice exists, and women instrumentalist are the few exceptions that confirms the rule that men are understood as the more powerful and energetic players. Misaki tries to avoid using the adjective 'masculine' about the female saxophone player, but in the lack of better words she uses masculine to describe the way of playing.

While some of my informants described their way into jazz as coincidental, for others, like Sakura, jazz provided a space where they could be themselves. Sakura is a vocalist who spent her formative years in U.S. before her family moved back to Japan when she was ten years old. Sakura describes the move from the U.S. to Japan as a devastating

experience, fraught with the difficulties of fitting in and her knowledge of the English language serving as a barrier in school. When asked about her relation to jazz she instantly opens up about how jazz provided a space of liberation in an otherwise toxic environment, where she was bullied by teachers and fellow students because of her English.

Me: What would you say if I ask you to describe what jazz means to you, both as a genre but also your relation to jazz?

Sakura: Hmm, my relation to jazz. Well, I was living in the U.S. when I was a girl and I came back to Japan when I was ten years old, and that is not a really good time to come back to this kind of country. The community is so conservative and I was living in the countryside, so I had to fight for myself. I hid myself during my teenage years. I was a fluent English speaker but I had to hide it when I was in school. When English class started the students didn't know a lot of English, but I pronounced it almost like a native.

Me: Right.

Sakura: The teenage years were a really difficult time for me, and I hid myself. But after starting jazz I felt like this music - singing jazz and singing in English - all these great songs were a relief to me and it was a relief to my soul. I feel like I survived because of jazz music (smiling).

Me: Ah. Did you feel it wasn't cool to be good in English or? Like you said, you felt the need to hide in English class, when you actually were able to pronounce English as a native. Was it kind of embarrassing to be good or?

Sakura: Yeah, maybe this is Japanese culture (laughing), you know. In Japan there is a saying, 'deru kugi wa utareru' (saying it in Japanese, while looking it up). It means: 'the nail that sticks out gets hammered in'. Everybody wants to be normal in our society. I was abnormal.

Me: Do you think this idea translates into music as well?

Sakura: Not so much because other musicians are really uuh.. not normal people (smiling), like normal people in Japan. But people who become jazz musicians are not normal people.

Sakura's statement testifies that becoming a jazz musician goes against the norms in society by not complying with the social rules and being 'the nail that sticks out'. Sakura gives a description of how the jazz community gave her a place to finally be herself, and she felt like she "survived because of jazz music". Sakura's story of home and belonging in music is reminiscent of how Ramnarine argues that music can help change ideas about the hybrid perceptions of belonging. Music as a globalized way of understanding home, reminiscent in Sakura's statement of belonging in jazz. Ramnarine criticizes the understanding of belonging to just one country or place, and argues that diasporic music tells of several identities, in line with what Sakura describes when talking about jazz. She explains how she had a hard time growing up in the countryside of Japan, that did not welcome people like her with special talents or gifts. While Sakura had to hide herself in her teenage years, jazz music provided a community where talents like hers were met with appreciation later on in life, namely the gift of being a fluent English speaker. I will return to the power of language in the jazz genre later in this chapter.

Sakura concludes with the statement that "people who become jazz musicians are not normal people", which draws on the perception of jazz musicians as atypical individuals who deviate from societal norms, but find a sense of belonging in the jazz community.

4.2   The gatekeepers of jazz in Japan

The fact that jazz clubs in Japan mainly appeal to the Japanese elite, is reflected in the people who have access to the jazz clubs in Japan. The jazz aficionados are setting the standards for all jazz listeners by being able to pay the entrance to high-end jazz clubs, and thus excluding interested jazz listener with an average salary. Here, the jazz clubs become most literally 'gatekeepers' of who get access to the place where this genre is played. The majority of the jazz audience at the prominent jazz clubs exist of urban middle class businessmen, top politicians, and people with a high status in Japanese society, and therefore most often men.

Miku explains how the jazz clubs in Japan are expensive, and you are expected to pay a certain price to get into jazz clubs, setting an unreasonably high bar for entry and excluding musicians from concerts.

> **Miku:** There is still a huge wall barrier to gain entry into jazz clubs in Japan. And here [outside of Japan] people just go to local clubs and enjoy, and if you don't have so much money you just drink and sometimes you just tip or like even if you buy the ticket - it doesn't cost much money. But in Japan it costs so much money to go to a jazz club. In my opinion, especially if you go to a jazz club in cities like Hiroshima, it is not accepted to just pay a small amount of money, and I wouldn't pay that much for the music.

In Japan, the jazz clubs are not accessible for nonelite urban commoners, who make up the majority of the jazz audience in for example in the U.S. and European countries. In cities like Hiroshima, jazz clubs are only available for the exclusive elite classes. The jazz community pass as a subculture in spite of the elite gatekeepers. As Atkins argue, subcultures have the potential to challenge dominant culture, but it is dangerous to understate a subculture's extensive, economic, cultural, political, and social stakes and connections in the power structure.

4.3   *Izakaya*'s 'vocalist-hostess'

According to some of my informants a big part of the jazz singing in Japan is linked to saké bars or *izakaya* where the main audience are local businessmen or *salarymen* as they are called. These bars are portrayed as a cheaper and more accessible than the high-end jazz clubs. *Izakaya* is described as a casual restaurant-like establishment where locals go to eat and for after-work drinking. They are often referred to as "Japanese tapas". Sakura portrays *izakaya* as the low-end jazz clubs with a band delivering soulful renditions of jazz standards in a corner.

> **Sakura:** Do you know the Japanese saké place? That with the guys, or salary men, salary men do you know? businessmen go to the bar and there is a woman who sits next to the businessmen and that kind of bars are all over Japan. Some bars have piano and singers. They play jazz, and some singers are doing the hostess thing and singing. So the musicians are not doing those kinds of things, but the singers are really special in this jazz music […] The bar thing and jazz music here is really combined, the jazz vocalist is something special yeah. The vocalist is singing English songs but not for foreigners or English speakers - they are singing for these salarymen, Japanese businessmen, so their English is not good, they can't speak English but they are doing their work.

Serving and performing are conflated and the vocalist acts as both bartender and singer, often provocatively dressed in honor of the businessmen. Her job, according to my interviewee Sakura, is to service them and satisfy them through her presence.

The fact that the jazz standards are sung in a Japanese-English is not important, because for the listeners, perfect English is not what the salarymen came for. The main reason the salarymen come to the bars is to drink and talk with their colleagues. Occasionally a 'mood-person' grabs the mike and adds some vocals. Nanami is a jazz vocalist with a broad experience from different kinds of venues. She says that females are often used for publicity purposes to lure men to the jazz clubs: "The bars or drinking places need women as a signboard. Women are more used in commercial things". In order to sing onstage, women are expected to look a particular, marketable way and. The vocalists are marketable with their looks and youth, but also their way of interacting with the audience to create a certain atmosphere. According to Nanami, mood-making is important, and the *izakaya* attract people because of the special mood created at the bars and not necessarily the music:

> **Nanami:** People at the *izakaya* are more like Japanese people. And they are not always listening to jazz or foreign pop music. They are, or many of them there tend to, listen to Japanese folk song, and Japanese pop songs […]. But you know, we can have fun by serving this music at those places even though they are not prepared to listen to the music - they just came to drink and talk and have fun. They did not have an idea that we were playing music here. But after we start playing, we can get those people interested in music, we can sometimes switch their interest in music and everything, the whole thing at *Izakaya.* Not only because of the other special things that we have to do, not like that. It is all about communication again. *Izakaya's* don't have the atmosphere like at the jazz clubs, basically they don't have the atmosphere there but sometimes it gets a more popular or hotter place compared to jazz clubs. There are some cold places even though they are jazz bars. Sometimes there are these mood-making persons, and they are very helpful for whatever we do. Mood-making is very important. Sometimes we as musicians can become mood-maker.

The *izakaya* places are according to Nanami sometimes more popular than the jazz clubs. Nanami argues that they have the opportunity to change regulars view of jazz music, seeing her job at the *izakaya* more as an outreach project that goes beyond the sometimes slightly inappropriate things or "other special things" the musicians are asked to do. Even though the *izakaya*'s does not have the atmosphere of a jazz club they have something else to offer. *Izakaya* offers a caricature of the jazz singer as a sensual,

seductive woman. Performers adopts a way of singing that values English over Japanese and is reminiscent of colonial power dynamics, imitating the famous jazz divas from the past, and so they are expected to.

Nanami played at the *izakaya* bars when she was younger, but most of the jazz vocalists I interviewed distanced themselves from the *izakaya* bars. Rin says that she avoids those places altogether. At the high-end jazz clubs, however, it appeared as if the expectations concerning the 'vocalist-hostess' were maintained.

> *Rin:* yeah, I avoid. I don't go there but it depends on the singer but we have the places like that. Like host and jazz vocalist is sometimes imaged like that (wrinkle her nose). I hate that. So, Liv, that's the big problem (laughing). Not big, but strange in Japan - men are maybe stronger than women in Japan. I don't know but..
>
> *Me:* like more powerful in society, is that what you mean when you say stronger?
>
> *Rin:* we are recently getting a change but before, men was so powerful, more powerful. And it is strange because singers are musician, right? But we have a place like that, as a host. To serve saké, whiskey and talk but now, still now when I sing at the jazz club, the audience want to talk a lot sometimes, some places. And some people really want to some places. And I, yeah talking is fun for me too, but it is strange talk sometimes. For example they want to take photographs while I am singing. Taking a photo is more for men here.
>
> *Me:* like men taking photos for themselves?
>
> *Rin:* so we have idol culture, you know.
>
> *Me:* yeah, do you think that you being a vocalist… I mean do you think it is different for those who play instruments? Or is it the same?
>
> *Rin:* oh that is a good question. I really don't want it to be, but maybe a little bit different. Yeah, I am 49 years old so recently no, but in my youth I had bad experience, because audience said "you should be more cute, you know" "you should be.." yeah, yeah, yeah, and somebody said that. And somebody said more strict, more dirty words to me, but in Japan it is a strange culture maybe. But now, yeah still now we have it like that for singers.

Rin downplays the way vocalists and instrumentalists are being treated different using terms such as a "little bit different" and correcting herself when saying it is big problem with "not big, but strange" excusing the oppressive culture by calling it strange. She uses different pronouns, shifting from 'I' to 'we' when talking about Japanese culture, highlighting her sense of belonging in the culture and a slight defense when the oppressive structures are being questioned. Still, Rin expresses a sense of worry when talking about how women are portrayed and the expectations she is met with when performing in certain venues. She is treated different than her musician colleges.

The audience expects her to talk with them and in her youth, Rin experienced audience coming up to her after performance saying "you should look more cute, you know", and she further explains how in Japan beauty was considered as women being behind men. The audience always want to talk to her, and Rin is expected to act cute, instigating caretaking behavior and eliciting empathic responsiveness. The prosocial behavior

includes communication and companionship, and Rin expresses that the talking is fun, but sometimes "strange talk occurs", and men take pictures of her during performance. She underlines how men are stronger in society and it is more common for men than women to take photos of her performing.

