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## The Sociology of Music

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## Introduction

The sociology of music has enjoyed a notable boom during the final decade of the twentieth century and the early years of the twenty-first century. This is partly evident in the rising number of publications that address music in some capacity, be it the creation, dissemination, or reception of various musical genres. From 1970 to 1980, *Sociological*

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*Abstracts* lists only 269 of such articles as appearing in journals; however, the number dealing with music climbed dramatically from the mid-1980s onward—with subsequent years yielding 265 (1985 to 1989), 340 (1990 to 1994), 507 (1995 to 1999), and 695 (2000 to 2004) publications, respectively.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, in the 1990s and 2000s, journals such as the *American Sociological Review* and publishers such as the University of Chicago Press featured works that draw on and extend the sociology of music, while journals such as *Poetics* and *Social Studies of Science* offered special issues that focus directly on music sociology.<sup>2</sup>

The present vitality of music sociology stands in stark contrast to the near dormancy of its past. As was once the case for the sociology of culture (Wuthnow 1987), the sociology of music was long marked by scattered works that failed to generate sustained scholarly interest. Cruz (2002: 16) traces the roots of music sociology back to the autobiography of Frederick Douglass ([1845] 1999), wherein discussions of slave music (i.e., spirituals) demonstrated “paths to the study of music as fathomable inner culture, and as a window to a social world of subjects hitherto misunderstood.” While this autobiography sparked interest in spirituals (see also Cruz 1999), its substantive potential, such as the role of music in identity construction, would not be realized for some time in sociology (see DeNora 2000). Another early milestone occurred with Georg Simmel’s ([1882] 1968) provocative work on the origins of music, which treated music as originally emanating from emotionally charged speech. However, his effort did little to move the sociology of music along (Etzkorn 1973).

Music sociology languished during the early to mid-1900s. Max Weber’s ([1921] 1958) work on the historical uniqueness of Western music seemed to create little reaction

among sociologists of the day; even in the present, his scholarship on music remains far less known in comparison with his work on religion and bureaucracy.<sup>3</sup> Several sociologists offered ethnographies of Chicago music venues, as well as ethnographies that heeded music when detailing social life in Chicago (e.g., Cressey 1932); however, such efforts would subside for a period of time (Grazian 2004a). Theodor Adorno (e.g., 1941b, [1938] 1988, [1962] 1989) penned numerous works across the decades that addressed things such as the deleterious effects of commercial music. While his work arguably attracted more contemporary interest than did Weber's, its complex and contentious nature likely limited his influence (see Morrison 1978; Witkin 2000; DeNora 2003). Paul Lazarsfeld and colleagues (e.g., Lazarsfeld and Stanton 1941, 1949; Lazarsfeld and the Bureau of Applied Social Research 1946) detailed the workings of commercial music industries and documented the patterns and preferences found among music audiences. By the mid-1950s, such efforts had become uncommon in sociology (Peterson 1976).

The fate of music sociology changed as scattered works gave way to various schools of thought. As was the case for the sociology of culture (Griswold 1992), this was driven by the interrogation of key issues. In the 1970s, two schools focused intently on the collective nature of music; the production of culture perspective applied insights gained from organizational sociology to the study of music, while the art world perspective approached music by drawing on symbolic interactionism (Gilmore 1990; Peterson and Anand 2004). Other schools of thought soon joined the sociology of music, with contributors to each often drawing on theories at the heart of sociology. Thus, sociologists examined music in relation to such issues as subcultures (e.g., Hebdige

1979), the reproduction of inequality (e.g., Bourdieu 1984), globalization (e.g., Hesmondhalgh 2000), identity formation (e.g., Negus and Román Velázquez 2002), and social movements (e.g., Roscigno and Danaher 2004). By the turn of the twenty-first century, music sociology was marked by an expanding range of perspectives that engaged many scholars—which is arguably the best evidence of its vitality.

Given the current renewal in interest, there have been recent efforts to review (a) core issues that enliven the sociology of music, (b) particular approaches that inform this area, and (c) specific methodologies that benefit it (e.g., Martin 1995; Hennion 2003; Bennett 2004; DeNora 2004; Dowd 2004b; Grazian 2004a; Peterson and Bennett 2004; Peterson 2005). In the following sections, I offer an overview that attends to the three domains of production, content, and consumption. These domains represent analytical distinctions that may blur in both sociological scholarship and contemporary experience. Nevertheless, distinguishing among these domains provides a convenient way to organize the vast works known as music sociology. To employ a musical metaphor, this chapter surveys substantive themes and variations that occur when sociologists turn to music.

The study of music is an enterprise that involves multiple disciplines and, to a certain degree, this review will not focus solely on sociological contributions. Scholars in the humanities, for instance, have devoted much attention to music—especially those in disciplines that directly address music, such as ethnomusicology. Given this breadth of scholarship, it is not surprising that some overlap in substantive concerns has occurred between sociologists and non-sociologists (e.g., Becker 1989).

## The Production of Music

While many disciplines have much to say about music, sociology's forte is its ability to elucidate the context in which music is located. Early sociological efforts hint at, if not demonstrate, this. Schutz (1951) pointed to the shared knowledge and interactional cues that are necessary for the collective performance of music, contextually grounding the production (and reception) of music. Mueller (1951) and Nash (1957, 1970) acknowledged the challenges that orchestral composers face—including their dependence on numerous actors for possible performances, and the tendencies for such actors (e.g., conductors) to favor the works of past composers. MacDougal (1941) and Peatman (1942) described the efforts of the music industry to routinize the production of hit songs, with Adorno (e.g., 1941a) lamenting the effect of such efforts.

The elucidation of music's context gained momentum in the 1970s, as key sociologists forged two perspectives. The art worlds perspective coalesced around the work of Howard Becker. His initial forays highlighted the constraints that many musicians face (Becker 1951, 1953)—including unstable careers, low prestige, and audiences that are indifferent to aesthetic concerns. Becker (1974) later conceptualized constraints to creativity as stemming, in general, from the collective nature of artistic production and the conventions that inform such collective efforts, thus foreshadowing his seminal statement *Art Worlds* (Becker 1982). The production of culture perspective benefited from the efforts of Paul Hirsch and, especially, Richard Peterson. In contrast to those who emphasized the power of the popular music industry, Hirsch (1969, 1972, 1973, 1975) detailed how its evolution is shaped by evolving technology and copyright law, and he emphasized the uncertainty that is inherent in industries that truck in aesthetic

goods. Peterson (e.g., 1972, Peterson and Berger 1971; Peterson and DiMaggio 1975) focused on comparable issues in his wide-ranging analyses of commercial music. He also issued an important rallying cry for the new perspective, noting that it

chooses the alternative track of turning attention away from the global corpus of habitual culture and focusing instead on the processes by which elements of culture are fabricated in those milieux where symbol-system production is most self-consciously the center of activity.

(Peterson 1976:672)

From the 1970s onward, these and other perspectives spurred sustained research on musical production that ranged from individual musicians to entire industries (Gilmore 1990; DiMaggio 2000; Dowd 2004b).

## **Musicians: Socialization and Careers**

The production of music ultimately depends on individuals who enact conventions and populate various collectivities. One common theme thus concerns the socialization of musicians. Various scholars show that potential musicians must master various skills and knowledge, undermining the myth that music making is simply an intuitive activity.

