Weirdness Takes Work:

Using Cultural Capitals to Understand How Freeform Radio DJs Choose Music

BY

EMILY W. EASTON

B.A., University of Chicago, 2001

M.S., University of Chicago, 2001

DISSERTATION

Submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Communication
in the Graduate College of the
University of Illinois at Chicago, 2017

Chicago, Illinois

Defense Committee:

<div style="margin-left:2em">

Steven Jones, Chair and Advisor
Deirdre McCloskey
Holly Kruse, Rogers State University
David Park, Lake Forest College
Tim Wall, Birmingham School of Media

</div>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SUMMARY

To understand how people with diverse musical tastes choose music, seven freeform radio DJs at WLPN in Chicago, IL shared their programming strategies in this participant observation project. Freeform radio DJs have a reasonably unique autonomy to choose music for broadcast, unlike DJs who work in formatted radio. The history of radio formatting helps to explain how these privileges have evolved throughout the history of music radio. Freeform radio DJs act as curators, choosing music with care and expertise for their audiences, in partnership with the organization that provides their venue, e.g. a museum, but in this case, a radio station.

The DJs used various forms of cultural capital, including objectified and embodied cultural capital. The host station, WLPN, acted as a source of institutionalized cultural capital. The forms of objectified cultural capital included musical objects, most specifically vinyl records and 45s, which had the most value in this field. The forms of embodied cultural capital included knowledge about music, programming philosophies, language, and the physical motions when they played records. To accrue and effectively use this capital, the DJs invested their time as labor. While this can (and should) be considered work, it should not be taken with any impression of tedium or drudgery.

The conclusion discusses the joy that these DJs brought to their work, which was highly collaborative and community-oriented. Counter to the conclusions of the original theorist who developed the theories of the forms of cultural capitals, Pierre Bourdieu, this research does not point to competition and struggles for power, but rather happiness.

I. INTRODUCTION

Despite the wide variety of music available, most listeners tend to consume only a small fraction of it. While studies of musical taste and consumption have noted this problem, there is little (if any) work on musical participants who *do* develop and maintain more expansive tastes. As casual listeners gain access to an increasingly overwhelming array of music, understanding the work it takes to develop and support more expansive musical tastes helps to explain why more listeners do not do so, but, more importantly, how it *can* be done. This dissertation attempts to learn from one such group: freeform radio DJs. Freeform stations, unlike most other music radio stations, give DJs the freedom to choose the music for their own shows and these stations feature music from a wider range of albums, artists, and genres.

Freeform stations often explicitly aim to broadcast a more diverse selection of music. Compared to mainstream radio, freeform radio stations can sound significantly weirder, which raises the question of how freeform stations ensure each of their DJs plays the right *kind* of weird that attracts and retains audiences. Research on formatted radio has explored how programmers rely on centrally developed strategies that feature music their audiences already enjoy. What is less understood is how freeform radio stations attract audiences *without* a centralized strategy that limits programs to specific patterns or genres (i.e. formats), while also playing music most of their listeners have never heard before. At freeform stations, DJs act as curators, working within explicit, though informal, parameters to choose music for the station's audience. In addition to understanding how individuals develop more expansive taste, this research explores how one freeform radio station balanced DJ autonomy with station identity to introduce audiences to a wider variety of music.

Most people arrive at studying music culture because they are music fans. I went the other way around. In 2001, smitten with a classmate and searching for a thesis topic, I stumbled into the indie music scene of Chicago as a scholar trying to understand a new world of music fans. They seemed exotic and strange to me. At concerts, or "shows," they stood stock still while they stared at the stage; dancers created a wide ring of disapproving side eyes, and the occasional straight up glare. Everyone dressed in what I ultimately described as "the uniform" of thrift scored shirts and the ubiquitous, Buddy Holly style black-framed glasses. Everyone looked like they had uniquely chosen to dress the exact same way. Music preferences also seemed to follow some strict rules of acceptability. With a few exceptions[1], very few bands earned universal approval. Someone usually had an "objective" fact at the ready to explain why, for example, he (and it was usually a "he") preferred another, often earlier, iteration of the artist or perhaps a less popular, album. I observed it first hand as my research came to a close and I applied for my own radio show at WHPK, the University of Chicago station where I had met most of my research participants. When I told a participant I was preparing my playlist to submit for review, he quickly offered "Don't put Built to Spill,"[2] referencing a moderately popular indie rock band I had just "discovered" in my own musical explorations (and was completely in love with). His comment succinctly summarized the standards of the station, which valued more obscure artists. Even though Built to Spill was (and still is) far from a mass

---

[1] In 2000, the 10 or so people I talked to agreed on only one band: Pavement. One interviewee event laughed about how "different" everyone's tastes could be, but yet "Everyone loves Pavement."