Rin mentions the idol culture in Japan as a reason for men taking photos of her while singing but she also explains that the women jazz vocalists are more exposed to sexualization and harassment from audience, often being the front of the stage communicating directly with the audience. However, this is something she only recently became aware of.

> *Rin:* At the time when I started to play jazz and to sing jazz, it was more a man's world.
>
> *Me:* do you think it was difficult to get into the jazz scene as a woman?
>
> *Rin:* hmm, yeah it was a little bit tough. Still now I often play only woman with many men, you understand me? Piano and bass and drum and the saxophone everyone are men and one woman - me. It was not uncomfortable for me, but now recently I feel more aware and it is so different it is more tough for me. But only recently I thought that, "wow, it is a man's world". I don't, I really want to speak with ladies. I don't know why but now. Like I said, I am 49 years old, so why – I don't know, why but recently I got aware, "oh its tough – is it tough.. to be here?" yeah, like I said men are using the mind different, so they are free to do something they want. Focused on their toy, but women can't be fully focused, you know. I want to.. for example, yeah maybe women want to protect someone and love someone and have babies. I don't have a baby, I don't have a child. We can't be pregnant, so that was so sad for me and for my life. Yeah, very sad. So I really feel not whole, you know.

Rin is expressing how she misses playing jazz with women colleges, and just recently realized how tough it has been to be the only woman in a male dominated genre. Still, she suggests that women cannot be fully focused on what they want in the same way as men. She plays on the interpretive repertoires of the woman as a caretaker and mother. Rin draws on the caretaking aspect, arguing that women have another focus than men and have an internal desire to nurture and care for someone. By saying that she does not feel whole, she implies that women are not whole beings until they have a fulfilled the "duty" of giving birth but also an understanding that all women wish to be mothers. Most importantly, though, Rin's story unveils a narrative of a woman who does not fit into the idea of what a woman should be like, according to the male gaze.

Laura Mulvey (1975) writes in her frequently cited essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, that "[t]he determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*." (Mulvey, 1975, p. 715). Referring to film, Mulvey argues that the representation of the woman is controlled both in time and space to create a gaze and an object, produced entirely to the needs of the male ego and measure of desire (Mulvey, 1975, p. 721). The concept

has been extended to understand women's subject position and their 'looked-at-ness'. Women are, in other words, socially constructed to see themselves through the male gaze, and if they are not conforming they get confronted when performing on stage.

Miku, the drummer I interviewed based outside of Japan, says that she is surprised to hear that the *izakaya* places still exists.

> ***Miku:*** I've never been there myself and I've never experienced something like that. So this is just what (another musician) told me and what I hear from my colleges in music, but yeah I was really like surprised that it still exists and I hope that it dies. But I think the image of jazz is still like that. To – uh it is hard to explain – but jazz music is for adults and to have a special time, either for a nice date or kind of cabaret. And I was really surprised, I just saw a video from a singer that I just met who is based in [a big Japanese city], and I don't really know her, but the first video I saw was kind of like cabaret set-up. She was just singing in her minidress. And if Japanese people would think jazz is that, like what? (sighing) We are already in 2020 and the image of jazz for Japanese people might be from the 60's kind of. I don't know these people who think and have this image, because I am a musician and I only have that kind of people around me. But if this is the image of jazz I am really worried. Like, this is seriously a warning.

Miku inhabits the outsider perspective, and criticizes the fact that the image of jazz in Japan has not evolved since the 60's, displaying affect with an audible sighing. By distancing herself from the Japanese society she is capable of seeing how the environment of jazz has become a vehicle for the society's sexism.

Aoi also explains how jazz still works as part of adult social time in the city. She tells me that she took a private lesson with a jazz vocalist who told her that if she wanted to be a professional jazz vocalist she should go to New York. Therefore, she took a job as a vocalist-hostess at a young age to make money to go.

> ***Aoi:*** And I really liked English rhythm to sing especially, it is different than Japanese. So yeah, I just came to listen to bossa nova – or French pop. Then going to the American continent to listen to jazz. When I was like 18 or 19 I practiced to be a long term singer, to express myself. Yeah, at the time I took a private lesson with a jazz vocalist, then she said, the first lesson she said, "if you want to be a professional jazz vocalist you should go to New York as soon as possible and make money" (laughing) then right after the lesson at the studio I saw the advertisement said "here is the club" and you can be a jazz singer and also at the same time waitress, "here is the audition". Then I took it and I was accepted so like half of a week I was working there as a waitress and learning jazz, but probably now you could probably say many things about that. It was more like an adult social town in Osaka so there are like presidents and like yeah some talents came but there yeah, I saw the jazz society when I was 18 or 19, too young to see that.

Aoi describes that she worked in a club as a waitress in the "adult social town" and learning jazz at the age of 18. The fact that Aoi says that she was too young to be in the

jazz society implies that the environment at the *izakaya* is somehow inappropriate for younger musicians, and especially young women. This also suggests that the jazz environment is so permeated with sexism that the women has to be at a certain age to participate.

4.4   Strategies of authentication

Pronunciation is one of the key elements brought up by most of my vocalist informants. However, there are certain boundaries when it comes to pronunciation. Pronunciation appears to be an important criteria of quality among the Japanese elite listeners, and to give feedback to the vocalists about language is common. It is the gatekeepers who judge whether a performance is 'authentic' or not. American English is their working language, and there seems to exist a prestige in knowing the native pronunciation especially when it comes to jazz standards. The relation between the audience and vocalist becomes more vulnerable when the performer is more fluent in English than the listener. This is something both Sakura and Aoi have experienced when performing in jazz clubs in Japan. Sakura has experienced a member of the audience coming up to her and expressing his dissatisfaction with her American accent in singing:

> **Sakura:** I'm still not comfortable in the Japanese jazz scene because I can sing really fluently and some person in the audience said to me: 'I can't understand English, so you don't have to sing like in that really native way'

She adds that some spectators like the beautiful singers more and "that only happens to vocalists, the other musicians are treated different". The audience seems to be threatened by the fact that the entertainer - the 'jazz singer' - has more knowledge about their own professional field than they have. When the vocalist knows more about jazz than the audience either through singing with an authentic accent, or by not taking advice from the audience, they are met with apathy, if not outright resistance.

Aoi states that in Japan there is a cultural ideal of imitating the American accent and the better you can pretend to be American, the more desirable you are in the jazz clubs. The jazz performance is thereby caught up in language-based power relations, resulting in the Japanese jazz vocalists adopting a way of singing that values English over Japanese and is reminiscent of colonial power dynamics.

> **Aoi:** People they just want to be like American jazz singers, you know singing in English. But for me it's very hard to understand. Of course it is very important to learn real English to speak fluently and sing, but jazz is more about us. So to me it shouldn't be like perfect, pretending, speak or sing perfectly American. But because I was in New York, maybe I've seen so many different singers from all over the world and it is so unique. They have their own languages and I think that's jazz for me. But here there are still lots of only Japanese – of course the country here is called Japan. They just want to be the perfect image of American or European singers you know, singing in English.
>
> **Me:** So copying the way original jazz was…

> *Aoi:* Everything. Yeah, or especially African-American singing is very outstanding like gospel or like Stevie Wonder or whatever - that stuff people just copied. I think copying is very important to learn, but it is not like being plural musicians. Just absorb everything first, then performing. It is not like only copying, especially singers singing African-American style are totally different, our bodies are different. But they try to copy how to sing which is very funny. And if Americans watch that they all say "wow" haha, they are like us.

In contrast to Sakura's story, here we see that there is a power in knowing a foreign language, and a prestige in being able to pronounce the 'jazz language', namely English as an American, in Japanese jazz clubs. Aoi paints a picture of the American singer as the ideal in Japanese jazz. Imitation and appropriation of American culture is according to Aoi the norm in the Japanese jazz community, but this norm does not appeal to her. She describes how some Japanese singers "just want to be the perfect image of American or European singers". She is opposed to the idea of creating the perfect image of American singers, and explains how although copying is an importing part of being a jazz musician, this does not mean that you need to become the musician that you copy. This view, the pianist Naomi shares:

> *Naomi:* In the Tokyo jazz scene, unfortunately there are a lot of musicians who play the same as their idol jazz musicians. They copy jazz legends solo improvisations and play it at jazz clubs. I think it's wrong – for me it have to be fresh every time. If we know where the music will go before playing it will be boring. You never know what will happen in improvisations and that's what makes it fun and interesting. I can bring to music what I feel today, how I am and what's going on in my life.

For Naomi it is important to always play different than she did the night before and make her own improvisations instead of copying. In the same way as Aoi, she thinks it is wrong to copy the jazz legends solo's. Aoi is concerned with the ways in which the Japanese singers are perceived by Americans, and she seems to have as an outside perspective of the authenticity connected with jazz.

> *Aoi:* I want to be a jazz musician so I'm still learning a lot and listening to jazz. So as a 'jazz singer' we just have to keep trying to understand what jazz is, what the jazz core or history is. I always say that "if you want to sing jazz, if you want to scat, at least you just have to know about them [the "jazz legends"]", but they [the vocal students] just don't pay attention, they are busy performing or looking good for the audience or whatever. It is kind of a headache so that's another thing that I have to educate them in some way. For me, singing jazz and listening in jazz instrument is a little bit different. Jazz is a more instrumental society unfortunately.

Aoi argues that when a musician shows an interest in the music of a culture that is different from her own to the point of desiring to become proficient in playing or singing, it is important to learn about the history of the music and culture. To make it one's own and ultimately be recognized as a proficient player, there must be a shift of identity of some sort. The vocalists do not necessarily have to learn the language, though it is

preferable, which implies much more than simply learning the theoretical and technical aspects of that music, and its aesthetic concepts. A musician does not only lean a genre or type of music, but they also integrate a culturally grounded and framed aesthetic system to appear authentic. Authenticity implies that someone has the power or authority to authenticate a representation. When Japanese singers copy African-American singers, Aoi explains how the bodies differ from singers they try to copy, and what she leaves unsaid is the underlying idea that the bodies cannot produce the same sounds. "our bodies are different" also implies a level of belonging to an outsider "we" in the jazz community. Her 'self-othering' underlines the assertion of Western difference. The bodies of the Japanese singers are in other words seen as 'non-authentic'.

Aoi is a professional jazz vocalist with wide experience in the jazz field in both Japan and the U.S. She has been in New York and seen the diversity of jazz singers there, and argues how her knowledge from the American jazz scene might have influenced her views concerning jazz. She argues that "it is very important to learn real English, to speak fluently and to sing, but jazz is more about us. So to me it shouldn't be like perfect, pretending, speak or sing perfectly American". Aoi shows that she has a broader idea of what it means to be a jazz vocalist, and she does not agree with the norm of imitating and copying other jazz vocalists. In that sense, a shift of positioning and identifying must take place. The cultural identity must be renegotiated in order to be able to adopt and appropriately this other music and make it to one's own, to make it original.