Drawing on such microlevel theories as phenomenology and symbolic interactionism, they detail how this ongoing process unfolds. David Sudnow's (1978) work is exemplary in this regard, as he describes in great detail the cognitive and corporal elements that he had to absorb to become adept at jazz improvisation. In terms of the cognitive, he acquired a vocabulary that included the chords that ground music and particular scales

associated with these chords. In terms of the corporal, he mastered placement of his hands on the keyboard as well as bodily motions involved in the rendering of a performance. His individual odyssey into improvisation complements the ethnomusicological scholarship of Berliner (1994), who offers an exhaustive (and perhaps definitive) investigation of how jazz musicians learn to improvise.

Sociologists have followed in Sudnow's steps by also addressing the mastery and internalization of musical conventions. Some heed the corporal aspect of this process. Winther (2005) details trial-and-error methods involved in learning how to strike *taiko* drums (Japanese drums of various sizes) so as to produce a satisfactory sound and how to sense the unity of ensemble drumming via bodily motions. Curran (1996) highlights how drummers show their affiliation to a particular genre (e.g., jazz, rock) in terms of dress and the manner in which they strike their instruments. Others observe the cognitive aspects of this socialization process. For instance, they describe how rock musicians come to acquire requisite knowledge—such as appreciation for the appropriate notes to play, familiarity with technologies for producing and reproducing sound, and recognition of the etiquette needed for maintaining a band (e.g., Bennett 1980; Curran 1996; Bayton 1998; Clawson 1999a).

Another common theme concerns the careers of musicians. Although musical performance is an avocation for many (Finnegan 1989), those seeking a livelihood confront considerable challenges as historian James Kraft (1996) has shown. Contributors to the art worlds and production of culture perspectives have documented the extent to which resources such as employment and income accrue to a few individuals (Faulkner 1971, 1973; Peterson and Ryan 1983; Peterson and White 1989), as have contributors to



other perspectives (see Abbott and Hrycak 1990; Strobl and Tucker 2000; Uzzi and Spiro 2005). In Germany of the eighteenth century, for example, musicians found employment in two domains—courts and towns. The former offered the potential for high salaries and prestige, yet employment could quickly end given the vagaries of the patron’s financial situation; the latter (e.g., church organist) offered much stability (such as lifetime appointment) but little income, often requiring that town musicians hold multiple jobs. Tracking the careers of 595 musicians who were active between 1650 and 1810, Abbott and Hrycak (1990) find a divide between the two domains, where few musicians traversed between volatile court employment and low-income town employment and where career ladders were limited to the courts (see also Salmen 1983; Scherer 2001).

Such divergent careers are not consigned to the distant past. Regarding opportunities, consider all the composers who created Hollywood soundtracks from 1964 to 1978 (Faulkner 1973). Less than 10 percent of these composers accounted for nearly half of all soundtracks. Given that the elite tier of composers had extensive ties with various filmmakers, it was difficult for composers to cross this divide between them and the elite. Furthermore, those composers trying to “break in” were easily hampered by their choices (e.g., becoming typecast for a particular genre) at various career stages, resulting in shortened career ladders. Regarding income, economists (e.g., Felton 1978; Wassall, Alper, and Davison 1983) and sociologists (e.g., Jeffri 2003, 2004) still find that professional musicians must often hold multiple jobs to earn a living.

Some attend to broader cultural assumptions that limit career opportunities for certain types, such as female musicians. In Vienna of the late 1700s and early 1800s, the piano became increasingly gendered as the music of Beethoven was cast as embodying

both the “masculine” and “genius.” Whereas female pianists once performed in public as frequently as their male counterparts—and performed similar compositions—public performance was increasingly the domain of men because the athletic requirements of Beethoven’s compositions were seen as inappropriate for women (DeNora 1995, 2002). Such constraints for women continue to the present in both the realms of classical and popular music, although some gains have occurred (e.g., Allmendinger and Hackman 1995; Coulangeon, Ravet, and Roharik 2005; Dowd, Liddle, and Blyler 2005).<sup>4</sup> For instance, women have faced historical barriers to becoming rock instrumentalists because this music has long been viewed as “masculine” (Bayton 1998; Clawson 1999a, 1999b). However, there are a growing number of women bassists in alternative rock bands, wherein musicians have recast the electric bass as “feminine” because of its ability to anchor musical performance and foster group solidarity; nevertheless, the guitar and drums largely remain the purview of men (Clawson 1999b). Drawing on various theories, these studies show that nonmusical factors (e.g., assumptions about gender) have palpable effects on musical careers. Research within and beyond sociology also makes this point when showing how assumptions about race impinge on musical careers (e.g., Sanjek 1997; Southern 1997; Dowd and Blyler 2002). This research reminds us that those musicians who go on to flourish in organizations represent a fraction of the total (see Menger 1999).

## **Music Organizations: Formalization and Sensemaking**

Organizations play a prominent role in music production. Multinational corporations dominate the recording industry (Peterson and Bennett 2004; Leyshon et al. 2005).

Nonprofit organizations are preeminent purveyors of “high culture” (e.g., symphony orchestras) (Blau 1989; DiMaggio 1992; Born 1995). An array of organizations, such as unions, broadcasters, and retailers, shape the creation and distribution of music (du Gay and Negus 1994; Dowd 2003). Sociologists, among others, have focused on the implications of such organizations by emphasizing the themes of formalization and sensemaking.<sup>5</sup>

Scholars from various disciplines approach the first theme in a way that resonates with Weber’s (1978) approach. They heed the distinction between nonformalized ways of organizing musical production (e.g., democratic) and formalized ones (e.g., bureaucratic), as well as the potential for substantive values to be replaced by a concern with the “bottom line” as formalization occurs (e.g., Seiler 2000; Ahlqvist 2001; Grazian 2004b).

In the recording industry, for instance, small recording firms (“indies”) confront a marketplace that is largely defined by the multinational corporations that are highly attuned to profitability (“majors”) (Lee 1995; Hesmondhalgh 1996, 1998a, 1998b, 1999; Gray 1988). The majors have formalized, among other things, contracts and royalty rates that reflect the interests of the firm rather than performers, a star system that favors a few performers and genres, and massive distribution networks by which recordings reach retailers and consumers. Indies that intentionally resist this formalization—including punk indies that take a favorable approach to performers (e.g., high royalty rates) and dance indies that eschew stars—attempt to survive in a marketplace that operates counter to their values. For those that do survive, they face pressures to formalize (e.g., contracting with majors for distribution) and run the risk of resembling the majors that they initially resisted.

Formalization is also at play in the nonprofit realm. In the wake of rising production costs, aging audiences, and declining federal funding, U.S. opera companies, symphony orchestras, and dance companies are increasingly concerned with the bottom line, as the funding that is available often requires some evidence of an organization's ability to reach an audience. Thus, these nonprofits tend to rely on proven works that have drawn past audiences and on marketing efforts to draw future audiences (Baumol and Bowen 1966; DiMaggio 1984; Martorella 1985; Peterson 1986; Gilmore 1993; McNeely 1993; Glynn 2000; Pierce 2000; Heilbrun 2001).

