

Women and Steel Bands in Trinidad

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ABSTRACT

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Steel bands were developed in Trinidad during the 1940s and 1950s. Since then, they have become popular both in Trinidad and around the world. At the time of their development, steel bands were exclusively male. Since the 1970s, women have increased their participation in this musical idiom. This paper examines two possible reasons for women's historically limited participation in steel bands. First, early steel bands' association with violence and outcasts of society may have discouraged women from participating because of fear of personal injury or social stigma. Second, Trinidad's patriarchal culture has prevented women from participating in steel bands. This has occurred in several ways. First, women have been discouraged through the perpetuation of the idea that women belong in the home. Second, women have been discouraged by violence and harassment. Third, women have been discouraged by discrimination they have faced in the workplace. As the violent image of women in steel bands has decreased, women have increased their participation. Also, as women have achieved increasing rights and status in Trinidad, they have also increased their involvement in steel bands. The paper also outlines the current status of women's involvement in steel bands in Trinidad.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	p. 9
Early History of Steel Bands	p. 12
Steel Bands' Association with Violence and Outcasts	p. 16
Sexism in Trinidad	p. 23
Conclusions	p. 33
Sources Cited	p. 37

Introduction

A variety of instruments, crafted from fifty-five gallon barrels and played by striking them with sticks or mallets, as well as a rhythm section made up of equipment such as the cowbell and brake drum, make up the musical idiom known as the steel band. The steel band idiom was developed in Trinidad by young men, most of African descent and low socioeconomic status, living in urban areas. These bands have grown from small unorganized groups into sophisticated bands that can play Caribbean music such as calypso and soca as well as traditional European classical music. The steel band is Trinidad's national treasure and is widely popular there. Its appeal has also spread around the world. Trinidadians refer to the idiom, as well as the drums included in a steel band, as "pan" or "steel pan."

Although those who invented and developed these instruments faced harsh criticism from upper-class Trinidadian society in the past, the steel band has since been "widely acclaimed as a marvelous and unique art form which has produced exciting rhythms from the only original musical instrument of the twentieth century" (Goddard, 1991, p. 17). The origins of this group of instruments can be traced to the early twentieth century, and their development and refinement is continuing in the present. Steel drums have grown out of a long tradition in Trinidad of experimenting with discarded metal to use as percussion instruments. The first steel drums were made of any kind of tin found in the junkyards, especially biscuit tins. However, after World War II, the American naval base and airfield in Trinidad left an abundant supply of empty fifty-five gallon oil

drums (Hill, 1993, p. 208). These became the popular medium for drumming in Trinidad, and have since been developed into sophisticated multi-tonal instruments. Since the 1940s, the steel band format and music have been solidified, spread throughout the world, and continue to grow in popularity.

Steel bands have always been male-dominated. All of the original developers of the instruments were male, as well as the players and arrangers of the early bands. Steel bands have been described as “an exclusively male preserve” (Sandiford, 1991, p. 3). Although since the inception of the steel band, women have made gains and significant contributions as players and arrangers, they still do not command equal respect in the idiom. They are not participants as players or arrangers in the same numbers that men are, and they have not made an impact on the art of tuning the pans. Two main factors have contributed to the under-representation of women in steel bands. First, steel bands at the time of their inception were associated with aggression, criminal activity, and low socioeconomic class. Second, sexism in the home and workplace are a presence in Trinidadian culture. Both of these factors have discouraged or prohibited women from participating in steel bands.

This paper will analyze the reasons why women have not become more involved in the steel band idiom. The first section of this paper will outline the early history of steel band development, from the late nineteenth century through the 1970s. Next, it will examine the association of early steel bands with violence, and analyze what effects this had on women’s participation. Following this, the paper will examine how the low numbers of women in the steel band idiom is related to the reality of sexism in Trinidad.

Finally, the paper will conclude with a summary, including the current situation of Trinidadian women in steel band and suggestions for further research.