This idea is in line with what Atkins argues about the essentially American character of jazz being regarded as so incontestable, that aesthetic distinctions between authentic and inauthentic practitioners are made to seem natural, even by Japan's own culture industry (Atkins, 2001, p. 11). Aoi argues that the jazz performance reinscribes Japan's artistic and cultural subordination by imitating and copying other jazz vocalists, instead of creating something new and original. She perceived the milieu as bound by limited creative freedom, and her artistic desires goes beyond the highly rigid, socially established role of a 'jazz singer'. The chapter which follows this one provides an elaboration of the idea and understandings of a 'jazz singer' in more detail.

4.5   The significance of body and location

Aoi has lived in New York and made several successful albums. She seems to have found a strategy that balances the different expectations of American and Japanese jazz listeners so that she can please her different audiences. However, as an Asian woman fluent in the language of modern jazz, Aoi has met prejudice in coming to the U.S. As Mulinari notes, "The privilege of the dominant group is the privilege of the absence of difference" (Mulinari, 1995, p. 37). The privilege of "the absence of difference" disappears when the Japanese vocalists travel to the U.S. to perform, and they experience marginalization.

> *Aoi:* When I go back to the States to perform and sing jazz standards they sometimes all look surprised at me, "wow you are singing in English – our language" and "how did you know about jazz, even we don't know it so much" you know.. It is very interesting and they

really appreciate it actually. Especially as my figure is Asian, and when I sing in English they kind of get blown away. They try to look at me twice or three times sometimes like "wow, wow, wow" […] Occasionally I feel bad when American listeners are surprised at me because, of course it is not perfect English, but I try to be perfect at English on the stage. [somebody close to her] told me before that they feel like "in a way she took our culture" or something.

Aoi positions herself as an object of American ignorance and the patronizing comments that reveal the racialized and Orientalist assumptions about non-whites in the U.S. She has experienced the audience as being surprised by the fact that she speaks English. The quote reveals some of the patterns of racial oppression against Asians in the U.S., and how people with Japanese origin have been constructed as outsides to the American ethos based on moral, political, cultural and cognitive grounds (Hoang, 2015). When Aoi however talks about her experience of releasing albums in the American jazz metropolis (New York), she takes ownership of her Japanese accent and sometimes even makes it more pronounced.

> *Aoi:* When I lived in New York I performed already over there and I got lots of reviews after releasing CDs. On the CD I tried not to have any English accent coach. I just tried to be like 'Japanese sings jazz'.
>
> For some songs I put on my Japanese accent on purpose. And then, at the time, I would get jazz improv magazine in New York - it was more than 10 years ago - they said, "her Japanese accent is very unique" and I read the article and I thought: "ok, succeeded". For me especially in New York I try not to be perfect at English because then it is going to be a standing out that I'm Japanese. I have like reason to not to be perfect, which is easier. I cannot compete other native American jazz singers, not at all. But once I came back to Japan people want to listen to native English speaking or singing. So sometimes I have a switch on and off and when I go to America I try not to be perfect .

Aoi explains how she uses her Japanese accent to stand out in the jazz community in New York, where she sees no reason to try to compete with American singers. Here, she uses her foreignness in the American gaze to her advantage, to occupy a position of originality and authenticity. She switches her accent on and off, depending on where she is. The pursuit of the original is defined by a hierarchy of experts, that has taken a route through African American music, from jazz to R&B to soul and Motown and appropriated by Europeans (Frith, 2000). As a performer, difference is important and to sell a musical artist an audience wants something unique and original. To be marketable you have to promote difference.

Aoi is fully aware of how she can promote herself as a vocalist within the different settings, adjusting her subject position as she sees fit. The different subject positions are expressed in the two different interpretative repertoires – namely the Japanese and the American jazz communities. She already possesses an original feature in the eyes of the Americans by being Japanese. The way she enhances her Japanese accent can be seen as her way of proudly showing her origin, or alternatively it can be seen in keeping with the exoticism for artistic legitimation. A way of reading in and playing along with the

American orientalist construction of Asian Americans as always foreign, always foil to an ideal American ethos. Aoi presents a Japanese identity on the American jazz scene combining jazz (an American idiom) and elements like a pronounced accent that highlight her heritage. But does her pronounced Japanese accent serve to further cement existing Orientalist views? She has recognized that Japanese jazz artists who have received the most international praise are those who conspicuously draw on their heritage to incorporate textures and aesthetic principles associated with traditional Japan, thereby creating what many have imagined to be a recognizable "national dialect".

Aoi represents the well-educated jazz musicians in Japan. She is capable of identifying some of the mechanisms of authenticity, and she very clearly has already reflected and analyzed how she has to work in different positions to achieve her goals. Her statements bluntly give a perspective on how she as a musician has to be aware and use the power that lays in the knowledge she has. Her detailed descriptions on how she uses accent to gain popularity show that she is well aware of the coping strategies she uses to survive in the music industry. In this way, Aoi deviates from the other musicians I interviewed. It is therefore important to note that her story does not necessarily represent the experience of other jazz vocalists in Japan.

4.6 Summary

In this chapter I have identified some of the hierarchizations that are in play in the Japanese jazz community, and looked into how women negotiate and deal with issues and obstacles, highlighting the importance of affect and bodies rather than the barriers themselves. While jazz can provide a community and a sense of belonging, stories that emerge from my empirical material also show the flaws of the jazz communities where women jazz musicians have to overcome numerous barriers both during their formative years at music educational institutions and throughout their professional carriers. Ayaka tells a story of her not being good enough, instead of underlining what is wrong with the structure in the jazz environment. This also reveals the notion that women are taught to take the blame for something that is really out of their hands. It is the conditions that women are met with in the jazz community that create obstacles and even sometimes appear to be the reason some women do not end up pursuing a career in jazz. Sakura's story shows that when the vocalist knows more about jazz than the audience, they are met with apathy, if not outright resistance. The elite listeners have an iron grip on the performers who are dependent on their support, and when the power relations are destabilized by well-educated jazz singers, the financial support decreases. Aoi uses strategies such as language and accent dependent on the location. She is fully aware of how she can promote herself as a vocalist within the different settings, adjusting her accent accordingly. The musicians are in this way restricted to certain ways of performing and acting in the interaction with their audience, and they learn to negotiate their positions in rigid structures of power. Signifiers of femininity are not only characterized by physical attributes, but also by body movements and occupied space that historically represent a feminine frame of reference. Beyond instigating caretaking behavior, cuteness also fosters several other dynamics which I aim to explore in the next two chapters, where notions of cuteness and cute femininity will play a central role in the analysis. Here, I will examine coping strategies and acts of resistance in the jazz community.

5 Cuteness as a coping strategy

While the first chapter gave an overview of the intersecting and processes of hierarchizations in jazz, this chapter will look into the different subject positions women jazz musicians occupy when they navigate in the jazz community, negotiating their role as a jazz vocalist. The chapter explores the ideological dilemmas faced by Japanese jazz vocalists, struggling to liberate themselves from certain interpretative repertoires and foreign models by using different coping strategies and introducing new perspectives on what it means to be a jazz vocalist in Japan. I aim to examine not only how identities are produced on and for particular occasions but also how, in the form of established repertoires or ways of talking, history or culture both are impacted and transformed by those performances.

I draw a comparison between the jazz vocalists that are described in my material and what Joshua Paul Dale (2016) in *The Aesthetics and Affects of Cuteness* describes as the "cute object". The point of discussing the vocalist as an object in the cute, is not to further objectify women in the role of a vocalist, but rather to explore how the position is negotiated and situated in particular contexts. It is never a question as to whether the women are skilled and disciplined musicians, but rather how coping strategies evolve in a male dominated community. Dale et al. (2016) demonstrate that indulging in and communicating through cuteness provides an important coping strategy for subjects caught up in the precariousness inherent to neoliberal capitalism, and is thus central to the establishment of contemporary subjectivities. Cuteness is in other words an interpretative repertoire that is used by a variety of constituencies and for a variety of purposes.

Extending these scholars' insights, I argue that jazz vocalists in Japan make cuteness central to their exploration of systematic power and potentially a mode of resistance. The analysis that follows will be based on the key informant Aoi's perspective and revolves around the questions: How does a jazz musician position herself within established musical discourses? What options are available, and what do her choices signify?

5.1   The ambiguity of being 'cute'

It is important to note that although literally the word *kawaii* means 'cute' it has a much broader semantic meaning than the corresponding English term (Dale et al., 2016). The normative English-language definition retains a degree of suspicion towards the cute. There is a powerful ambiguity of 'cute' and its capacity to simultaneously assuage and insult, to sugarcoat while critiquing (Dale et al., 2016). 'Cute' is often used to describe a feminine attractiveness but it can also be a condescending term when used in certain contexts, creating an unequal relation.

In band rehearsals with an American drummer, Aoi had the experience of being humiliated or being the object of jokes:

> ***Aoi:*** I used to have a band and the pianist and bassist were Japanese but the guitarist and the drummer were American. When I gave them a rhythm or feeling before the song started the drummer always made jokes about my count in, because he is a drummer. And he is such a nice guy and I totally understood but I was very ashamed, because I wanted to be like at the same level as them, my favorite musicians I gathered in a band. And it was my band, I was the leader but they are well-educated, well-experienced, and I'm just a singer, but I wanted to make my music with the top musicians. In the rehearsal I just couldn't give them the best image of rhythm or explain and the American drummer always made jokes like "Yeah, Aoi, the rhythm wasn't clear" and "that was cute".

Here, Aoi is questioned on her abilities as a band leader and she becomes the center of the joke. The band that Aoi was in charge of instead becomes an environment where she is afraid of making mistakes. Aoi underlines that drummer is a nice guy but instead of addressing the issue of not being able to catch the tempo or rhythm from her count-in, the drummer makes jokes in an attempt to try to ease the mood, which leaves Aoi embarrassed and ashamed. The story also gives an example of how the English 'cute' deviates from the Japanese *kawaii*, by being used as a derogatory term. By virtue of its feminine associations 'cute' becomes an insult to describe the lack of technical savoir-faire. The quote also reveals a level of minimization and contrast. Aoi downplays the significance of her own musicianship by specifying how well educated and experienced the other musicians are and by referring to herself as "just a singer", using 'singer' as a derogatory label. In the next paragraph I address how gender performance comes into play when jazz vocalists try to fit in to a highly rigid regulatory frame of the 'jazz singer'.

5.2   The role as a 'jazz singer'

When talking with vocalists I found similarities in the ways in which they describe expectations placed on them to inhabit the role of a 'jazz singer'. The musicians I interviewed share stories of uncomfortable inquiries or unwanted attention from male audience at high-end jazz clubs in Japan. The stories reveal situations in which they are represented and clearly expected to behave in particular gendered ways. As noted in the introductory chapter, the idea of the 'jazz singer' is produced, critiqued and imagined primarily by male elites in Japan (Dale et al., 2016).

There are certain negotiations happening in positioning between performer and audience and cuteness plays a central role in the recalibration of contemporary subjectivities in the jazz community. Cute has an integration of both power and powerlessness that come to play in the relation between the audience and performer in jazz.