Studies of the commercial and nonprofit realms suggest that formalization narrows the range of available musical content. Nevertheless, there are limits to its impact. On the one hand, the elaboration of the division of labor is an important aspect of formalization, whereby positions are assigned specific tasks and given rules and procedures for realizing those tasks. Given that musical production is ultimately a creative endeavor, the procedures for certain tasks are highly ambiguous and/or complex, thereby resisting routinization. Individuals in such positions, which include conductors, record producers, and sound engineers, can occasionally gain autonomy given the discretion that they enjoy. To the extent that they exploit this autonomy, they expand the range of music found at various organizations (see Arian 1971; Kealy 1979; Gilmore 1987; Hennion 1983; Murningham and Conlon 1991; Ahlkvist and Faulkner 2002; Dowd 2000; Horning 2004; Porcello 2004). On the other hand, developments in the environment can occasionally spur highly formalized organizations to adapt new music. As shown below in the content section, the majors have formalized a method for keeping

apprised of new musical developments. Research on another theme, sensemaking, gives an initial purchase on this development.

Various theories—such as sensemaking and neoinstitutionalism (Scott 1995; Weick 1995)—posit that organizations confront an environment that requires deciphering. Rather than relying on all possible information, which would be a daunting endeavor, organizations use a limited range of information to interpret their environment. Social scientists have applied these theoretical insights to music organizations, as shown by Negus's (1999) work on the majors. These corporations are well positioned in the recording business, but even they face uncertainty. While their information gathering on consumer demand has grown more sophisticated, it still remains limited, if not inaccurate, and many of their products can remain unprofitable. The majors cope by formalizing certain structures and strategies. They simplify the vast array of music found beyond their boundaries by creating divisions within the firms that are oriented to a few genres. They then employ a portfolio management strategy—monitoring the performance of each division and allocating resources to divisions deemed successful. Their evaluations, however, are shaped by assumptions, as the case of rap music illustrates. Ill at ease with aspects of rap (e.g., its controversial lyrics) and skeptical about its long-term economic viability (e.g., its international appeal<sup>6</sup>), the majors relegate this genre to black music divisions within the firm and to contractual alliances with rap producers beyond the firm. As a result, the majors have invested relatively little in rap and have cordoned it off from other genres. Sensemaking is thus inscribed into their daily operations, shaping the type of music that the majors offer and underlying any formalization.

While the sensemaking process helps organizations manage the uncertainties inherent in the creation and dissemination of music (see Ahlqvist and Faulkner 2002; Hennion 1983; du Gay and Negus 1994; Anand and Peterson 2000; Maitlis 2005), it can also contribute to instability when competing interpretations collide. These collisions can occur within an organization, as Glynn (2000, 2002) reveals. Musicians at the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (ASO) interpreted their organization's mission in terms of musical excellence, while the administrators and trustees did so in terms of the bottom line. The latter interpretation was dominant for years before the musicians eventually responded via a disruptive and contentious strike. In the wake of the strike's resolution, ASO performances combined both an emphasis on marketing that appealed to administrators (e.g., "An Evening of Mozart") and an emphasis on innovative interpretations of established works that appealed to the musicians. Such collisions can also occur between organizations. The major recording firms of the past doubted the popularity of jazz, blues, country, and rock 'n' roll. They had to alter their assumptions—and address these genres—when indies mined substantial demand for each (Peterson 1990, 1997; Ennis 1992; Dowd 2003; Phillips and Owens 2004). Besides creating opportunities for musical change, then, these collisions also direct our attention to organizational fields, wherein competing interpretations are located.

## **Music Fields: Genres and Distribution**

Music organizations do not operate in isolation but, instead, are situated in "organizational fields" that contain the totality of relevant actors and a range of resources (DiMaggio 1991). Proponents of various perspectives, thus, focus on how music fields

emerge and develop (e.g., Becker 1982; Bourdieu 1993; Peterson and Anand 2004), with many documenting how an interpretation diffuses throughout a field to such a degree that it becomes “institutionalized”—becoming the lens through which most actors make sense of their field. Two common themes address how ways of classifying certain genres and of distributing music become taken for granted.

Scholars in sociology and the humanities point to the situation in which a vast array of musical material is classified into distinct genres, and they interrogate the development of such classifications. Research on classical music offers an important example, especially the institutional work of Paul DiMaggio. Despite its moniker of “classical,” this classification did not take root in Europe until the early 1800s. Prior to that time, according to historian William Weber (1984, 1992, 2001), patrons of music emphasized contemporary works by living composers rather than past works by dead composers. Notions regarding music that is both exalted and enduring would eventually diffuse to the United States, yet they initially found no widespread counterpart in the realm of performance. Commercial establishments of the day, for instance, offered programs that routinely mixed exalted music with entertainment, thereby blurring the distinction of classical music (DiMaggio 1982b, 1991; see Levine 1988; McConachie 1988; Saloman 1990). DiMaggio (1982a, 1982b, 1991, 1992) argues that “classical music” was eventually institutionalized in the United States as the following occurred. Urban elites established nonprofit symphony orchestras that they funded and oversaw, beginning in Boston and later occurring throughout the United States. These orchestras mostly offered exalted music, thus segregating classical from popular music, and developed an appreciative audience. The establishment of nonprofits and the attendant

emphasis on classical music later diffused to U.S. opera and dance companies. Finally, university curricula, as well as the emergent radio and recording industries, endorsed the distinction of classical music and lauded its superiority. By the mid-1900s, this genre classification was widely accepted; by the late 1990s, it was eroding for various reasons, including the bottom-line emphasis noted above.

The case of classical music in the United States is instructive. First, it calls attention to the general process by which genres are institutionalized. Cultural entrepreneurs develop an interpretation of how particular musical material is to be classified relative to other material, and then, these entrepreneurs and others construct arrangements and secure resources that uphold that particular classification. That is, they construct an organizational field. We see this same process occurring in the institutionalization of such genres as the *canzone d'autore*, country music, Israeli popular music, jazz, punk, rap, and rhythm and blues (e.g., Peterson 1997; Hesmondhalgh 1998b; Keyes 2002; Lopes 2002; Santoro 2002; Dowd 2003; Regev and Seroussi 2004). Second, it reveals that genre classifications are not static—as sociological work on jazz has made clear (e.g., Gray 1997; Lopes 2002; Appelrouth 2003). Finally, it reveals that the viability of a particular genre field is often shaped by its connection to other organizational fields—such as those involved in the dissemination of multiple genres (e.g., the broadcasting field).

Scholars addressing the dissemination of music confront an important historical development: Live performance and music notation are no longer the only means by which music reaches an audience (Hennion 2002). In the past century or so, various technologies have made possible fields that are devoted to music distribution—most



notably, the established fields of recorded music and music broadcasting and the emergent field of online music. The rise of these technologies, however, does not solve the dilemma of *how* businesses should exploit them, as demonstrated by an institutional analysis of U.S. radio broadcasting (Leblebici et al. 1991; Leblebici 1995). Commercial radio could not thrive until an early problem was addressed—when actors in a given locale broadcast on the same frequency, they obscured the content. This was eventually solved by the federal government, which required that private firms attain a license to broadcast on a particular frequency.<sup>7</sup> Yet other problems remained—including what to broadcast, who to target, and how to finance this content. Leblebici and colleagues thus document how taken-for-granted answers to these questions changed dramatically over several decades. For instance, radio programming transitioned from live performances to prerecorded music, its target shifted from a mass audience at the national level to segmented audiences at the local level, and its financing eventually morphed from the sale of radio sets and radio parts to the sale of advertising time via short commercials. These changes were driven by once-marginal firms that sought to improve their position by introducing new ways to address these long-standing issues.