Early History of Steel Bands

The steel band idiom grew out of an earlier form of drumming called *tambooo bamboo*. Tambooo bamboo consists of rhythmically beating or thumping dried bamboo sticks. This was the most popular percussive instrument in Trinidad after the English government banned traditional drums in 1883 (Brereton, 1981, p. 225; Mason, 1998, p. 57). For a time tambooo bamboo was extremely popular, and may “have been developed specifically to fill the need for a strong, rhythmic Carnival music that would not be directly restricted by any of the existing ordinances” (Thomas, 1985, p. 65). By 1937, however, significant numbers of people had abandoned tambooo bamboo to experiment with the percussive capacities of other types of metal, such as biscuit tins, brake drums, and trash can lids (Hill, 1993, pp. 203-4). Around the 1939 and 1940 Carnival seasons, tambooo bamboo ceased to function as a popular Carnival music because of the large numbers of people turning to the beating of steel (Thomas, 1985, p. 82).

A breakthrough in the development of steel drums occurred shortly before World War II when Winston “Spree” Simon, a member of the John John tambooo bamboo band, discovered that, by creating dents in the top of the drum, oil drums could be developed into an instrument that played more than one note (Hill, 1993, p. 205; Mason, 1998, p. 58). Goddard (1991, p. 37) puts the actual beginning of the steel band in 1939, when the New Town Calvary Tambooo Bamboo Band transformed itself into Alexander’s Ragtime Band, a steel band. By 1940, eight-note steel drums had been developed and incorporated into the tambooo bamboo bands (Mason, 1998, pp. 58-9). Around the same

time, Ellie Mannette made pans that hung around the neck, and developed a note configuration that was widely used. Mannette was also “among the first steelband players to tune the oil drums” (Hill, 1993, p. 208). He also was the first person to beat the top of the oil drum in, so as to make the drum concave rather than convex as had been done previously. People at this time used wooden sticks to beat the drums. Another of Mannette’s innovations was to wrap small pieces of rubber around the end of these wooden sticks in order to produce a softer and more melodic sound (Thomas, 1985, pp. 126-127).

Trinidad’s Carnival was suspended between 1942 and 1945 because of World War II. This was a key period of steel drum development behind closed doors (Mason, 1998, p. 59). There was much experimentation during this time, and people became able to play recognizable tunes on the steel drums (Brereton, 1981, p. 226). The importance of this time can be gathered from Andrew Carr and other folklorists labeling the era beginning with 1942 the “Huge modern (fancy masquerade) bands and Steelband Period” (Hill, 1993, p. 208). A Trinidadian folklorist named Edric Connor lectured on the development of the steel band in 1943. He was accompanied by a live demonstration. “This was the first step in a long march toward respectability for the steel band” (Hill, 1993, p. 207).

The idiom continued its development after the Carnival ban was lifted. During this time, between 1946 and 1947, people began experimenting with striking discarded oil drums, which were found to be sturdy and to produce a musical sound. Fifty-five gallon drums were used and slowly replaced the varying forms of drums that had been

previously utilized. This was an important step in steel pan development and one of the first steps toward the continuing process of standardization. It is widely contested who first used the fifty-five gallon drums; the two most likely claims come from Ellie Mannette and Anthony Williams. Thomas (1985, p. 131) writes,

Steel bands' use of fifty-five gallon oil drums made possible previously undreamt of innovations. The drums were slightly larger in diameter, made of a higher quality metal, of greater durability, and more readily available than any of the containers used before them. Over time they became the only type of metal container used to tune pans.

In 1949, the Steelband Association, led by George Goddard, was formed (Mason, 1998, p. 61). By the 1950s, "steel pan had gained such momentum and was so popular among the masses that it had already established itself as the undisputed national instrument of Trinidad" (Mason, 1998, p. 61). At the same time, steel band began to be recognized internationally (Mason, 1998, p. 61). According to Hill (1993, p. 208),

The steel band quickly spread throughout the Caribbean to the United States, to Venezuela, to Panama, and to other parts of the world. Antigua became a major center for steel-band activity. The American navy sported its own steel band, as did several American colleges. And the steel band became a fixture of the Trinidadian-style Carnival in the remote Venezuelan mining town of El Callao, where West Indians had settled for a century.

Another advance of this time period occurred in 1951, when the Trinidad All Stars (or All Steel) Percussion Orchestra (TASPO) became the national steel band, and was chosen to

perform at the Festival of Britain (Brereton, 1981, p. 226). This performance greatly added to the steel band idiom's sense of respectability and legitimacy.