Aoi is a jazz vocalist in her late 40s. She was born in Japan, and has travelled several times to the U.S. to perform. Aoi's story will be the primary source of empirical data for this chapter. Aoi makes it clear that she identifies more as a musician than a singer, but there are moments when she has to adapt to fit into the role of a jazz vocalist. The negotiations of adapting reveal that there are certain dominant repertoires that set the standards as to the "right way" a jazz singer should act or be. At the same time Aoi shows us that there are alternative options.

> ***Aoi:*** I want to be like more the jazz musician type, not just a 'queen' or 'diva', you know, as a singer. It's not my style, but of course I need to – not pretend – but I need to act like a kind of a leader on the stage proclaiming "hey, I'm a diva" I have to do that too as a part of my job. But my core is more united with the jazz instruments.

Aoi occupies a conflicting position where she on the one hand tries to be 'true' to herself by being united with the jazz instruments but on the other hand feels the need to act like a diva on the stage. She is faced with limited possibility for action outside of the highly rigid, and already socially established role and interpretative repertoire of the 'jazz singer'. Aoi explains how she is more interested in non-lyrical improvisation and identifies more as a jazz musician rather than a 'singer'. She expresses a wish to expand the scope for jazz vocalists and make room for more experimental vocals. Aoi does not fit in the 'diva-style' and she says that she has to make an effort to act the part. Aoi is automatically read in a subject position, given the resilient interpretative repertoire of the 'jazz singer', and it requires effort from her to counter the inertia of the jazz singer repertoire.

There are certain expectations that the jazz vocalists should act like divas. Aoi's expectations for herself contradict the expectations of the audience. Aoi is placed in a subject position given the already set interpretative repertoire of the jazz diva and it takes a big effort to shift the position she is being placed and interpreted in. When Aoi breaks with the cultural norm of the 'jazz singer' she enters a cultural or political struggle, whether or not she means to. This is in line with what Butler argues to be a radical petition for solidarity, and further "[g]ender is not gender if it does not imply the social dimension of a bodily being, the way that the body refers to a broader world and exceeds the one who bears or does it, even as that one remains in some sense singular" (Butler, 2016, para. 6). The subject position as a *jazz diva* plays out in performance, in the meeting between vocalist and audience.

5.3 "I try to be more 'woman' on the stage"

Aoi continuously refers to the 'jazz singer' in air quotes to distance herself from the given subject position, and to occupy a new position, namely the subject position as a wage laborer. However, it is clear that Aoi feels the obligation to fulfill the task of being a 'jazz singer', and the task does not only involve behavior but also looks.

> ***Aoi:*** I'm a woman, I'm a 'jazz singer' and I try to be like good looking as a business person […] I try to be more woman on the stage. How I react and what clothes and makeup I wear. Because the audience who pays are.. men. Businessmen. In my mind I have to be the woman on the stage who they look for to pay.

Aoi explains that she changes her behavior, acts more feminine and wears certain clothes and makeup because she knows that the audience is primarily male and has expressly come to see a woman on stage. Aoi is business oriented - she knows that the businessmen pay a lot of money to get into jazz clubs to see her, and therefore she feels obligated to enhance her femininity on stage. She is not free to choose which gender to enact, and is faced with limited possibilities when she performs. The position for a woman in this set of meanings is as the object that precipitates heterosexual men's natural sexual urges. The hegemonic 'male sexual drive' discourse is very dominant in the productions of meanings concerning sexuality. Cuteness might be regarded as a commodity, but here the commodity is no longer legible as the product of any concrete form of labor but becomes reduced to an object. The job as a vocalist is no longer in the category of wage labor, but rather reduced as a product, and the woman is seen as an object. As sexualized objects of display 'jazz singers' – and particularly female jazz singers, enjoy a popularity that often eclipses their own musicality.

There are two distinctive interpretative repertoires in common circulation. In one, the image of the vocalists, the musician, who tries to break out of the 'jazz singer' role, and be more united with jazz instrumentalists. Aoi describes her role as a jazz vocalist with everything that she is not and, by comparison, the second interpretative repertoire is much more rich and complex. It includes details of the 'jazz singer's' physical appearance, gendered behavior and femininity. These two repertoires are drawn upon in a number of different ways to indicate what 'jazz singers' are really like, what others say they are like or what people used to think they are like. However, there remains a high degree of consistency in terms of the content of the construction of the 'jazz singer'.

The two repertoires creates a powerful ideological dilemma. It is in these moments of argument and deliberation that the contrary themes of contemporary common sense make themselves most plain. First of all, Aoi does not attempt to deny the importance of musical agency. In a sense, she can be seen to acknowledge and so reproduce that as an aspect of lived ideology. However, the second point to note is that in spite of that acknowledgement, she recognizes that she has to act a certain way to be "the woman on the stage that they look for to pay".

In a sense, the vocalists are a battleground upon which the struggle between these opposing ideals is played out. Aoi wants to be successful, but she also wants to stay true to her own musicianship. However, to become successful she has to act "more woman on the stage". Moreover, the way that she conduct her own life will depend upon how she position herself within this ideological field.

The male audience seems to picture the jazz vocalist as someone erotic and mystic, and they don't want to know about the singer's family. Aoi explains how she is completely honest about her family life, unlike many other jazz vocalists. She argues that the businessmen pay a lot of money to go to the jazz clubs and that it is expected of the vocalists that they keep their family life a secret.

> *Aoi:* I'm open to say I got married, I have kids. But here in Japan it was a little bit – not prohibited, but it was not common to be honest about our lifestyle or family or whatever to our audience or fans. Especially for jazz, it is not really easy to go to jazz clubs because it is not cheap. Lots of businessmen bring the friends or coworkers to go to the jazz clubs to pay, and it is not cheap at all. […] So still my mind is like I have to be hmm, the woman on the stage who they look for to pay. But at the same time, I'm not young anymore I had those fans so much when I was young, but now I am over 40 and they know my husband or kids you know - no more secrets for me. So know I have just completely jazz listener core people, but it is very limited. So if I want to be more like uh, famous I have to be more good looking, good shape. I have to pay more attention – like being woman outlook.

The 'jazz singers' are seen as an attraction for the businessmen. The limits of discursive possibilities are set by pre-defined subject-positions to inhabit, which offer processes of subjectification. For the female jazz vocalist choices matching feminine behavior may appear as more disposable and thereby "rational" and "logical" on stage.

> *Aoi:* And if we are outside the role people are looking for, yeah of course lots of people have fans who are so into real music, but just a small percent so like 90% are just normal listeners and they just want to see, like especially for jazz, they want to see the 'jazz singer'

The jazz vocalists are caught in a fixed role and if they do not confirm the role in their behavior on stage, they are left with the remaining 10% of actual jazz listeners. They must look and act a certain way to be considered acceptable, in line with Butler's argument that gender is performative in the way that it is produced as a ritualized repetition of convention. The outlook is an essential part of the gender performativity as the jazz singer, and as a dedicated performer, Aoi conforms to the beauty ideal to make herself more appealing to her audience. Her appearance is important to her livelihood and this justifies her behavior as a conscious career decision. Because women are judged by their physical attractiveness, beautifying oneself can be considered an important marketing strategy.

If Aoi wanted to get more fame, she would have to be more "good looking" and in "good shape", and protect herself from the appearance of aging. The patriarchal point of view is so ingrained in women's subconscious that they often dress with the visualization of the male gaze, which reinforces gendered signification. Signifiers of femininity are not only characterized by physical attributes, but also by elements of talk, body movements and interaction with the audience, that represent a feminine frame of reference. Some might argue that the traditional function of 'cute' femininity

essentializes and eroticizes women, putting them into service for the state in a contemporary version of geisha commodification. The selective interest in a version of Japanese girlhood endows it with innocence and gendered essentialism that forestalls a consideration of female agency and resistance through aesthetic forms. While the power differential between a subject affected by cuteness and an allegedly powerless cute object has serious implications when it is expressed through differences such as gender, race, class, age and nationality, I argue that aesthetics of cuteness also offers an escape from the very systems in which they function.

5.4 Doing gender, doing *burikko*

The relation between the jazz singer and audience can be characterized as obeying and humble. At first sight the power relation appears unequal with the male consumer as the subject occupying a position at the micromanaging end:

> ***Aoi***: They want to support female young, musicians or singers, but at the same time it's not exactly controlling the situation connecting with the singer, but they just want to be a little bit above us. To pay to get into the jazz clubs, that means supporting, and like 'I want to support you but at the same time I want to give you more information of what I know about jazz'. They want to advice especially the female, younger generation.

Here Aoi uses neoliberal capitalism as discourse to explain how the male audience is in the position of power as a consumer. They can choose not to come and support the musicians with their money, but if they support it is also expected that the musicians take advice from them. The jazz vocalists who have a bigger crowd at the jazz club always try to please their crowd by acting humble. The vocalists are consciously and unconsciously drawing on linguistic and nonverbal repertoires that reflect idealized norms. They use cuteness and *kawaii* gestures as a coping strategy, exploring the interpretative repertoire of cute to gain more audience. Cuteness is a hot commodity in Japan and if she wants to be more famous, Aoi says that she not only has to be good looking and in good shape, but she also has to change the way she talks and acts.

> ***Aoi:*** when I look at other people who have more fans or crowd at the jazz club they want to be like more friends. "Thank you so much for coming, thank you so much for advising me" (says in a high-pitched voice), you know, being cute. And to be like female, like "I'm still learning, thank you so much" even when they are like over 30 or something. If they do it more like old men especially try to come – to support.
>
> ***Me:*** so they are more popular?
>
> ***Aoi:*** yeah, so popular. I think that's how the business is. Like I can't do that, I do different business, but I can't do that. But that is very common in Japan
>
> ***Me:*** it must be so challenging to pretend to be humble when you know that you know more than them
>
> ***Aoi:*** yes, but I gave up – I tried it before, but I just gave up recently. I can't do that. But those female musicians, younger or elder, it doesn't matter, they are popular.

The vocalists that Aoi describes take on a dramatic childish submissive position that echoes the *burikko* behavior, an interpretative repertoire that she dissociates herself from. Aoi vary her pitch of voice, inflicted with a touch of sarcasm, when paraphrasing the vocalist. She explains how the singers who behave like this (*burikko*) have bigger crowds, consisting of especially old men. The audience at the jazz club seems to like it while Aoi on the other hand seems to find it really annoying. Miller argues that "the same display of cuteness, childishness, or femininity can be seen as real or fake, depending on who is the actor and who is doing the evaluation" (Miller, 2004, p. 151). Contemporary young people react negatively to extreme forms of docility and cuteness, while older Japanese men may still admire and endorse the subservient pose of those who do *burikko*.