The work of Leblebici (1995; Leblebici et al. 1991) is emblematic of that by other social scientists—which, taken together, reveals commonalities in the evolution of music distribution fields. On the one hand, the evolution of these fields does not simply flow from technological imperatives. Government policy shapes how distribution technologies can be used. Patent law limited the number competitors in the early U.S. recording industry, and copyright law played a role in the demise of the original incarnation of Napster. These are but two examples regarding the import of law and regulation (Hirsch

1975; Frith 1987, 1993; Dowd 2003; McCourt and Burkhart 2003). Furthermore, distribution technologies have been used in drastically different fashions across time and place. For instance, Thomas Edison and others expected that early recording machines would be used for business dictation. However, other entrepreneurs carried the day with an alternative interpretation that emphasized the sale of prerecorded music; the Victor Company, in particular, rose to prominence by touting its operatic recordings (Seifert 1994, 1995). Thus, interpretations of *how* to use technologies are as important as the technologies themselves (e.g., Greve 1996; Hesmondhalgh 1996; Regev 1997b; Hargittai 2000; Ahlqvist 2001; Burkhart and McCourt 2004; Leyshon et al. 2005). On the other hand, the cited works show that the evolution of these fields proceeds in stages that alternate between stability and flux. Typically, peripheral actors in the field—who are disadvantaged by the status quo—push these stages along when they help create new institutions that favor their interests and, in the process, transform the field. Of course, these commonalities have implications for musical content, as shown in the next section.

## **The Content of Music**

The sociology of music have done well at analyzing and explaining the context in which music occurs, but it has done less well in its treatment of musical content. This is partly the result of substantive concerns. Those concerned with production often focus on dynamics involved in music making rather than the resulting content; those interested in reception often focus on responses of listeners rather than the content that spurred these responses. This need not be the case because early scholarship shows the potential that sociology can bring to the study of content. Weber ([1921] 1958) examined the manner in

which various societies have organized the tonal material that comprises music, and he highlighted how the Occident has done so in an increasingly systematic, rather than ad hoc, fashion—noting such Western elements as the diatonic scale and equal temperament (which are derived via arithmetic calculations and embodied in the piano keyboard), as well as the system of musical notation. Sorokin (1937) posited broad-sweeping cultural trends, whereby societies cycle between ideational and sensate cultures, and the implications that these trends hold for music and other arts (e.g., content oriented toward religious values vs. entertainment). In contrast to his sometimes sweeping pronouncements against commercial music, Adorno ([1949] 1973) offered thorough analysis of works by Stravinsky and Schoenberg and addressed the importance (and rarity) of innovative composition.

While past works have suggested the potential of music sociology, recent schools of thought provide ways of reaching this potential. Both the art worlds and production of culture perspectives, for instance, emphasize the role of conventions in music making, and each highlights moments in which those conventions are subverted (e.g., Peterson and Berger 1975; Becker 1982). That is, each provides a framework to address both musical homogeneity and diversity. Institutional analysis has historically emphasized the collective nature of aesthetic classification—such as that involving urban elites and high culture (e.g., DiMaggio 1987). As a result, it provides leverage on how particular content is located relative to other content. From the mid-1970s onward, music sociologists have drawn on these perspectives—as well as other theoretical frameworks—to address the form that musical content takes (e.g., lyrical themes, melodic complexity) and the evaluation of this content (e.g., valorization).

## The Form of Music: Innovation and Diversity

Becker (1982) provides a convenient way to approach the vast and disparate array of musical material that currently exists. We can consider the extent to which an *individual* entity—such as a composition, composer, or genre—relies on precedence and the extent to which it is unique; thus, conventional music greatly resembles what has come before, while innovative music breaks new ground. Sociologists and others have taken this insight to heart and have examined factors that foster musical innovation, as well as the related theme of musical diversity—the dissimilarity that occurs among an *aggregate* (e.g., a group of compositions).

Sociologists often explore innovation by focusing on the contributions of particular musicians (e.g., Bjorn 1981; Cerulo 1984; Danaher 2005; Van Delinder 2005), taking a track that is common in the humanities. Such work can vary widely along a number of dimensions—including the analytical approach, the empirical case, and the quality of the effort. In contrast, one productive approach links significant musical shifts to the emergence and/or evolution of technology—drawing on such perspectives as the production of culture and the social construction of technology (e.g., Pinch and Troco 2002). This approach has precedence: Weber ([1921] 1958) noted that the construction of particular instruments—like the aulos, which could play “in between” the standard notes of its day—helped spur the Western innovation of chromaticism (i.e., a system of 12 notes).

Like Weber, DeNora (1995, 2002) reminds us that “technology” is a broad term that is not limited to electronic instruments (see also Theberge 1997; Bijsterveld and Schulp 2004). Beethoven advocated for a piano that could withstand the force of his

playing. While his style of playing represented a departure from contemporary standards—and initially drew criticism—his increasing prominence proved key. The leading Viennese piano manufactures produced a triple-string technology that endured his demanding touch. In short, Beethoven redefined the standard of piano playing in Vienna and beyond. Comparable work (e.g., Theberge 1997; Pinch and Troco 2002; Waksman 2004) addresses how musicians seized on other instruments—such as the electric guitar and synthesizer—and, in devising uses for them, pushed music into new directions, including heavy metal (see Walser 1993) and progressive rock (see Palmer 2001). Another stream focuses on emergent digital technologies that, among other things, have led to relatively inexpensive “bedroom studios” that figure prominently in the evolution of emergent genres (e.g., Hesmondhalgh 1998a; Keyes 2002; Theberge 2004; Marontate 2005).

“Sampling” provides a compelling example of how the use of technology can break new musical ground. This technology allows one to make digital files containing snippets of sonic material (e.g., past musical recordings), which can then be inserted directly into another recording or be inserted after it is transformed into a “loop” (i.e., where all or part of the snippet plays repeatedly in a rhythmic pattern) (Hesmondhalgh 2000; Theberge 2003). Taylor (2001) argues that this sampling represents a fundamental (and innovative) shift in music making because it brings together consumption and production in new ways, as when the German group, Enigma, inserted samples of Gregorian chants and a Taiwanese folk song into their own composition. This shift in music making reached a pinnacle arguably in rap music of the 1980s, when musicians relied on a wealth of samples to create the sonic pastiche that accompanied their lyrics—

such as Public Enemy's "Bring the Noise" (Walser 1995; Keyes 2002).<sup>8</sup> However, samples that relied on past recordings increasingly required clearance from and remuneration to copyright holders, thereby raising the cost of this compositional technique (Rose 1994; Keyes 2002). Lena's (2004) content analysis of rap hit songs, for instance, shows that rap musicians relied on fewer samples as the early 1990s gave way to the mid-1990s—thus suggesting limits to innovation.