During the 1960s, George Goddard, the leader of the Steelband Association, brought together rival bands to sign peace agreements. Because of his efforts, rivalries between bands came to be based on music more than fighting, unlike in steel band's early history. Also during this time, steel bands were formed in more prosperous areas than they had been previously, and many young middle-class men joined college bands (Mason, 1998, p. 61).

In 1963 came the first official Carnival-time Panorama competition (Mason, 1998, p. 61). Panorama, an official steel band competition, awards the winning band with a cash prize equivalent to that given to the winner of the popular calypso contest (Goddard, 1991, p. 112). The movement for steel band to make its way into Trinidadian schools began in 1964 when George Goddard and Ellie Mannette spoke to students at Queen's Royal College (Goddard, 1991, p. 146). Throughout the 1960s, steel bands continued their gains towards respectability, and in 1971, they achieved corporate sponsorship, with Amoco sponsoring a steel band called the Renegades (Mason, 1998, p. 61). By this time, the steel band had established itself as a genuine musical idiom in Trinidad.

Steel Bands' Association with Violence and Outcasts

In their formative years, steel bands were associated with violence, criminal activity, and low socioeconomic class. “From the perspective of the steelbandsman, the early years of pan were years of frequent prosecution (in the courts), of social rejection, and of violence” (Goddard, 1991, p. 45). The possibility of danger and low social status as a member of a steel band may have discouraged most women from participating in the music.

This image of the violence and low status of steel band members was widespread and its origins are found in steel band's early days. The key period of steel band development during the World War II suspension of Carnival saw steelbandmen being arrested frequently. The development of the music was happening in private, but the developers saw steel band music as the “music of the people” and thought it should be played in the streets for the people. Thus, groups of men would hang their pans around their necks and march down the street beating on them with sticks. This was a violation of a law of the time, established to prevent riots, that prohibited public processions of twenty or more people. Consequently, the men would be arrested in violation of the anti-procession ordinance and put in jail. Goddard writes that “this aura of illegality surrounded the steelbands from their very birth” (1991, p. 46). Thus, the first developers of the steel band were often arrested and prosecuted as criminals. This set the tone for the public perception of steel band participants that would follow them for many years.

The images were based on truth, but came to be overemphasized and exaggerated as time went on. Goddard expressed this sentiment in his history of steel bands (1991, p. 45):

In those years, the steelbandsman was regarded by many as an outcast, a nuisance, a law-breaker, and the steelbands were regarded as ‘disturbers of the peace’ with their ‘noise-making instruments’. ...the magistrates, who imposed fines and sometimes ordered jail terms for ‘parading in the streets without police permission’, used uncomplimentary epithets to describe the steelbandsmen. It was not uncommon for the magistrates to deem some of the steelbandsmen brought before them, ‘rogues’, ‘vagabonds’, ‘hooligans’.

I should emphasise that I am not implying that some men associated with the steelbands did not commit criminal acts or that they should not have been punished for those criminal acts. But as I reflect on the situation as it was then, the impression lingers with me that, as far as some important people were concerned, all steelbandsmen were criminals or, at least, potential criminals.

With the growing numbers of people becoming involved in the steel bands, the government as well as the upper-class members of society saw the steelbandsmen as a threat. In spite of this, many people enjoyed the steel bands’ music and saw it as innovative and interesting. In the early 1940s, a government committee was set up to investigate if steel bands were “a corrupting influence or an art” (Hill, 1993, p. 207). The chair of this committee wrote of the steelbandsmen,

Educationally they have been denied everything beyond a smattering of the 3 R's. Vocationally they stand in No Man's Land. Socially they are condemned to conditions in which home life, as understood by their critics, does not exist. In the matter of religion they have been literally abandoned to their own resources. They are normally shunned as the unwanted and undesirable and subjected to taunts and reproaches. Thus ostracised and estranged from the circumstances and the people who alone could help them, they are driven out like lepers of old into the wilderness and waste places of society (Hill, 1993, p. 207).

The existence of this committee and its findings demonstrate the public view of the steel band player as an outcast.