What is considered too much or inappropriate femininity or cuteness will depend on the evaluator's stand. Aoi implies that the women are sometimes too old for the kind of behavior acting cute, "even when they are over 30 or something". While women are taught that innocence, femininity, childishness, and cuteness are desired commodities, if such a display does not suit her age or status, her behavior will be judged as *burikko* (Miller, 2004). Despite these negative assessments, behaviors as high pitch are connected to prescribed cultural norms of femininity. This tells us that while cuteness is thought to be an approved aspect of femininity display, it is nevertheless sanctioned within certain age limits. There are boundaries of the cute, and women have a limited range in which they can act out cuteness. When their actions are considered inappropriate for her age she is dismissed as doing *burikko*. According to Aoi, the audience however, does not seem to care about age, and both young and older vocalists who are acting *burikko* are popular at the jazz clubs.

In line with gender performativity *burikko* is a social phenomenon that arises from situated behavior, and a transgression that reveals some boundaries tied to the performance of cuteness.

Because they draw from the same gendered cultural system, many of the features that typify *burikko* performance are also a part of acceptable female gender presentation. To reach more fans, you have to look good and young, and be female, Aoi says. However, the cuteness is much more than a feminized affect: rather it is one that works in a network of relations that expose power imbalances between subject and the cute object, the subject here being the listeners and the cute object the jazz vocalist. The asymmetry of power speaks to the inherent imbalance between the object that is cute, weak, small, childlike, young or worthy of protection, and the subject making the judgment, basing those assessment on his or her status as larger than, older than, and/or stronger than the object. As Ngai notes, a cute object's demand for the subject's affection suggests that cuteness is "not just the site of a static power differential, but also the site of surprisingly complex power struggle" (Ngai, 2012, p. 11).

The intense appeal of cuteness can produce a sense that the subject is under the cute object's control, which might explain why the vocalists who act *burikko* have a bigger

audience at the jazz venues. Given the powerful affective demands that the cute object makes on us, one could argue that this paradoxically doubleness is embedded in the concept of cute from the start. Ngai argues that there are historical reasons for why an aesthetic organized around a small, helpless or deformed object that foregrounds the violence in its production as such might seem more ideologically meaningful, and therefore more widely prevalent, in the culture of one nation than in another. Underscoring the aggressive desire to master and overpower the cute object that the cute object itself appears to elicit (Ngai, 2012, p. 78).

5.5 Trapped in the cuteness paradox

'Proper' female behavior places some women in a behavioral paradox. According to my informants, some jazz vocalists use outlook and submissive behavior to attract more fans and listeners when performing. The systemic level of submissive behavior used in performing creates a norm inspired by traditional gender roles and the idea that beauty is considered as women being behind men. The jazz vocalists play on gendered notions of cute to pursue their own economic interests. Cuteness is used as a strategy to attract more audience at jazz venues. The younger singers, because of the power embedded in their female beauty, elicit anger among the male colleges of Aoi.

> *Aoi:* I think here in Japan is standing out, but also in the U.S. They try to have a very sexy outlook. Yeah, they use it and they know how to get more people to listen. So I think it is the same everywhere. But here in Japan there is a hostess-culture, that is also a part of it, but it is kind of old style. Now more and more music styles come, so I don't think it is only in Japan. But, this is interesting; uh, male jazz musicians they are jealous
>
> *Me:* is that so?
>
> *Aoi:* yeah, they all say that they are like middle-age professional jazz musicians, pianists or whatever all my friends, to play together. They are all jealous. "wow, female, young and good looking, so good looking. They have lots of fans - but what about us?". They could never use their looks so easily to generate fans, and they [the women] know it – how to control people. But men, they can't do as much as a woman. So they always wear just suits or you know, shirt and tie that's it. We have more choice to display or reveal things, our bodies, so they are jealous.

The bodily attention solicited by certain singers provokes jealousy from jazz musicians who does not have a body that corresponds to the objectified and commercialized female body.

In the second story, using another interpretative repertoire, namely the commercial imperatives of the female body, Aoi explains how the female singers own the power by being able to use their bodies to attract. These female 'jazz singers' know, according to Aoi, how to control people. The lived simultaneity of submission as mastery and vice versa, is the condition of possibility for emergence of the subject. The singers are fully aware how to use their look to attract more audience, and what one might see as

submission as a loss of control, paradoxically, it is itself marked by mastery. The quote shows that there exists a power in submission, and a power in the female body. Few musicians could hope to share the spotlight with the glamourous vocalists. The two different interpretative repertoires provide resources that Aoi uses to reveal how social interactions as flexible resources are able to construct different versions of reality.

The relation between the 'jazz singer' and audience can be characterized as obeying and humble, reminiscent of the ambivalence between mastery and submission and highly intertwined with the enactment of intelligible masculinities and femininities as predicated by what Butler refers to as the 'heterosexual matrix'. The story shows that women are not just hapless victims of the male sexual drive. Aoi describes the commonly accepted practices of femininity that take for granted that there is status and power attached to being attractive to men. In order to attract them, women can take up the object position in the 'male sexual drive' discourse. Women are here seen as 'trapping' men by their powers of sexual attraction, in line with Butler's idea of the heterosexual matrix. The subject position of the 'jazz singer' plays on heterosexuality. Through the meanings and incorporated values attached to gendered practices, provide power through she can position herself in relation to her audience.

Cuteness is a fundamentally commercial aesthetic, and as these quotes show, it is adaptable in order to escape from the very systems in which they function. Rather than being purely an aesthetic of childhood or 'feminine spectacle', cuteness can emerge in disruptive and unruly ways when it intersects with highly gendered social scripts, such as the role of a 'jazz singer'. When jazz vocalists act outside of the script, they are met with either sympathetic or critical discourse that increasingly frame masculinity as men's negative experiences of and responses to social change (Dale et al., 2016, p. 290).

5.6 Summary

In this chapter I have addressed how gender performance and aesthetics of cuteness come into play when women jazz vocalists try to fit in to the highly rigid regulatory frame of the 'jazz singer'. By looking for the different ways that people talk about women, jazz and femininity we begin to understand the kinds of limitations that exist for women's construction of self and other in jazz. That is, we come to see what is possible to say about women in jazz and what, by implication, is not.

The cuteness theory allow us to see how coping strategies are evolved to deal with the conditions jazz vocalists have in the jazz community in Japan. My material exemplifies how different hierarchizations of power in jazz culture create terms in which jazz musicians are limited to certain roles. The role of the 'jazz singer' rarely includes representations of the women who fail to conform to the narrow model of cute femininity. The story of Aoi gives a new perspective on the 'jazz singer', diversifying the role of the jazz vocalist. Aoi avoids features that construct a submissive position and instead use language and education to negotiate her relationships and interactional outcomes.

The argument of this chapter is that the 'performance' of the complex quality of femininity is a crucial part not just of the lives of women but of the social dynamic of capitalism in the twenty-first century. Cuteness is adopted as a subject position that appeals to the male gaze, namely the jazz listeners at high end jazz clubs in Japan. The cuteness appeal still exerts great power in popular jazz venues and the better women are able to play the part, the more popular they become among the audience. The findings of this chapter suggest that even though the performance of *burikko* and feminine cuteness is not shared by all women, it is to some degree practiced by most women vocalists in order to cope with the expectations that exist in society. In that way, cuteness provides a coping strategy to help people cope with the impacts of neoliberalism and the increasing inequalities and financial instabilities it causes.

6 Negotiating alternative stories and cuteness as an act of resistance

Cuteness and femininity are not essences to be revealed, but rather they are practices that are actively developed and negotiated in relation to other forms of identity in particular cultural contexts. In this third and final analysis chapter I will discuss how negotiations of positioning and resistance in the jazz field can help promote change. As the previous chapter demonstrated, these practices take many different forms and involve a wide range of activities, such as disciplining of bodies to match currently ideal physiques, choices of clothes, makeup and fashion and so on. But there is an additional aspect of cute, which underlines the internal instability of cuteness. In *kawaii*'s appeal to our experience of 'innocence' it is emotionally charged and its occasional propensity for anger that breaks clearly with the cuteness discourse. In this manner, cuteness surprisingly throws certain aspects of jazz practice into particular relief, and brings out a darker and much more complicated account of cuteness. This, I aim to explore through Ayaka's story. With stories of the vocalist Aoi from previous chapters and the instrumentalists Miku, Izayuki and Takumi I will examine the resistance to the masculine norm in jazz and ideas of leading and how power-relations are negotiated.

I will analyze how masculinity and femininity are constantly made and remade and how they provide not just a radical destabilizing of the gendered hierarchies that exists in the jazz environment. Further I will examine how this destabilizing can change musicians' approach to performing jazz, and last but not least encouraging people to tell different stories about themselves and others. I ask questions of how repertoires of cuteness are negotiated in the practice of jazz, and what alternative stories and new meanings are created by their acts of resistance.

6.1 "Anger made the band"

As highlighted in the first analysis chapter, *Jazz-ken* (jazz circles) play a key role in the trajectory toward more professional music practice. Whether or not you are accepted into the circles have influence on if you pursue a career in jazz. It is here musicians get an opportunity to develop their musical repertoire and training. The trumpet player Ayaka told me how the jazz circle and community at her university were a man's world, and only a few female students were selected to audition for the school's jazz orchestra.

> ***Ayaka:*** Ah, okay so when I was senior student at the university I was very angry because there was a little bit of a man's world in the jazz circle and community. I was very angry with other students and I was angry with male students and I was also angry with female students. The 'new wave jazz orchestra' is a very important band behind the group, a big

band with 18 or 19 students who can join the band based on an audition. And at that time only a few females joined, or were selected.

Me: Ok, so it wasn't like a blind audition?

Ayaka: No, it was open, very open. And females also gave up before the audition, and I was so angry like, they should stand up.

Me: Yeah, but do you think that they kind of selected, and didn't choose the female players because of their gender?

Ayaka: I think it was because women are very busy. Because we have to study, we have to like uh, work to get jobs before graduation. And we have to go to… a female wants to travel, wants to go on dates or wants to buy some nice clothes or eat – yeah they want to enjoy the world. And they don't have time to practice. The band needs the members to practice so hard, every day for hours, even though we have exams or assignments. But yeah, so some male students even dropped out or repeated years [because of this heavy time commitment].

The quote reveals ideas and expectations about women and how female students "have to" obtain good grades and jobs before they graduate. Ayaka implies that women at her university were more inclined to enjoy the world through travelling, buying clothes and eat food, and for this reason they did not have time to practice with the band for hours every day. Ayaka explains how women at the university were busier studying and pursuing a degree, while the male students opted to drop out or repeat years in order to prioritize band practice. Ayaka describes that she was angry with the male students for getting all the spots in the big band but also with the female students for just giving up. The quote reveals an implicit bias concerning women's attitudes, values and behavior which makes it so those that do pursue an audition are up against prejudices. Then there are also those who see they do not have a chance and quit before they go all the way through to the audition. In that way Ayaka both criticize society's expectations to women, but also women's choices of following them.

In contrast, one of my male interviewees, Takumi, argues that once you get into college or university, the studying time is over.

Takumi: The thing in Japan, I mean the college and the university in Japan is… you don't have to study as hard as probably you guys do, or any country and students do. It is pretty unique in Japan, because once you get into college or university your studying time is like over. I mean not for all, but for most regular students. You have to study hard to get into college, but once you get in it is like over, and you have like these four years of free time.