Scholarship in the social sciences and humanities deals with the second theme, diversity, in a number of ways. A sizable body of research tracks the range of representations contained in musical content, such as the images of women in music videos (e.g., Pegley 2000; Emerson 2002); however, this research can tend more to description than explanation. Fortunately, other streams of research provide a corrective. Peterson and Berger (1972, 1975) initiated one such stream when they explain the waxing and waning of diversity in terms of "concentration" (i.e., the extent to which majors dominate the industry). Focusing on the U.S. recording industry from 1948 to 1973, they find long periods of time in which concentration is high and various indicators of diversity (e.g., the number of performers) are at low levels and short periods where concentration is low and diversity is high. Their explanation, which draws in part on industrial organization economics, stresses the conservative nature of majors versus the innovative nature of indies that occasionally rupture the status quo.

Beginning in the 1980s, scholars find that concentration and diversity can co-occur in the U.S. recording industry as well as in some European industries (e.g., Hellman 1983; Frith 1988; Burnett 1990, 1992a, 1992b, 1996; Dowd 1992; Lopes 1992). They explain this by noting how the majors have altered their approach to production (see

also Christianen 1995; Lee 1995; Hesmondhalgh 1998b). Smarting from instances in which indies caught them unaware—most notably, the explosion of rock 'n' roll in 1955—the majors sought to emulate and exploit indies via “decentralized” production. This included the creation of indie-like divisions within the majors and numerous contractual alliances with indies, which provided the majors with an expanding range of performers and genres. As decentralized production grows more pronounced in the U.S. recording industry, concentration’s negative effect on diversity is reduced. Thus, even in times of high concentration, we see a flourishing of elements associated with musical diversity—heightened numbers of new firms, new performers, African American performers, and female performers—as well as increased melodic complexity and musical dissimilarity among hit songs (Dowd 1992, 2000, 2004a; Dowd and Blyler 2002; Dowd et al. 2005). Comparable moves to decentralization in the U.S. radio industry may also promote diversity (see Ahlqvist and Fischer 2000; Lee 2004). Still, pressures toward centralization, such as economic downturns, remain for both industries, and these pressures represent a challenge for diversity (see Lopes 2002).

Another stream—one that includes sociologists and ethnomusicologists—considers how global processes can alter the diversity of available music. In doing so, they show the complexities of concentration and technology. For instance, a handful of multinational corporations dominate the global distribution of recorded music (e.g., Laing 1986, 1992; Burnett 1996). Consequently, their interpretations regarding “viable” musical products hold much weight. In constructing very narrow notions of what constitutes such categories as “salsa” and “world music,” the majors may greatly limit the range of performers and genres from various locales that receive worldwide distribution (see Feld

1994; Frith 1989, 2000; Taylor 1997; Negus 1999).<sup>9</sup> Yet, in this global flow of recordings, there are also instances when the total range of music expands—as when local actors respond to the products of the majors by creating musical material that selectively combines elements from abroad with local traditions (e.g., Ryback 1990; Mitchell 1996, 2001; Magaldi 1999) and when they create and uphold musical alternatives to the products flowing into their borders (e.g., Grenier 1993; de Launey 1995; Regev 1997a; Santoro 2002; Regev and Serousi 2004). Meanwhile, technology can facilitate the easy appropriation of musical material from distant lands, as when “First World” performers rely on samples of indigenous performers, and it thus limits the (potential) careers of the latter performers and the range of music they represent (Hesmondhalgh 2000; Taylor 2001; Theberge 2003). Still, the use of technology can also promote musical diversity, as when the introduction of the inexpensive cassette in India spurred a flourishing of genres that were previously little- or un-recorded (Manuel 1993).

## **The Evaluation of Music: Hierarchy and Valorization**

Once musical content emerges, we frequently see an evaluative process in which actors situate one type of content relative to others. DiMaggio (1987) states that this evaluation occurs along several dimensions—including the extent to which various actors rank some types as superior to others and the extent to which these rankings are widely accepted by others. In describing this process, then, DiMaggio reinforces a point made by Bourdieu (1993): We should heed both the physical production of art (i.e., content) and its symbolic production (i.e., evaluation). Music sociologists have done so by considering themes of hierarchy and valorization.



While some sociologists focus on the production process that surround genre classifications, those with a penchant for content pay particular attention to hierarchies at play in these classifications—such as racialized hierarchies. In the United States of the early 1900s, for instance, certain powerful actors (e.g., recording executives) drew sharp distinctions between music created by African Americans and by European Americans, deeming the former as less worthy than the latter. As a result, they initially avoided the production of music by African Americans, they offered “sanitized” versions of genres associated with African Americans—such as recordings of “symphonic” jazz by white musicians rather than “hot” jazz by black musicians—and they disparaged the musical innovations of black musicians (e.g., advancing the art of improvisation, developing new timbres) for deviating from “good” music. When recordings of African Americans finally became common in the 1920s, this disparate content was simply classified as “race” music and segregated from other musical genres for decades (e.g., Lopes 2002; Appelrouth 2003; Dowd 2003; Phillips and Owens 2004; Roy 2004). While current evaluation of music by African Americans has changed considerably (see Gray 1997; Lopes 2002), the implications of race still remain striking, as shown in scholarship on rap music (e.g., Binder 1993; Negus 1999; Watkins 2001; Keyes 2002).<sup>10</sup>

Sociologists and others also examine hierarchy by interrogating “authenticity”—showing that this positive ranking does not simply flow from musical content but results from a process in which competing claims are made about content (e.g., Regev 1992a; Taylor 1997; Hesmondhalgh 1999; Frith 2000; McLaughlin and McLoone 2000). Two impressive works, for instance, show how these claims can vary across time and place. In the historical development of country music, the “authentic” label has been applied, on

the one hand, to performers whose dress and comportment harkens back to “old time” or rustic traditions and whose music is decidedly unpolished and, on the other hand, to performers whose persona is refined and whose music is polished if not “poplike.” Rather than proceeding in a linear fashion—such as from unpolished to polished—what is deemed “authentic” in country music has vacillated between the two designations, with well-situated actors (e.g., Henry Ford, the Grand Ole Opry, media personnel) advancing claims about each (Peterson 1997). In the contemporary setting of Chicago blues, claims of authenticity vary among actors and locales. Unschooled tourists and entrepreneurs locate “authentic” blues in glitzy clubs that feature black musicians performing a narrow range of standards (e.g., “Sweet Home Chicago”), while knowledgeable fans and musicians can locate the “authentic” in run-down clubs in which black and white musicians emphasize the performative nature of blues (e.g., “keeping it real”) instead of a rigid repertoire (Grazian 2003, 2004b). Such work makes clear that authenticity is a fabrication, to use Peterson’s term, rather than an objective evaluation.