In addition to the image of the steelbandmen as undesirable outcasts, actual violence did occur. The men who were in the steel bands came from rough territorial neighborhoods, and in the 1950s and 1960s, loyalty to bands often led to violence and death when rival bands would clash (Mason, 1998, p. 59). This violence often occurred at a panyard, the place where band members meet to practice, but also occurred in the public arena, such as at Carnival. Lord Blakie recorded a calypso about the extreme violence that took place at Carnival in 1950 between two bands called Invaders and Tokyo in the following verse:

It was a bacchanal, aha!
'50 Carnival, aha!
Fight for so, with Invaders and Tokyo
When the two bands clash
Mamayoe, if you see outlass!
Never me again
To jump up in a steelband in Port of Spain (Goddard, 1991, p. 49).

Because of these images of violence, children were discouraged from going to panyards (Mason, 1998, p. 60). The representation of the steel band as violent was prevalent in Trinidadian society. There were extensive and often sensationalized newspaper stories covering the violent clashes between bands (Goddard, 1991, p. 49). This media coverage ensured that women would have been informed of the unattractive image of the steel band participant. There would have been no place for the widespread participation of women in this world. Women who may have enjoyed the music and desired to participate probably would have been discouraged by friends and family for fear of a negative reputation or injury in the clashes. This is evidenced by the fact that the calypsonian Mighty Sparrow has written a song that contains the following lyrics:

If yuh sister talk to a steelband man
The family want to break she hand (Sandiford, 1991, p. 3).

This lyric reinforced the idea that women were discouraged from having any association with steel bands, and may have even been physically prevented by family from doing so.

During this period most “respectable women didn’t play because panyards were part of the male street world” (Stuempfle, 1995, p. 178), but there have always been notable exceptions to the unofficial ban of females. A band called White Stars was organized in the early 1950s at the Girls’ Industrial School, a correctional institution. Members of a male steel band called Casablanca were recruited to instruct this band (Stuempfle, 1995, p. 178). White Stars was probably in existence because its members conformed to the violent image of steel band: its members were being held in a correctional institution, and thus the band was associated with criminal activity. This is an example of how women, in order to participate, had to assimilate to the image of the

typical male steel band player. A contradictory example is the Girl Pat Steel Orchestra, which contained not criminals, but teachers, civil servants, and store clerks. This band was founded by a schoolteacher named Hazel Henley and helped by Ellie Mannette (Stuempfle, 1995, p. 178). Despite the bad reputation of steel band, this band was considered more acceptable than the White Stars because it was linked with an educational setting and was led by a teacher. Being respectable set this band apart from most other bands of its time. The Girl Pat Steel Orchestra was successful enough to make public appearances and travel throughout the Caribbean, but was not in existence for a long period of time. Both of these all-female bands were formed in the wake of TASPO's success in Britain. This achievement had made steel bands more respectable and created the opportunity for these women to be accepted as members of a steel band (Thomas, 1985, pp. 169-170).

When a significant increase in women steel pan performers occurred, it was through school-based instruction. This separated these female players from the aura of violence typically associated with membership in a steel band. They were also less likely to lose social status because of association with a band. Increasing most strongly in the 1970s, women learned to play the steel drums through the acceptable means of school-based instruction (Stuempfle, 1995, p. 179). During this time period, steel pan was included in the secondary schools of Trinidad, thus many more women were exposed to the music and were permitted to learn (Stuempfle, 1995, p. 180).

Not only were women participating in the school bands, but they were also actually making up the majority of these groups. This was possibly because they were

more interested in extra-curricular activities. Another explanation is that boys preferred learning to play in the adult bands, as traditional gender roles would have dictated that they not be as threatened by the violence (Stuempfle, 1995, p. 181). Women were more interested in learning to play in the schools because this method allowed them to play with decorum and respectability. School bands also may have been more attractive to women because media coverage of them was positive (Goddard, 1991, p. 83). Women steel pan players were able to have a musical identity separate from that of the outcast steelbandsman. At the same time, women also gave pan greater respectability because most who played were middle class, employed, and good musicians (Stuempfle, 1995, p. 181). School bands became even more common in 1981 when Trinidad's Ministry of Education and Culture introduced a Junior Panorama and a Junior Steelband Festival in order to encourage steel bands in the schools (Sandiford, 1991, p. 3).