Takumi gives the impression that college and university in Japan is easy once you get in. However, Ayaka says that female students work hard to get good grades and often do not prioritize band practice. There is a collision in the opinions about how difficult it is to get through college and university that in a way confirms that the expectations are to a lesser degree asserted. This also implies that there is a risk for women not to fully prioritize band practice.

Ayaka: Women are very clever and very cool, so they give up before the audition. But I was very mad, angry about the situation, so I formed a female big band in my senior year. And the members were all female. I insisted that they wear, not underwear, but bikinis, or swimsuits at the concerts. This was 20 years ago, but I think now I wouldn't do such a thing. But I thought at time that wearing a bikini or like swimsuits was a privilege for women, or not a privilege, but rather a great power…

Me: So kind of empowering?

Ayaka: Yeah, empowering. Like, let's show our potential. Let's show them our power. 'We are powerful' or something like that. We are beautiful. The concert was great. Fully packed. It was the most sensational and sold the most in the history of the jazz circle. Yeah, it was kind of a legendary thing.

The biased audition for the jazz orchestra made her take action against the injustice she perceived in the jazz community at her university. Putting their bodies on display made them more visible while and served as an act of protest. Ayaka redefined the jazz band at the school, using bikinis as a tool to both showcase and draw from the potential power of the female body on stage. In this manner, cuteness surprisingly throws certain aspects of jazz practice into particular relief, and brings out a darker and much more complicated account of cuteness.

Referring back to Mulvey, it is the place of the look that defines the woman's acting space, the possibility of varying and exposing the male gaze (Mulvey, 1975). By undoing the traditional position of women as the object, Ayaka challenges the image of the woman as (passive) raw material for the (active) gaze of man and takes the argument a step further into the structure of representation in the patriarchal order, creating a perfect contradiction of mastery and submission in one act. The fact that they were able to put together a whole band of female musicians is evidence that the male dominance within the jazz circle was not determined by the lack of female talent at the university but rather a by lack of inclusion. Ayaka further describes the cultural specificity of Japan and Japanese culture:

Ayaka: Hmm, like I don't know but Japan is kind of Galapagos country, like kind of a weird country in the world.

Me: do you think so?

Ayaka: yeah, we are, Japanese people are *otaku*, geek, I don't know like nerds. So we have some weird feelings (laughing). Yeah, but I went to [American conservatory] and some of the students already knew the band like wearing bikini, and asked me "Oh, do you know this band, it is like a Japanese band" and I was like "oh yeah, yeah, it is me", and they said "really? Are you crazy?" (laughing) "yeah". But I'm not crazy actually, but I can't explain why I did it.

Me: so that was just something that you wanted to do and it happened to become a thing, or was there another motivation behind your thinking?

> **Ayaka:** I was so angry, so anger made the band. But yeah, for me, anger made the band –
> but for you and other people in other countries I think they think "why?" "Anger made the
> band wear bikinis, what?"

Ayaka explains how anger made the band and moreover adds that she was questioned by people from other countries who could not understand why her anger drove the band perform in bikinis. She compares Japan with the Galápagos Islands and argues that Japan is kind of a 'weird' country. Ayaka creates, in the same way as Aoi in the previous chapters, a 'self-othering' by looking at Japan with an outsider perspective when she talks. She speaks as if the U.S. are the norm, and Japan differs from this norm. Ayaka uses the Japanese term *otaku*, and claims that only Japanese people could understand why she would form a bikini-band: "Japanese people are *otaku*, geek or nerds, and we have some weird feelings" Ayaka says while laughing. The meaning of *otaku* is riddled with ambiguities and its definition depends on who is defining it. When Ayaka refers to Japanese people as *otaku*, she expresses a feeling of being an outsider in the American jazz community.

The feeling of never really fitting in also testifies to the deeply rooted traditions that exists in jazz as a subculture and community. Contrary to the stereotypical image of the *otaku* as socially isolated, *otaku* gather as formal college clubs, such as jazz circles (*Jazz-ken*). Here, connections emerge, and spaces of interaction arise as people share their interest in jazz and learn from each other. Ayaka identifies with the same *otaku* ethos that she criticizes, the *otaku* that is displacing and trivializing women who fail to conform to the narrow model of cute femininity, excluding her and other women from jazz circles. In that way, her story reflects a level of not being understood in neither the American or Japanese jazz environment. Ayaka describes the different layers of marginalization she experiences, but by covering them with a humorous wrapping she develops a distance to the marginalized subject position she experiences.

In a band, Ayaka combined personal vision grounded in anger with a mixture of cute attractiveness and power. By calling attention to the look, Ayaka plays on the object as a tool to empowerment. Clothing can play a role in how we communicate our viewpoints to the world. It can become a political act, open to individual interpretation or a message of protest. Here, I will argue that Ayaka's choice of bikini is an example of the latter. The action plays on a commonplace appetite for girls in bikinis combined with a mastery of jazz – otherwise unheard of. The women she collected in a bikini-band present approaches to female gender and identity that critique such objectifying and otherwise predominant processes. The cuteness is located within a tension, for what is regarded as 'acceptable' and the boundaries are challenged. Cute hereby takes on a certain introspective valence. By enhancing their feminine bodies, staging their performativity as an act of empowerment. They, the women, are using the sexualization of their bodies, the stereotypes brought with bikini culture to undo something. They are calling attention to the look, and forcing us to ask ourselves the question: why are bikinis and jazz so seemingly incompatible? And more importantly: why are feminine connotations not welcome in jazz?

While Butler argues that gender is brought to being through ritualized practices like talking dressing and moving, here it is staged and exaggerated. We learned from the previous chapter that to reach more fans, you have to look good and young, and as a female you have to be a certain kind of beautiful. However, when musicians are using the objectification as a tool they are playing on the instability of cuteness. The cuteness serves as a vehicle to express their anger. The limited range in which women can act *burikko* is stretched and provoked to the extent that the acceptable female gender presentation appears almost ironic.

Performance is not a self-constituting act of a subject, but relies on the social relations. When combining gender performativity and jazz performance, Ayaka and the band are openly putting the gendered behavior on the spot and in a way critiquing the boundaries that follow the female body. They are dependent on the support from their audience and the performance relies on certain boundaries that makes the very performance possible. And they get more audience, in fact it was the most successful performance in the history of university jazz circles. This is where the cuteness repertoire's internal instability plays out, and the subject is drawn, unknowingly to the cute object. The musicians might be limited by the words and behavior which exist as resources for talk and action, but using them as flexible resources and combining them in new ways they can contribute alternative stories. The story tells us that by taking back the agency of their own practices, musicians provide new meanings and to gain agency as an artist involves negotiation of the musician's own positioning in their field.

6.2   Agency of the artist

Musicians long for agency in their performance and by negotiating their positions, they are giving themselves an ability to express themselves. Some use cuteness repertoire, while others distance themselves from the expectations that exists in the position of a jazz singer. In other words, there is a diversity of subject positions in play in the Japanese jazz practice, and the musicians play on different interpretative repertoires to gain agency in their performance.

To gain agency in their performance, the musicians have to abide their listeners. The top politicians and businessmen give advice to the women regarding how they should pronounce certain words and act, demonstrating their power and knowledge and leaving the performer in a difficult position: they can either conform and take advice from the men and become more popular or ignore their advice, at the same time risking their status at the club, and risk losing the support and pay from the business elite. Aoi explains that when the singer knows more than her listeners there is a gap that opens up between the audience and artist that was not present before, and as a result the musician might lose popularity amongst the average listeners. The audiences at high-end jazz clubs are mostly business people or top politicians who want to support female singers in particular, Aoi says. They want to share their knowledge of jazz with the young singers, but a male fan of Aoi told her that he could not give her more advice, given her superiority in English:

> **Aoi:** The top politicians and businessmen want to support especially female musicians or singers. They love jazz and they want to teach the musicians saying things like "do you know this album", and I'm listening to this "blah blah blah". But once I was told by one of my fans, or one who used to be my fan, he said "I cannot advice you, [Aoi], because you graduated from an American university and learned jazz over there, so if I say something to you I might be wrong".

Even though the remark is supposedly meant as a compliment, the words convey a sense of powerlessness. The fan is not capable of giving her useful advice about her singing, which he think of as his duty. The only way in which he can support her now is to listen rather than advising, which appears to be a less comfortable position. This testifies that when the vocalist knows more about jazz than the audience either through singing with an authentic accent, or does not take advice from the audience, they are met with apathy, if not outright resistance. Aoi further explains how she recently gave up on trying to please the businessmen who tried to advise her about jazz and created another kind of relation to the audience at the jazz club:

> **Aoi:** They cannot advise me anymore, the connection between us, or the relationship is different now. So that is why they support younger females especially. Especially English for example, they cannot give me any advice because I know more than them of course – so now the relationship between me and those music listeners or fans or whatever just completely like I'm the artist, and they are the audience.

She renegotiates her work within the framework of a 'jazz singer', and this results in a distance between her and the audience. The power balance has shifted, and Aoi has distanced herself from the behavior that seems to be the norm at the given jazz clubs, leaving the audience in admiration of her as an artist. Unlike many of her colleagues, she avoids taking advice that not only may deny her control over her own career but also control over her being an artist. She has realized that the only way to earn real respect – not just patronizing curiosity - is to distance herself from the audience. Aoi explores the potential of jazz as a feminist medium, and the search for identity and subjectivity in patriarchal culture. How Aoi considers vocal musicianship with actions are changing jazz, spectatorship, and bodily perception.

6.3 Providing new meanings in jazz and to lead without aggression

The visibility of women in jazz is important for the next generation of musicians, but because of the lack of history of women in jazz there is a tendency for women not to feel welcome. The sense of belonging to the community of jazz often shows itself in the role models that are prominent in the history of jazz. Looking up to certain role models who have defined jazz is an important part of learning jazz and innovating the music genre.

In several interviews, issues of femininity and masculinity in music were brought up by the interviewees themselves, without it being my intention. They were asked if they had any role models growing up and to what extent they thought being able to identify with their role model were important. Two very different stories appeared, when the question about role models were asked. The majority underlined that the musical aspect is the most important, and that it does not matter whether the person is female or male. Miku described the importance of being able to identify with a role model and to see herself as belonging in the jazz community:

> **Miku:** I guess that it is really important that you can relate to the person and the person is kind of in the similar status, the situation or race, gender. Cause, yeah, that was kind of like my struggle because when I was at [jazz conservatoire] there were only few other female drummers, and only one, or I don't know how many there were but maybe out of 20 there were only one female drum teacher. She is very, she is doing really great work to you know, to bring awareness at [the music conservatoire] about gender. But yeah, if you .. I was surrounded by whatever the gender was, boys, who had a lot more muscles and bigger body shape than I. And I'm like, well I was thinking – so that is what I have to do. But maybe with my condition there is something else that only I can do. But it was hard.