Although hierarchical evaluations of music are fairly common, universal recognition of these evaluations remain somewhat rare. Scholars who address the theme of valorization thus heed not only the claims for why a particular music is superior but also the discourse of powerful actors that endorses such claims. Educational curriculum offers important examples of this discourse, as it upholds certain types of music as deserving of scholarly attention. While this curriculum was tilted toward classical music in years past, it increasingly addresses other music (e.g., DiMaggio 1991; Dowd et al. 2002; Lopes 2002; DiMaggio and Mukhtar 2004; Bevers 2005). Professionals (most notably, other musicians) and critics have likewise played an important role in the

valorization of music, with their awards and publications celebrating the music that should receive public attention. Indeed, longitudinal and cross-national scholarship suggests that the amount of critical coverage given to music has increased in recent decades and that the range of music praised by professionals and critics has increased as well, extending well beyond classical music to various popular musics (e.g., Frith 1996; Theberge 1997; Janssen 1999; Lopes 2002; Schmutz 2005). Governments and foundations have also played key roles, declaring that certain musics (e.g., classical, bluegrass) merit institutional support and subsidy (e.g., Born 1995; Peterson 1997; Dowd et al. 2002; Skinner 2006).

This broader discourse of powerful actors has endorsed, at least, two general types of claims regarding superior music. One type of claim heeds the formal properties of music (e.g., the way in which notes are combined). For instance, the high culture aesthetic that emerged in Europe stresses musical works that stand the test of time; celebrates musical geniuses who offer works that challenge, rather than merely please, listeners; and views the works of such composers as comprising a coherent oeuvre (e.g., Weber 1992; Elias 1993; DeNora 1995; Hennion and Fauquet 2001). Thus, this claim regarding classical music exemplifies what Bourdieu (1984) labels the “pure gaze,” whereby evaluations are based on the formal aspects of this content rather than its entertainment value. As Bourdieu would expect (see Holt 1998), this pure gaze has since been transposed to avant-garde composition, jazz, and even some types of popular music—with particular musicians and the broader discourse likewise touting the formal characteristics of these musics (e.g., Regev 1992b, 1997a, 1997b; Born 1995; Cameron 1996; Gray 1997; Lopes 2002; Santoro 2002). The other type of claim heeds tradition—

such as music that provides important historical roots and/or indigenous music that possesses an integrity not found in its commodified counterparts. The broader discourse has endorsed such claims for folk, jazz, popular, rap, and world musics (e.g., Taylor 1997; Lena 2004; Lopes 2002; Roy 2004; Skinner 2006). While there is variability in the extent to which various musics are valorized, one thing is clear: Classical music is not the only music that is cast as superior. Perhaps the valorization of these other musics lies behind the eroding classification of high culture that DiMaggio (1991) describes. Of course, the eclectic tastes of listeners may also lie behind this erosion (see below).

## **The Reception of Music**

Although scholarship on production helped invigorate the sociology of music in the 1970s and 1980s, scholarship on reception has contributed greatly to its vitality in recent times, arguably becoming the leading edge in music sociology from the 1990s onward. It is intriguing that the burgeoning of this scholarship had not occurred sooner, as early work in music sociology had already raised important substantive issues—such as how individuals listen to music (e.g., Reisman 1950; Hatch and Watson 1974), how music figures in the lives of communities (e.g., Lynd and Lynd 1929; Coleman 1961), and how musical tastes and preferences vary across a population (e.g., Lazarsfeld and the Bureau of Applied Social Research 1946; Schuessler 1948). The emphasis on production that came together in the 1970s did little to address such issues. Those employing the production of culture perspective, for example, often focused more on how producers understood and imagined their audience than on the audience itself. Moreover, as Grazian (2004a) notes, ethnographies in the early 1970s mostly involved the production of music

instead of its reception.

The fate of reception scholarship improved as music sociologists and others moved beyond the limits of production approaches. Scholars associated with the Birmingham School offer an important example. Beginning in the mid-1970s, they penned a series of studies that address the role that music plays in various subcultures (e.g., Chambers 1976; Hebdige 1976). Their efforts presaged both the thriving literatures on subcultures and “music scenes” that extend beyond music sociology and the proliferation of sociological perspectives that directly address the reception that ranges from individuals to populations (see Bennett 2004; Grazian 2004; Peterson 2005). Interestingly, some of this proliferation occurred as production scholars also turned their attention to reception—including Tia DeNora, Paul DiMaggio, Antoine Hennion, and Richard Peterson.

## **Individuals and Music: Selves and Technologies**

The reception of music begins with individuals who listen for pleasure and incorporate this listening experience into their daily existence. While psychologists and others have devoted much effort to the mental and physical processes involved in listening (e.g., Hargreaves and North 1997; Sloboda 2004), sociologists have also taken up this endeavor. Tia DeNora (2000, 2003; see also DeNora and Belcher 2000) offers perhaps the definitive sociological statement on the topic. In contrast to the common sociological emphasis on music as “product” and the musicological emphasis on music as “text,” DeNora highlights the microlevel processes by which music “gets into” social life via the mind and body (i.e., music as “practice”). Music serves as a resource for her interviewees

when they engage in a number of activities—including the management of emotions, the construction of a self-identity, the negotiation of commercial establishments that offer background music, and the remembrance of relationships. Music also serves as a mechanism for “entraining” bodies—as when it provides cues for movement, soothes infants in neonatal units, and facilitates an invigorating aerobics session. That is, music provides a “technology of the self” whereby individuals both actively use music and are caught up in its properties (see also Gomart and Hennion 1999). DeNora thus offers a counterpart to Sudnow’s (1978) work on improvisation, showing how listeners also engage music in both cognitive and corporal fashions and a complement to sociologists who consider how individuals use music to negotiate such things as aging and spirituality (e.g., Wuthnow 2003; Kotarba 2005).

Whereas DeNora (2002) demonstrates how music provides a technology of the self, other scholars examine how music listeners make use of various technologies. Some offer an historical perspective on this theme. When considering technologies that serve as material intermediaries between music and individuals (e.g., phonograph recordings), Hennion (2001) heralds a new type of listener “endowed with an ability which no-one possessed before the 20th century, represented by the technical availability of a historical musical repertoire dating from the Middle Ages to the present day” (p. 4) To a certain degree, this new type resonates with other historical developments. First, individuals in the late 1800s and early 1900s confronted many new ways to listen—such as stethoscopes and sonically enhanced architectural spaces—so the phonograph was simply a part of this broader transformation (Channan 1995; Thompson 2002; Sterne 2003). Second, this new listener engages in tendencies that predate recordings. In France of the

1800s, for instance, enthusiasts heralded the once-marginal music of Bach as the epitome of fine music, thereby recasting the canon of classical music as emanating from Bach and bearing his influence. The classical music that later appeared in recordings likewise involved such reconfigurations, as listeners grappled with a growing musical past and the “best” way to apprehend it (see Seifert 1994, 1995, 2001; Hennion 1997; Hennion and Fauquet 2001; Maisonneuve 2001). Still, this new type also represents a significant departure from the past. Listening is no longer solely linked to live performance and, in turn, is easily diffused to those who once lacked easy access to such venues. Furthermore, the new listener is able to devise idiosyncratic rituals and mind-sets for pursuing musical enjoyment in the privacy of the home (see Katz 1998; Douglas 1999; Gomart and Hennion 1999; Hennion 2001; Maisonneuve 2001; Perlman 2004).