The connection between steel band's association with violence and the lack of women players can be seen in that increases in women's participation occurred over time, as steel bands became less associated with male violence. This dissociation with violence occurred through several means. An important step was Goddard's work in channeling rivalry toward music (Mason, 1998, p. 61). Also, the establishment of the Panorama competition gave steel band more of a goal and purpose, thus producing respectability. Pan was moving away from the image of territorial clashes, and women were able to feel in less danger (Mason, 1998, p. 144). They paid less attention to the dangers of steel band and more to its benefits. During the 1970s, "In playing pan many women,

particularly those with middle class backgrounds, found a new avenue for utilizing skills acquired through music lessons and membership in choirs” (Stuempfle, 1995, p. 179).

Today, steel bands have no association with the violence of their past. Goddard writes (1991, p. 38), “How the steelband has changed over the years! Not only has there been a transformation of the instrumentation but the social background of the steelbandsmen, the public and official attitudes towards the steelband music – all these have changed almost beyond recognition.” This is reflected in the dominance of women in school bands and their noticeable presence in professional bands: In 1991, women were making up between eight and seventeen percent of the players in many major Trinidadian bands (Sandiford, 1991, p. 3).

Sexism in Trinidad

Trinidad, like many of the world's cultures, is patriarchal, or organized in such a way that the values, culture, and systems of power are male-dominated. As a result of this, sexism – discrimination against women based on sex – is present in many aspects of the society. Perpetuation of the idea that women belong in the home, discrimination in the workforce, and violence against women are all examples of Trinidad's sexism. The discrimination against women that occurs in the steel band world is a direct result of Trinidad's patriarchal society. Women's exclusion from the steel band idiom is a reflection of Trinidad, and Trinidad's sexism is a reason for women's lack of participation in the music. This situation is reflected in the popular calypso music of Trinidad, and direct links can be made between the negative results of this patriarchal society for women and the lack of women's participation in steel band. The link between sexism in Trinidad and women's involvement in steel bands is evidenced in that as women's social situation has improved, so has their participation in steel bands. Sexism, especially in the past, has been blatantly present in the music and culture of the steel band community. Evidence of this is found in calypso music. Calypso music and steel band music are closely tied. Much of the music played by steel bands is of the calypso style. Most Panorama competition pieces prepared by Trinidad's large steel bands are popular calypso hits that have been arranged for a steel band. Within the world of calypso music, one can find evidence of Trinidadian sexism; because of their close ties

this would naturally permeate the world of steel band. The lyrics of this music are often degrading to women, “leading some observers to opine that humiliation of women appears to be part of the national ethos” (Manuel, 1988, p. 81). The following is an example of a popular calypso song from 1935 called *Women Are Good and Women are Bad*. This song came during the time period when steel bands were beginning their development. It was recorded by two artists, Lord Beginner and Atilla. Lord Beginner takes a negative stance toward women. Atilla’s portion of the song is sympathetic toward women, but considerably shorter than Lord Beginner’s. The following excerpts from the song are Lord Beginner’s portions:

They cause me too much pain
Not me with woman again
They cause me too much pain
I don’t want no woman again
I see woman one and all
Always cause a man’s downfall...

Since history began
Woman has been fooling man
I sure you men will agree
They know nothing of fidelity
When you are prosperous they love you and be gay
When your money done they will run away
These things happen to me
That’s why I can speak with authority...

Even the mighty King Saul
It was a woman cause his downfall
And Napoleon the Great
Is said that a woman hands met his fate
Turn back the pages of history
See what Cleopatra did to Anthony
Too much sorrows and pain
So never me with woman again.

This song reflects the common image of women in Trinidadian society as vindictive and unfaithful. This misogynistic view is evidence of the sexism in Trinidad, the culture that produced the steel band. Such sexism within the world of music, especially in the calypso genre because of its close ties with steel bands, could have affected women's willingness to participate in the steel band idiom for fear of having a personal experience with sexism and also by making women feel disempowered in general.

Sexism is not just a factor of steel band life; it is also a factor in women's home lives. What happens to women in the home can often have results in how women behave outside of the home, such as in their participation in public-sphere activities. Women's self-esteem may be lowered by sexist encounters and experiences. Also, women need to spend more time working and as much time as possible looking after their homes. In addition, they may not receive the same support from family and friends as would a man wishing to play steel pan. Women's home life in Trinidad is affected by society's prevalent view that they belong just there – in the home. This may contribute to their lack of participation in politics and other areas of public life (Reddock, 1994, p. 5).

