

RECONSTRUCTING GENDER, PERSONAL NARRATIVE AND PERFORMANCE
AT THE MICHIGAN WOMYN'S MUSIC FESTIVAL

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ABSTRACT

This ethnographic study examines the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, a thirty-two-year-old, week-long event that features women performers and relies on an all female staff who produce the event for an audience of women and children. The Festival is more than a site to watch musicians perform. Participants have created a culture that foregrounds a worldview that includes safe space, personal authorization, and celebration of women's experience, work, and art. Through insider participant-observation, this ethnographer maps the folklore-based discourse of the short-term separatist community, uncovering and revealing alternative representations of the "nude" female in personal experience stories as both a key tradition and a symbol of personal regeneration.