Other scholars approach this theme by considering recent technologies that supply listeners with new resources for navigating daily life. A provocative ethnography reveals that individuals use personal stereos (e.g., Walkmans) to aestheticize their urban environment—providing a sound track of their own choosing for spaces on which they normally have little impact—and to keep urban strangers at a distance, because conversation is difficult when users have earphones in place and music in play. In fact, users of these devices report that they are somewhat “invisible” in urban settings, because others apparently assume that the users’ attention is elsewhere (Bull 2000). Aficionados make use of technologies in a fashion that is sometimes deemed illegal (e.g., bootlegs, peer-to-peer sharing) so as to gather and enjoy (sprawling) collections of musical recordings as well as to mine the work of particular musicians (e.g., Cooper and Harrison 2001; Lysloff 2003; Condry 2004; Marshall 2004). Karaoke—an audience-participation

technology that emerged in Japan and since diffused to much of the world—allows individuals to pursue amateur performance in convivial (if not blatantly commercial) settings, thereby fostering musical pleasures in urban spaces (e.g., Adams 1996; Mitsui and Hosokawa 1998; Drew 2001). While these studies on selves and technologies encompass various theoretical perspectives, they all push the reception literature in ways that production perspectives do not, and they highlight the individual variability that underlies those groups that engage in musical reception.

## **Groups and Music: Membership and Mobilization**

Although musical reception can be a private and isolated activity (e.g., individuals listening to iPods while jogging), much scholarship shows that it is also a group endeavor—especially as those with similar preferences and tastes can gravitate toward each other (see Bourdieu 1984). Indeed, Negus and Román Velázquez (2002) challenge sociologists to examine how it is that particular musics and groups become historically linked. In doing so, they argue, we avoid the analytical trap of simply claiming that some groups have a natural affinity for certain types of music. Sociologists often rise to their challenge when addressing the themes of membership and mobilization.

Social scientists and humanists have approached the first theme in several ways. One stream of scholarship somewhat bears the imprint of cultural Marxism and focuses on post–World War II youth subcultures with views and practices that run counter to the mainstream (see Hall and Jefferson 1976; Turner 1990). It has, thus, inspected subcultures that are centered on such genres as heavy metal, punk, goth, and alternative music (e.g., Willis 1978; Hebdige 1979; Laing 1985; Arnett 1993; Kruse 1993; Leblanc



1999; Hodkinson 2002). Many of these studies tend to gloss over musical content and, instead, emphasize the lifestyle elements that mark these musically based groupings—such as fashion and behavior in public spaces—as well as the marginal position of subculture members compared with the broader society. In other words, they more often have hints of musical reception than actual details. Still, some of these studies do edge music to the fore. Weinstein (1991), for example, discusses the rhythm and timbre that lie at the heart of heavy metal and that imbue it with sonic power; she also finds that members of this subculture take great pride in their love of and familiarity with the content of heavy metal, including the technical prowess demonstrated by metal guitarists (see also Walser 1993). A few studies stand in contrast to the subculture stream by focusing on consensus and the construction of community (e.g., Titon 1988; Gardner 2004). When examining the indigenous practice of “Sacred Harp” singing in the Southern United States, Laura Clawson (2004) demonstrates how flexible this ongoing construction can be. Southern families that have long participated in this traditional form of music at their local churches find themselves hosts to Northern “seekers” who are enthusiastic newcomers to this genre. Yet given their mutual love of Sacred Harp, these Southern conservatives and Northern liberals form a community that transcends their differences.

A final stream deals with the theme of membership by heeding music scenes—those collections of actors and relationships that center on particular musical styles (Straw 1991). In offering the concept of scene, its contributors are moving beyond what they deem to be limitations of the subculture approach (e.g., Straw 1991; Bennett 2004; Peterson and Bennett 2004). Hence, they (a) expand their analysis to include more than

youths that are counterposed to a dominant order, (b) consider that membership can be fluid, with some individuals moving in and out of a scene with relative ease, and (c) emphasize that local scenes can also be linked to other scenes. Román Velázquez's (1999) work on salsa demonstrates what this conceptual shift has to offer. She begins by tracing the global paths of both Latin Americans and salsa music and their respective arrivals in London. Rather than carrying their identity with them, she argues, Latin Americans re-create their identities anew as they relocate in various countries. Moreover, others play a role in locally defining the Latin identity. The London salsa clubs that attract Latin Americans also attract those that admire this musical genre and the exoticness and/or romanticism that it evokes for them, thereby altering and shaping important sites in which Latin American identity is pieced together. Thus, the salsa scene in London is heterogeneous in terms of its participants (rather than homogeneous, as the subcultural approach sometimes suggests) and its local manifestation is intertwined with other scenes around the world, such as in New York. Other contributors to this literature similarly unpack how local scene participants construct an identity by drawing on (and transforming) musical materials that flow from beyond their locale—even when that “locale” is a virtual one located on the World Wide Web (e.g., Bennett 1999a, 1999b, 2002; Mitchell 1996; Harris 2000; Kibby 2000; Lee and Peterson 2004).

While research on first theme sees the solidarity that music can inspire, research dealing with the second theme highlights how music can both spur dissent (e.g., Binder 1993; Rossman 2004) and serve as a rallying standard (e.g., Cerulo 1989; Roy 2004). Indeed, a recent flurry of works draws on variants of social movement theory and argues that music provides an important resource for the mobilization of protest (e.g., Eyerman

and Jamison 1998; Eyerman 2002; Steinberg 2004; Trapp 2005). Music can spur unrest when its lyrics call attention to social problems and suggest actions by which to correct those problems. During a period when onetime factory workers enjoyed success as “hillbilly” musicians—the dissemination of their highly critical lyrics via performance venues and radio facilitated unrest among Southern textile workers, with some 400,000 workers walking off the job between 1929 and 1934 (Roscigno and Danaher 2001, 2004; Roscigno, Danaher, and Summers-Effler 2002; Danaher and Roscigno 2004). Such mobilization need not rest on explicitly critical lyrics, however. For instance, some Italian audiences seized on Verdi operas that contained innocuous lyrics and reinterpreted them as addressing the political situation of the day (Stamatov 2002). Nor does this mobilization require a unified and/or homogenous audience. Hip-hop lyrics can be so resonant as to bring together African Americans who live in urban poverty with African Americans who have educational credentials and professional success (Watkins 2001). Such work, then, confirms DeNora’s (2003) position that music “gets into life” both at the individual and collective levels.

## **Populations and Music: Cultural Capital and Omnivores**

Whereas reception scholarship at the individual level often sees pleasure and enjoyment, reception scholarship at the aggregate level takes note of class, status, and inequality. Consequently, the work of Bourdieu figures prominently in at least two ways, thereby inspiring music sociologists and others to plumb the themes of cultural capital and cultural omnivores.