According to Mason (1998, p. 147),

Trinidadian women have reluctantly lived with the stereotype of the strong but downtrodden Caribbean female, forced through circumstance and poverty to bring up her family with only sporadic support from a husband or long term partner who spends much of his time with a 'deputy' or 'outside woman' and who may often resort to domestic violence when he is at home. Many Trinidadian women

have had markedly different experiences, of course, but whatever their circumstances they have increasingly become less prepared only to wield power within the limited arena of their home and family.

The lack of help from a male partner that most Trinidadian women receive has a direct impact on their ability to participate in activities outside of the home. Having to take complete control of the domestic sphere limits the amount of time women have to do anything else. Lieber (1981, p. 108) contends, “The Caribbean woman’s freedom is illusory. Women become entangled in the difficulties and responsibilities of raising children and supporting stable households.” In addition to this, because a male figure is commonly absent from the Trinidadian household, women must also work to support their children. Their worth and success are judged by how well-kept their children are (Birth, 1999, pp. 56-58). Because of the sexism inherent in Trinidadian society, women must juggle all of these roles – mother, head of the household, income earner – in order to enable themselves and their children to survive. There has often been no time left for leisure activities such as joining a steel band.

In spite of the sentiment that they belong in the home, Trinidadian women have always been a part of the nation’s workforce. Despite the obstacles working against them, they have often had no choice but to be gainfully employed. They have frequently not been able to obtain work that was given prestige or much monetary benefit because of discrimination in the workforce. This is a reflection of what opportunities are available for women rather than their ambitions or desires. In this sense, the worlds of work and

the steel band are parallel. Women's historic lack of participation, and absence of power when they did participate, was often because they lacked the opportunity, not the desire.

Trinidadian women have faced discrimination in seeking employment. Their participation in the public sphere, such as working outside the home, was lowest at the exact moment that steel drums were being developed and becoming popular. This is evidenced by the fact that only 32.6 percent of women in Trinidad were employed in 1946 (Reddock, 1994, p. 185). After filling the voids in employment during World War II, women were removed from their jobs to make way for men. At the same time, women were being excluded from the invention of the steel band idiom.

When women were eventually allowed to join steel bands, they were only permitted to play certain pans, usually ones that were high-pitched and that sounded feminine (Mason, 1998, p. 144). At the same time, in the 1970s, women were getting better jobs, but could still only find work in fields that were considered gender-appropriate for women, such as nursing and teaching (Reddock, 1994, p. 207). Women could only have occupations that fit the female gender stereotype at the same time that they could only play pans that were considered feminine.

Despite these setbacks, women have made significant gains in the world of work. This is due in large part to the improving economic conditions in Trinidad. The island experienced an oil boom in the early 1970s (Birth, 1999, p. 49). This caused women of this time period to have increasing economic and social independence, as well as greater educational and occupational opportunities. They were assuming more control over their

lives and choosing to participate in a wider range of activities, including the steel band (Stuempfle, 1995, p. 179).

Because of the connection between sexism and the steel band world, the participation of Trinidadian women in steel band mirrors their participation in the workplace. Although large numbers of women have entered the workforce, few have gained status or managerial positions as workers (Mason, 1998, p. 145). Women still do not have opportunities for quality careers, and “many women accept their dependent position only because they lack worthwhile economic opportunities” (Reddock, 1994, p. 211). In the same way, they may not participate in steel band in great numbers not because they do not want to, but because they lack the opportunity. Despite the lower position attributed to them, women in Trinidad continue to be employed primarily in “women’s” jobs, in the same way that they continue to be engaged primarily in “women’s” activities and sometimes continue to play “women’s” instruments. According to Reddock (1994, p. 2),

Those tasks and responsibilities assigned to women have usually been ascribed lower social, economic and political value than have those assigned to men. Today this division of labour is being challenged, although in Trinidad and Tobago as in most parts of the ‘modern’ Euro-dominated world, it is still accepted as ‘natural’ and normal.