In line with the study of Buscatto (2008), Miku explains how instrumental jazz are associated with 'masculine' qualities. Miku's story shows that the norm of jazz drummers does not include her body type. For her, it was difficult to see herself portrayed in the unfailing construction of the jazz drummer as a muscley male. Sakura also underline that there are few jazz drummers that are women, and that the image is macho: "There are very few female drummers, but the bassists are increasing I think. There are some female drummers but in Japan and other countries the image of drummers are maybe the most really macho thing". If it is only men that are visible in these roles, then that is how you see it, and how it is perpetuated.

As constraining as gender constructions have been in the jazz community, it is remarkable that musicians like Miku contest these subject positions and still turn to the power of making music, and speaking to find voice, creating art, and demanding social justice. Miku provides a new story of how a drummer can be and while it was hard to be the drummer outside of the already socially established meanings of what a drummer should look like, she recognized that she could offer something else and give the idea of the 'jazz drummer' a wider meaning.

To see yourself in someone that you look up to is something my informants weighed heavily. However, both Miku and Izayuki carefully underline that the idea of a masculine or feminine style of playing is not gender-specific. By this they imply that gendered bodies are irrelevant in music and point to symbolic gender as sense-making. Izayuki, a male bass player, argues that femininity and masculinity has something to do with the energy and not the gender of the person:

> *Izayuki:* [music] is like energy, a feminine energy and a masculine energy. Masculine is very man like (doing a flexing muscle gesture) and female energy.. if the persons energy is very good, I don't care whether that person is male or female.

Masculinity is described as "very man like", but Izayuki argues that masculinity and femininity are not reserved for a specific gender. The word masculinity came up numerous times and was often referred to as something negative and selfish:

> *Miku:* It is not about the gender at all.[…] But masculinity in performing is like uhm, you are not listening, and you are only appealing yourself – "me, me, me" kind of – and really like pushing, really like muscle-playing.

The masculine norm is criticized in both the mentioned interviews, and how the discursive reproduction of masculinity exists in jazz but is not provided by them. The fact that masculinity in performing is described as only appealing to yourself and not listening, contrasts to what all the interviewee described as most the important thing in jazz, namely listening to your co-musicians. The musicians I interviewed criticize the dominant masculine discourse in jazz, where the musicians who play loudest gets heard, and do not build up co-musicians in a musical exchange. When asked further about her role model in music the Miku elaborated:

> *Miku:* The way she plays is a really great example of kind of like Mother Earth. Great example of femininity. Not aggressive, she is open and support others. Of course she can lead but there is no aggression.

Femininity here, is described as something non-aggressive, supporting and open but at the same time has a leading role – but a complete opposite of the masculine style of playing described by the same informant. The idea that masculinity and femininity is constantly remade destabilizes the assumption that gender is something that is natural or inevitable but also can be changed in a positive direction, encouraging people to tell different stories about themselves and others. Another interviewee, Takumi, emphasizes that good leaders listen to their co-musicians.

> *Takumi:* Good leaders always have good ears, in my theory, from my experience. And they appreciate what they hear from others, no matter how different the style of music the other members play, or like style of taste. They have their uniqueness. And good leaders just appreciate others and take it into the music and make something out of it. So like, creating some unexpected things sometimes turn into original music from that particular member and particular bands. That's what I see in good leaders. And I just think of those leaders I've worked with, as role models. And I have like different role models of like each part of the life of musician.

Takumi explains that good leaders have good ears. The majority of my interviewees are strong advocates for a feminine and more listening style of playing, and criticize the dominant, masculine way of performing in jazz music. When asked about improvisation, the central points were openness and willingness to listen to co-musicians. Several interviewees criticized the dominant masculine discourse in jazz, where the musicians who play loudest gets heard, and do not build up co-musicians in a musical exchange.

By destabilizing the assumption that gender is something that is natural or inevitable my informants tell different stories about themselves and others, in line with Edley's argument that masculinity and femininity is constant remade, and can be changed in a positive direction. This Rin also implies, when expressing a hope for the future:

> *Rin:* To tell the truth, honestly, I feel a new world will come, and maybe a new world need women. A genderless world where women are women and men are men, not the same, but equal. A world where we help each other, and understand each other – I pray for that. We need to understand each other, but still now men's power is more strong, or stronger, I think. But change is going to come after the pandemic.
>
> *Me:* yeah let's hope so.
>
> *Rin:* (laughing) really? But it depends, very changed. Because men in my father's age can't do housework at home. In Japan it is so strict, so different, especially men and women before. But now young people are so different. And jazz musicians are also like that. But now we are getting more and more women musicians. It was only recently I got aware – like is it tough to be woman, you know? I didn't feel that before, in my youth. Maybe I guess, I didn't think about it. I didn't consider it, but it is just a man's world
>
> *Me:* I think that is very common to just accept how things are, especially if you are a minority in a field. But I think that there is an increased awareness also, and it seems like it is what happens in Japan now as well, that people are thinking that these traditional gender roles are not the perfect society. So that is also why I don't think it is strange that you just recently kind of thought about it.
>
> *Rin*: In Japan, genderless is getting more and more, so I don't know why - it is strange. But I like it.

The increased awareness about inequalities give my informants an optimistic view on the future. It is in this context – a context of global neoliberal societies with political commitments to sustained economic growth – that the concept of femininity as a commodity, and as a structurally significant concept of considerable importance, merits attention. The criticism of the masculine norm and the resistance to oppressing traditions in jazz is my interviewees way of telling different stories and realities as jazz musicians. There will always be room for the traditional mindset of jazz, just as there will always be room for aggression and competition. Those qualities are by no means exclusive to the high-achieving men in jazz. There is however reason to applaud when that culture opens up to another strong approach which I will avoid labelling as a post-masculine era, but rather a feminine one. I believe it is possible to detect a new, feminine counter-discourse in jazz music from my material. This is not the perceived affect of an

improviser's outflow, how macho or effete their playing comes across. What this involves is the general mood of the culture, which might sound vague, but rings true.

6.4 Summary

The stories presented in this chapter tell us that the musicians long for agency in their performance. They negotiate their positions, giving themselves an ability to express themselves. Some use cuteness repertoire, while others distance themselves from the expectations that exists in the position of a jazz singer. In other words, there is a diversity of subject positions in play in the Japanese jazz practice and the musicians play on different interpretative repertoires to gain agency in their performance. The trumpet player Ayaka made a band as an act of female empowerment and the concert became the most sensational and sold the most in the history of the jazz circle at her university. Although Miku goes against the socially established meanings of what a drummer should look like, she recognizes that she can provide something else and give the idea of the 'jazz drummer' a wider meaning. Aoi renegotiates her work within the framework of a 'jazz singer', and this results in a distance between her and the audience that now recognizes her as a musician.

To encourage creativity in a preset universe with a rigid structure of gendered norms and expectations is to deny the artist agency. The stories tell us that no musician gain from being labelled as anything due to their gender, sexuality or ethnicity. It is important to give the artist agency, and an ability of the subject to act. By negotiating power-relations and telling different stories musicians taking back the agency of their own practices, and provide new meanings and alternative stories in the process.

7 Concluding remarks

My study has examined the gendered discourses and hierarchies of power that exist within jazz music in Japan, and how musicians are not passive in meeting with these hierarchies. I have looked into how women in jazz negotiate these power relations, creating alternative stories in jazz. The specificities of power hierarchies in jazz and how my informants negotiate them might expose some overall structures of oppression in Japanese society in general. This study, however, can only say something about how my informants experience jazz, which also underlines the limits of this study. The experiences of women in classical or other music genres might be different. This study is based on real musicians' lived experiences, bodies and emotions which, I argue, give us an important insight and knowledge to understand the structures that work to discriminate and oppress women on a systemic level. When real bodies are exposed to oppression and discriminating structures of power they develop coping strategies to navigate in spaces that are not inclusive. I have focused mainly on women's stories of navigating societal expectations vis-à-vis their musical performance and the pressure to "act out" their femininity on stage. In this chapter, I will sum up my findings, and further reflect on the overarching thesis question of how inclusive jazz is when we look at the unequal power relations that determine and confer authenticity.

7.1 Findings

The analysis shows that there are certain expectations that limit my informant group's agency in both rehearsals and on stage, performing. The expectations are expressed as exorbitant feedback from the primarily male audience but are also revealed in rehearsals by fellow musicians. Further, the role of the 'jazz singer' rarely includes representations of the women who fail to conform to the narrow model of cute femininity that is prevalent in Japanese culture. In Aoi, I see a musician who wants to be respected and seen for who she is. Sakura expresses that she does not feel comfortable in the Japanese jazz scene because of the skepticism towards her fluent English.

Upholding the social dynamics that exist, especially in the vocal tradition in jazz and the "male club" among the instrumentalists in the community, makes it so that some are not included, and women (and men) do not always feel welcome. Hallmarks of quality are set by and outlined by men. If female performers opt to align with traditional expectations, they are seen as fitting in. Based on my analysis I suggest that cuteness may be viewed as a performative act of agency. Curiously to those of us outside of the Japanese jazz scene, the seemingly passive cute object takes on unexpected agency by adopting strategies of traction suggesting that my informants do not simply 'undergo' being the object of the audience gaze. When the audience feels that the object is cute or *kawaii*, they may be drawn into the cute object's orbit, and the singer thus gains agency a position of agency.

Let me again make it clear that this study is not about musical competence. My informants are competent and qualified jazz musicians, however, they must perpetually respond to the gatekeepers within a patriarchal system, who in this case are men. The strict conditions that govern jazz improvisation are not in themselves an obstacle: women are perfectly able to operate under strict rules and conditions at an advanced level. The gatekeepers are the people on top, which in the jazz community in Japan is the audience in the jazz clubs. The businessmen and top politicians who support the women are men. They ultimately decide whether the vocalist is worth supporting or not. Although the jazz audience represents an affluent part of the Japanese society, they pass in their marginality as a part of a subculture. The jazz community's presumed marginality can be used to obscure the involvement in the construction and diffusion of nationalistic ideologies and the economic power, an involvement, which I argue, runs quite deep. Within this patriarchal system, they are also endowed with power to judge aesthetics and choose what they wish to see and subscribe to. When musicians are met with such adversity in their professional field, with an audience that needs to be linguistically superior, limits to their repertoire and body conformities, then it becomes necessary to question the system.

As noted in the last analysis chapter, the majority of my informants are strong advocates for a feminine and more 'listening style' of playing, criticizing the dominant, masculine way of performing in jazz music. However, the system of gatekeepers contributes to a jazz community where some get in and some are left out. My informants experience the need to fit into a specific role, defined by others, to find their place within the jazz industry. This is a patriarchal system that determines who gets to have a career in jazz, and some very competent musicians are being left behind. As McClary notes, some composers insist on making their gender identities a nonissue, because of the still remaining essentialist assumptions about what music by women sounds like, to demonstrate that they too can write music (as opposed to "women's music") (McClary, 1991). Unlike composers, a woman musician, however, cannot hide her body on stage, and since the body is so intertwined with representations of gender they are assigned certain attributes. Her body does not appear as a musician's body but always as a gendered body, a marked body.