Bourdieu and Passeron ([1970] 1990) argue that schools are not neutral sites in which success simply stem from effort and ability. Instead, schools favor the disposition, styles, and proficiencies of middle- and upper-class students—specialized knowledge known as “cultural capital” (see Bourdieu 1984). As a result, these affluent students enter school with an initial advantage, and their advantage increases over time, because academic success and advancement come more easily to them than to their working-class counterparts. Given the myth of meritocracy, such differences in success are attributed to individual performance rather than class differences in cultural capital. In short, this argument suggests that familiarity with high culture—including esteemed music—plays a role in the reproduction of inequality. Their argument has since inspired much research. DiMaggio (1982a) provides an early effort when he posits (and finds) that schools reward those individuals who both know and enjoy classical music—even though such fluency is not always part of the formal curriculum. In the wake of much research on the topic, sociologists and others have debated both the mixed findings that have emerged and the inconsistent ways in which survey researchers have conceptualized cultural capital (e.g., Holt 1998; Kingston 2001). Yet if we take a rather generous operationalization of cultural capital—that is, familiarity with, proficiency in, and/or involvement with high culture (e.g., classical music) on the part of students and/or their parents—the research reveals that cultural capital, among other things, can facilitate success in secondary education (e.g., high scores on standardized tests, high grade point averages) and can foster subsequent success (e.g., progressing to the next educational level, conferring with counselors, attending elite colleges) (Aschaffenburg and Maas 1997; DiMaggio 1982a;

DiMaggio and Mohr 1985; Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell 1999; Dumais 2002; Kaufman and Gabler 2004).

While music sociologists are mindful of Bourdieu's argument regarding the educational realm, they are also drawn to his argument regarding the aesthetic realm. Bourdieu (1984) argues that aesthetic preferences and competencies are ultimately class based. Unlike their working-class counterparts, members of the middle and upper classes are removed from economic concerns regarding daily needs and necessities. Consequently, they have time and resources to develop an appreciation for the form and style of art (e.g., art for art's sake) rather than an appreciation for its function (e.g., entertainment) that is shown by members of the working class. These classes, in turn, pass on their respective aesthetic dispositions to their children. Such class-based differences matter not only in the educational system but also in daily interaction—because people associate with those who share similar tastes.

Music sociologists have followed up on Bourdieu's argument in several ways. Some have complicated his notion of cultural capital, even suggesting other types of cultural capital. For instance, Bryson (1996) relies on survey research to assess the symbolic boundaries that individuals raise between each other, as demonstrated by their musical preferences. Given her interpretation of Bourdieu's argument, she expected that high-status individuals will dislike musical genres that are not part of high culture. She finds, instead, a very different pattern. High-status individuals (i.e., those with high levels of education) tend to have the fewest "disliked" genres; the few genres that they dislike, moreover, tend to be associated with low-status individuals. As a result, Bryson modifies Bourdieu's argument and suggests that multicultural capital is now in play, whereby

advantages accrue to those who are well versed with a variety of music rather than conversant only with music associated with high culture. Meanwhile, Thornton (1996) relies on ethnographic research to see the symbolic boundaries raised by British teens who frequent music clubs. She finds, in particular, that these style-conscious teens draw sharp distinctions between themselves and teens who are not members of their clique, between the underground and the mainstream, and between authentic and commodified music. As a result, she modifies Bourdieu's argument by positing the importance of "subcultural" capital—thereby noting the cultural currency and distinctions at work in this domain.

Other scholars have gone in slightly different direction by querying the expansive musical tastes of high-status individuals (see also Holt 1998). When analyzing U.S. survey data for 1982 and 1992, Peterson (1992) and Peterson and Kern (1996) find that high-status individuals, in addition to liking classical music, also tend to like more musical genres than other listeners, and that this "omnivorous" tendency has grown more pronounced over the decade. Peterson also suggests that the U.S. taste structure resembles an inverted pyramid—with high-status omnivores at the top (i.e., many musical preferences) and low-status univores at the bottom (i.e., few preferences). At least three types of research arose in response to their findings. First, some problematize the distinction between "omnivores" and "univores"—pushing for a conceptualization that taps more than the number of liked genres. In pursuing a qualitative analyses of survey data (e.g., correspondence analysis) and attending to those who are decisive and indecisive regarding genre preferences, Sonnett (2004) finds various types of univores (e.g., those who like only country music) and omnivores (e.g., those who like pop and

country music but have mixed feelings about classical music). Consequently, he suggests that the taste structure looks more like a parabola, with decisive omnivores and univores occupying the ends and mixed opinion folks occupying the middle (see also Mark 1998). Second, some researchers have turned their attention to longitudinal patterns, investigating such things as whether the omnivore pattern is growing more pronounced over time. Considering survey data on attendance at performing arts events (e.g., jazz, classical) over three points in time, DiMaggio and Mukhtar (2004) find some evidence in support of the omnivore thesis: The highly educated are attending less orchestral concerts over time, but they are attending more jazz concerts. That is, cosmopolitan (rather than highbrow) tastes seem to be the coin of the realm (see also López-Sintas and Katz-Gerro 2005). Finally, a wave of research addresses the extent to which the omnivore thesis attains in other nations (e.g., van Eijck 2001; Vander Stichle and Laermans 2006), with Peterson (2005) identifying research on 12 nations. While the omnivore issue is far from resolved, the dramatic flourishing of this scholarship is but another sign of music sociology's recent vitality.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, sociology is uniquely equipped to elucidate the context in which music production occurs and to parse patterns of reception. It is hoped that it will become better equipped for the direct study of the remaining domain, that of musical content. Moreover, given the recent boom that music sociology has enjoyed, which includes an expanding array of theoretical perspectives, its short-term trajectory seems well set, with contributors researching such thriving issues as omnivorous tastes and the implications of

new technologies. Finally, its long-term vitality will benefit from current scholars building on the works of the past, such as Weber ([1921] 1958), and from contributors to one domain (e.g., reception) incorporating the insights and advances in other domains (e.g., production, content).

## Notes

1. I conducted this search via the keyword option, thereby identifying any article in this online database that contained “music” in its abstract, title, or subject heading. The resulting numbers are not limited to English-language publications.
2. I use “sociology of music” and “music sociology” interchangeably—although some might see these terms as denoting different approaches (see DeNora 2003).
3. Consider that sociological reviews of Weber’s oeuvre (e.g., Bendix 1977) often remain mostly (if not completely) silent about his musical concerns.
4. Scholars outside of sociology admirably address the responses of female musicians to such barriers—responses that have sometimes gone unnoticed—and make visible the musical production of women across time and various musical genres (e.g., Citron 1993; Tucker 2000).
5. “Sensemaking” can refer both to a specific theory (Weick 1995) and the general process by which organizations interpret their environment. I use the term in the latter sense.
6. Given the global diffusion of rap, it appears that these majors underestimated its potential audience (see Mitchell 1996, 2001, 2003; Elflein 1998; Bennett 1999a, 1999b).



7. This was only one possible solution; the British government, for instance, initially proceeded by owning and operating the entity responsible for radio broadcasting, the BBC (Coase 1950; Leblebici 1995; Ahlqvist 2001).
8. This approach to composition is one thing that initially made the majors uneasy about rap, as it departed from the typical mode of popular music production (Negus 1999).
9. The dominance of majors is not absolute. For instance, they face difficulties in staving off piracy and collecting remuneration (see Frith and Marshall 2004; Marshall 2004; Leyshon et al. 2005).
10. Early music by African Americans did have its defenders—as Lopes (2002) and Appelrouth (2003) show for jazz. Of course, rap also has its own defenders (see Binder 1993).

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