In addition to sexism occurring at work, in public, Trinidadian women have also endured sexism in the form of violence in their intimate relationships. Violence against women, which occurs frequently in Trinidad, is a direct result of patriarchy. When

women begin to gain positions of power in a patriarchal society, men are often threatened. A common reaction to this is violence against women. This problem is also linked with sexism because it reinforces the traditional gender roles of men as aggressive and women as docile. Heterosexual relationships in Trinidad see a high incidence of violence. This problem has been almost completely ignored, leaving women feeling helpless (Ellis, 2003, p. 89). Another method for men to protect their male privilege is sexual harassment. Harassment against women is used to strengthen the idea that women should be subordinate to men, and is common in sexist atmospheres. Women in Trinidad experience great amounts of sexual harassment at work. Since progress against this has been slow, many women still feel that they must silently endure sexual harassment or be fired (Yelvington, 1995, p. 159).

The large amounts of violence against women and common occurrence of sexual harassment may have had the effect of instilling Trinidad's women with a lack of confidence that would discourage their participation in steel band because it is a public sphere activity. Daily interaction with violence and harassment disempowers women. This may result in a lessened willingness to participate in activities outside of the home, such as playing in a steel band.

In addition to women's economic gains, they have also made social gains. This is evidenced in that many women's organizations were created during the 1970s, including The Caribbean Women's Association (CARIWA) in 1970, which linked women's organizations in the region (Ellis, 2003, p. 73 and p. 83). Since the late 1980s, women are being empowered in areas such as sexual harassment and battery. This is exhibited

through women fighting back against violence aimed at them: they are taking harassment and battery cases to court and writing to newspapers about these issues (Yelvington, 1995, pp. 156-168).

With the passage of time, sexism in Trinidad as well as in steel bands has been reduced. This is evidenced by women participating in steel bands. Women are involved in the music in much higher numbers and in a greater variety of ways than they had been previously. They play more instruments and have a greater chance for leadership. Additionally, instead of only playing high-pitched pans, women can now be observed taking part in other areas of the steel band. It is not uncommon to see women playing basses or even participating in the steel band's rhythm section, called the engine room (Mason, 1998, p. 145). These areas used to be exclusively men's domain. Women's gains have been significant in that now women can be seen playing every instrument in the steel band.

The first surge in women's progress infiltrating steel bands occurred in the 1970s. The general acceptance of women into the steel band idiom at this time is seen in the example of a band called Birdsong. This mixed-gender band was begun in 1973 at the University of West Indies as an outgrowth of the Black Power movement (Stuempfle, 1995, p. 179). It was democratic; the leadership of the band was based on playing ability rather than gender. The result of this was that talented women were in positions of power in Birdsong, serving as section leaders. "... Birdsong provided an environment in which women could gain respect for both their musical and leadership abilities. The success of women in this band inspired many other women to become involved in the pan

movement” (Stuempfle, 1995, p. 180). Women have become section leaders in the professional bands, as well. This gives them the responsibility of choosing who will be in the section, disciplining its members, and teaching the music to the group (Sandiford, 1991, p. 3). It should be noted that while women hold these positions with some frequency, many men feel the need to justify their acceptance of the women’s authority by comparing it to mothering (Sandiford, 1991, p. 4). This shows men’s continued reluctance to accept women in steel band as having legitimate power.

In the 1960s and 1970s women also began to move into more significant positions within the steel band world as arrangers. Girls at this time were more likely to be taking music lessons, and “As steel bands increased their performance of European classical pieces, there was a growing demand for arrangers, conductors, and players with formal musical training” (Stuempfle, 1995, p. 179). Women’s formal musical training gave them the opportunity to have a position in a steel band that provided them with more power than the players. There are many examples of successful women arrangers. Jocelyn Pierre arranged for the Invaders and Merle Albino-deCoteau for the Savoys in the 1960s. Other instances include Pat Bishop, Alma Pierre, Dawn Batson, and Gillian Nathaniel-Balintulo (Stuempfle, 1995, p. 179).

The infiltration of steel band music by women has since been reflected in steel band and calypso music. Three examples of songs that place women participants of this music in a positive light are *Woman is Boss* by Len “Boogsie” Sharpe, and *Woman on the Bass* and *Pan Woman* by Ray Holman.

Women have made significant economic and social progress in Trinidad. They have benefited from a growing economy and have claimed many rights. At the same time, they have made parallel gains in steel bands. They play steel pan in increasing numbers and are gaining leadership positions as arrangers and section leaders. As time goes on, opportunities in Trinidadian society and the steel band idiom continue to grow.