The vocalists' stories demonstrate how deeply rooted the idea of the 'jazz singer' is in gender stereotypes. There are certain expectations to live up to the norm of the 'jazz singer,' and while most of them are resistant to live up to these expectations, they explain how they sometimes have to give in. To refer back to Butler, "Gender is the mechanism by which notions of masculine and feminine are produced and naturalized, but gender might very well be the apparatus by which such terms are deconstructed and denaturalized" (Butler, 2004, p. 42). Some jazz musicians, then, demonstrate that meanings of femininity and masculinity are not universal, whether that be by playing a perceived masculine instrument or challenging jazz music's obsession with masculinity by simply playing, and disrupting the normative assumptions in jazz music – that a jazz drummer, for example, must be a man. The visibility factor is a very important one, when one does not fit into the stereotypes that are perpetuated. Miku recognizes that everybody has a different story to tell and understands the importance of representation. However, my informants do not perceive that making your voice heard

and changing matters is easy. When these systems appear to be so heavily entrenched in traditional gender norms, it is necessary to look at the entire picture and ask: how do you tackle the social aspects if you do not subscribe to the competing masculine norm in jazz?

7.2 Further research

By examining the premises of expectations and calling them into question, the work of these musicians broadens the range of possible jazz music, as it comments both on the assumptions of more traditional practices and on the problematic positions of a woman artist attempting to create new meaning within a traditional genre. These stories furthermore say something about the underacknowledged artistic accomplishments achieved in spite of considerable social and ideological obstacles. In the last few decades, many women have risen in the genre of jazz to command respect of both male and female peers. Respect not as women musicians, but as musicians. Period. I want to stress here that I very much admire the accomplishments of these musicians. However, my admiration is certainly not enough to make up for what they have gone through to get where they are. Even though women have managed to break into the jazz field as professionals, they still face the problem of how to participate without unwittingly reproducing the ideologies that inform the various levels of those discourses.

It is not about just filling quotas and representing, it is also about realizing that you have something really valuable to say and including these voices in the genre so that it can be shared. If we keep subscribing to the same structure in jazz then this genre is not going to move forward, but will instead die out. The issue has to be tackled from within to get out of the tokenism, where these musicians are referred to as "women musicians" and "jazz singers", playing "Japanese jazz" to evolve into a genre that actually represents different voices in jazz in Japan and internationally. As the genre of jazz has become more globalized, local perceptions and understandings can serve as a vehicle for presenting an alternative history of Japanese musical culture. Its directness in a culture that avoids such expression makes jazz the ideal vehicle for alternative stories, expressing real emotions about real life.

The interviews imply that male musicians are aware of the prevailing gender imbalance and want to help change the social dynamics of the jazz environment. It has to be tackled from underneath and within, and both male and female musicians want this. We have to see that different expressions are valuable. Naomi states that "if we play the same things that jazz legends already played, then there is no need to play jazz at all". The tradition of jazz would serve to be interpreted by different voices, and we have to see that expressions are different because of different lived lives. The reason you play the way you do is because of the life you have lived, especially in jazz.

Although the change suggests that ideas about the 'jazz singer' are opening up a space for variation, it also tells us that women continue to be objects of intense

social surveillance. Whether they are conforming to gender norms, challenging them, or overdoing them, Japanese women continue to be the recipients of derogatory labeling. If you are going to preach the ideal of 'you have to be yourself' and be individuals, then the system must allow for it. It is not just about representation in the hegemonic system but also about changing existing structures. The gatekeepers uphold the structures that prevent individuals their agency. These understandings restrict the artists from expressing themselves and cause them to doubt their own musicianship. If you take away all that and just allow things to happen in the music then you can provide a space where musicians can thrive and play freely. As the pianist Souta explained when I asked what jazz means to him, he said: "jazz is freedom. I know there are many rules and skills that determine if we do it well, but I think the essential of jazz is freedom", which resonates with Atkins' argument of jazz being so potentially inclusive and open that anyone can contribute to it. However, if we want to bring out individuals in this genre we have to allow them to play on their own conditions. I claim that, in line with the precepts of discursive psychology, we need to pay closer attention to the nuances of women vocalists' and instrumentalists' stories and actions and to see cute femininities as practical accomplishments rather than the inevitable playing-out of particular role prescriptions.

Where Buscatto argues that attitudes have led women to confine themselves to a space determined by certain patriarchal standards, my study shows how women use feminine capital in more complex ways. Cuteness speaks to her argument about how musicians masculinize themselves and by showing that cuteness is also used in complex ways my thesis opens up a place for cuteness, not just masculinization as shown by Buscatto. Jazz vocalists in Japan make cuteness central to their exploration of systematic power and potentially a mode of resistance, and in that way use feminine capital in more complex ways.

In conclusion, I would argue that a discourse psychology approach to theorizing and analyzing women musicians over its discursive counterparts is beneficial. I believe that theoretical concepts of subject positions, interpretative repertoires and ideological dilemmas in addition to Judith Butler's conception of gender performativity serves as a useful framework to show how music performance is a process where musicians constitute their gender identity, or facilitate gender norms, in analyzing masculinity and femininity within jazz in Japan. The performance of femininity in its various forms can either reinforce or interrupt particular societal norms. In paying close attention to how musicians talk about themselves (and others), we gain a clearer sense of how femininities are created, negotiated and deployed. I have emphasized that the picture here is one of negotiability and complexity. Embracing this complexity not only provides a better picture, but also a stronger understanding of how hierarchies are constructed, unsettled, and sustained in the jazz community in Japan.

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9 Appendices

9.1 Appendix 1: Information letter

(Temporary) project title: Gendered discourses in jazz improvisation: a different matter in Japan?

This is an invitation to participation in a research project whose main purpose is to assemble perceptions regarding jazz practice in Japan. In this letter we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose of the project

The aim of this study of jazz improvisation in Japan is to explore how certain practices are described from a musician's perspective and how these narratives structure understandings of this genre having travelled from the West but being enacted in particular ways in Japan. For my master's project I will assemble perceptions regarding jazz practice in Japan and the influence of role models and examine if there are any prevailing trends in Japan. Through a gender-analytical perspective I will analyze if gendered notions play a role in performance and if so, which ways.

Research questions:

- How do musicians experience and describe jazz improvisation? What role does gender play in musicians' narratives?

- Is improvisation and soloing about being tough and brave or being vulnerable and responsive, neither or something in between?

- How do jazz musicians understand the role of the relational/interactive in improvisation?

Who is responsible for the research project?

Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) is the institution responsible for the project.

Why are you being asked to participate?

I would like to conduct interviews with 6-8 jazz musicians to collect different perceptions of jazz improvisation. You are being asked to participate in this project given your profession as a jazz musician having completed musical training in Japan or having spent a number of formative years in Japan.

What does participation involve for you?

If you chose to take part in the project, this will involve a digital interview. The interview will be shaped as a structured conversation about themes like individual experiences with

improvisation, role models and communication. You will be asked about jazz in Japan as a starting point and to freely describe in your own words how you relate to the themes above.

The interview will take approx. 60 minutes and the interview will include questions about your personal experiences, reflections, and narratives, and this will be referenced accordingly in the thesis. Your answers will be recorded electronically but all information will be anonymized before the projects ending and sound recordings will be deleted.

Participation is voluntary

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data

We will only use your personal data for the purpose specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

- In addition to master's student Liv Quist Christensen the Associate Professor and head of Center for gender research Siri Øyslebø Sørensen (supervisor) and Post-doc researcher Jennifer Branlat (co-supervisor) will have access to the personal data
- I will replace your name and contact details with a code. The list of names, contact details and respective codes will be stored separately from the rest of the collected data, you will store the data on a research server, locked away/encrypted, etc.
- Only your occupation as a jazz musician will be published

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?

The project is scheduled to end December 2021. Personal data, including any digital recordings will be deleted at the end of the project

Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives us the right to process your personal data?

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with NTNU, Department of Interdisciplinary Studies of Culture NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact: NTNU, Department of Interdisciplinary Studies of Culture via:

- Liv Quist Christensen, livqc@stud.ntnu.no or phone: +47 40196087
- Supervisor: Siri Øyslebø Sørensen, siri.sorensen@ntnu.no
- Co-supervisor: Jennifer Branlat, jennifer.branlat@ntnu.no
- Our Data Protection Officer: Thomas Helgesen, thomas.helgesen@ntnu.no
- NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email: (personverntjenester@nsd.no) or by telephone: +47 55 58 21 17.

Yours sincerely,

Siri Øyslebø Sørensen, project Leader (supervisor)

Liv Quist Christensen, master's student

Consent form

I have received and understood information about the project *Gendered discourses in jazz improvisation: a different matter in Japan?* and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

- to participate in an interview

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx. 15.12.2021

(Signed by participant, date)

9.2 Appendix 2: Interview guide

Introduction

1. I encourage you to describe in your own words during the interview, and if some terms or concepts seem too difficult translate to English please feel free to say them in Japanese and I will look it up afterwards.
2. Take the time you need to respond during the interview and if something seems unclear, then I will do my best to rephrase the questions.

The main themes in the interview are:

a) Role models

b) Performance and improvisation

c) Communication

1. Can you tell me how you got into music and came to be a jazz musician?
When I was looking for music conservatories to visit in Japan, I couldn't find any with a jazz music program. I was told that if you want to be a serious jazz musician you have to study abroad.

2. What does jazz represent to you? How would you describe jazz as a genre and your relation to jazz?

a) Role models

3. Did you have any role models in music when growing up? (Please tell me about what significance role models have had in shaping your interest in music). Who influenced you when starting to play jazz?

4. What is it that you admire in the role model of yours, and what make you feel inspired? Are they bold, virtuoso, beautiful, wild? What is it that you see and hear?

5. To what extent do you think it is important to be able to identify with the musicians or artists you look up to through different expressions of gender and sexuality?

b) Performance and improvisation

6. What does jazz improvisation mean to you? What is happening (in your mind, in your music) when you are improvising? Public performance, personal practice alone, etc.
   a) If you should use three words to describe improvisation which ones would you choose?

   b) Do you have any memorable impro-sessions that you could describe to me? What made it work well/ what went wrong?

7. Can you tell me about your experience with jazz improvisation and what qualities you think are important as an improvising musician?

8. Have you ever felt insecure or vulnerable during a rehearsal or gig? And/or have you experienced other musicians feel so? If so – can you tell me about a specific situation?

9. How do you find the jazz environment in [area] in terms of being open and welcoming?

   You mentioned that you've mostly played in the Kansai area (Osaka, Kyoto, Kobe) and how it is still more traditional (like the Nagoya area), where in Tokyo there seems to be more open relations between young and old. Can you tell me a little bit more about that?

c) Communication

10. Jazz is often described as a complex social process both in terms of technically specialized and multi-dimensional. How do you understand the relation to others in improvisation?

11. How do you experience the communication with fellow musicians, audience, others?

12. Do you think there is any prevailing trends in the understanding of jazz in Japan? Since you now live in Germany – do you find any differences from the jazz environment in Japan?

13. Does the term authenticity ever come into play? If so, how? Advantage being good in English or not?