Conclusions

Despite the popularity of steel bands and steel band music in Trinidad, it was not until the 1970s that women became involved in large numbers. Since that time, women have joined steel bands as players, and some have become section leaders and arrangers. I have posited two reasons for women's delayed involvement in the steel band idiom: the early association of steel bands with violence and deviant behavior, and discrimination against women in Trinidadian society.

Early steel bands were associated with aggression, criminal activity, and the lower classes, which conflicted with traditional female gender roles. This discouraged women from participating. As steel bands have become more reputable, women have increased their involvement. Seemingly, this attitude has disappeared to the extent that it is no longer a deterrent to women's participation in steel bands.

Trinidad's inherently patriarchal culture discouraged women from participating in steel bands because they are a part of the social sphere. Stereotypes about women, violence against women, and discrimination in the workplace have all had a hand in preventing women from joining steel bands. There have been notable improvements in the recent past, but sexism is still a large element of Trinidad's culture. Women still struggle with the dual roles of maintaining the household while at the same time working outside of the home. Women in Trinidad still experience discrimination in the workplace, violence, and harassment.

Discrimination against women in Trinidadian society led to a continuation of that discrimination in the steel band world. Gains have been made, but much still needs to be accomplished before women can be considered to have achieved equality. Men still exclusively control the arranging of Panorama tunes. The first woman was elected to Pan Trinbago, steel band's administrative body, in 1984. This woman, Barbara Crichlow, served as the body's treasurer for two years (Sandiford, 1991, p. 4). Few women, however, have followed her lead; women are still not widely included in this decision-making group (Mason, 1998, p. 145). Finally, there are still relatively few examples of women in the prestigious positions of arranger, tuner, or band leaders (Mason, 1998, p. 145). As of 1991, there were no female steel pan tuners in Trinidad (Sandiford, 1991, p. 4).

Despite women's lack of leadership in the steel band world, the current situation sees many women participating and making strides toward full steel band inclusion. According to one source, "women make up approximately 15 percent of the membership of adult bands" (Stuempfle, 1995, p. 178), while another puts the number much higher at nearly half. There are several examples of women who have reached success in steel bands. There are two notable all-girl school steel bands. The first is the St. Francois Girls' College Band. This band has won several competitions and has even toured Britain. The second is the St. Augustine Girls' High School Band. This band has an excellent reputation and has toured in Canada.

On an individual level, many women have gained notoriety through pan. Ursula Tudor has played with the Desperadoes since the 1960s. Michelle Dennis is a member of

the Solo Harmonites Steel Orchestra. Allison Dryer served as Education Officer for Pan Trinbago. She was Captain of the St. Francois Girls' College Band while she was a student there, and as an adult played with Phase II Pan Groove. She aspires to become the first female pan tuner. Vidya Samaroo has become famous as a member of the Samaroo Jets (Sandiford, 1991, pp. 5-6). These are examples of how many women have been making a name for themselves as players of pan.

The story of women in steel bands includes much that has not yet been uncovered. Future research should examine such topics as the following: Has the sexist attitude toward women in Trinidadian steel bands spread along with the steel band idiom as it has become popular around the world? How has involvement in steel bands affected women's self-esteem? How has it affected Trinidad's opinions of women? How can women infiltrate the worlds of Pan Trinbago and pan tuning?

Women in Trinidad have displayed through their continually improving social status that real change can occur for women. In addition, women have had positive effects on the steel band world. "The influx of women has brought children into the yards, too, a move which has already begun to pay dividends as youngsters take more of an interest in the art" (Mason, 1998, p. 76). Women's presence in pan has had other positive effects on the idiom:

The arrival of women has undoubtedly helped to widen the appeal of steel pan, and according to some steelbandmen at least, has introduced more discipline into bands which were once more of an excuse to gather for an evening lime than to hit any musical heights. With thousands of girls now being taught steel pan at

school, the level of musical accomplishment is bound to improve in the future too (Mason, 1998, p. 145).

Women are no longer deterred by a violent image of steel bands. They also enjoy a large range of economic and social success in Trinidad. If the past is any indication, women will continue to gain prestige in Trinidad as well as in the steel band world in the future. Their journey toward full rights and participation in society and in steel bands has been a difficult one, but the independence and enjoyment many women now gain through steel bands has been worth the time and effort.

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