[2] Musical recordings are underrepresented in musical scholarship across fields (Day, 2000, p. 228), which makes even less sense now that so much music is easily accessible. For those reading on screens, I have provided hyperlinks to any music I have included in my research. A complete playlist of available tracks that I have references is available at: https://open.spotify.com/user/emilyhatestheworld/playlist/4u2R7PABodPVqrNV6qhJDr

commercial success, they did not fall enough below the musical radar to earn me a show at

WHPK.

During my research on the rules of the indie rock subculture, I successfully learned to

navigate it as a native. I came to be a music fan by studying music fans. I picked up how to act,

talk, and dress, because I wrote about those aspects of the groups I had observed. Building my

own taste took more work. To earn credibility in my interviews and ask better questions, I tried

to listen to all the bands that came up in my interviews. I picked up a copy of (1999) *The Great*

Indie and Alternative Discography and made flashcards of connections between bands so I

could sound knowledgeable to my participants. One of my participants recommended I start

reading a new website he was writing for, Pitchfork.com, to help me keep up with music

coming out. I bought a record player and started my record collection.[3] Learning what I liked

took as much work as anything; I rarely felt confident in my own tastes.[4]

When I finished my project, I kept listening and went on to a job in my field, working as

a clerk at Reckless Records. I did not share much about my academic work at my new job. For

starters, it was somewhat embarrassing to admit I had effectively learned to be cool by writing

a paper on it. But, at Reckless, I also started to harbor serious doubts about my conclusions on

independent music communities. First off, Reckless employees and customers had far more

diverse tastes and identities than I had initially accounted for. Theoretically, I had never found

the right fit with theories of subculture; Hebdige's (1979) punks articulated resistance with their

---

[3] My first purchases were Air's "Original Motion Picture Score for the Virgin Suicides" and Apples in Stereo's "The Discovery of a World Inside the Moone." I was so excited, I did not make it past the As.

[4] This is likely why I remember the WHPK playlist comment so clearly: Built to Spill was one of the first bands I found that had not been recommended by someone I was working with and I immediately liked them without someone else's endorsement.

style, but I saw no such opposition in faded corduroys and western wear shirts. Muggleton's (2000) updated observations on the subculture of punk label subculture came closer, but with the same focus one genre of music. I struggled to understand the political, but seemingly optional, ideals of punk in relationship to the far less radical groups of music fans I worked with and waited on; liking punk rock did not make someone a punk, as the well-dressed after-work crowd buying Anti-Flag 45s seemed to prove. The group I had written my thesis on seemed closer to Becker's (2004) college jazz fans, using their privilege to "slum it" in clubs in Hyde Park (of all places) and eschew the more popular music of their time. The underground elitism seemed the same 40 years later. [5] Working at Reckless, however, I met more and more music fans who did not seem like that group either. The record buyer crowed the new hit single by Kylie Minogue, celebrating the song as the best thing to come out all year. Another clerk, Courtland, collected spiritual jazz, Northern soul, LA punk, and every Jimi Hendrix bootleg that came through. He never criticized other tastes either, once explaining his own philosophy that "It's never cool to make someone else feel bad for what kind of music they like." And Courtland was not the exception. I somewhat expected to find a familiar stereotype of all-knowing record clerks who looked down on customers with the wrong tastes, but that was absolutely not the case. Most everyone had tastes that spanned the familiar and the exotic, as well as the obscure and pedestrian – and, perhaps more importantly, everyone seemed to mostly respect that.

---

[5] I had had some concerns about my eventual conclusions during the research process as well. I had attended a Guided by Voices concert that shattered my conclusion that indie fans stood still: the audience danced, sang along, poured beer on each other, and generally acted like a more stereotypical rock audience. But, I had a thesis to finish, so I kept my language broad and stuck to the majority of what I had seen.

When I returned to graduate school in 2010, the ways to learn about and hear music had changed dramatically. Pitchfork.com had become an encyclopedia of past and present albums, all searchable and numerically graded; they also hosted a major music festival every summer. Music listeners could more easily learn about artists. Instead of looking at label ads in the back pages of select publications, nearly every band and label had a website, as well as a presence on social media (e.g. Facebook and Twitter), and music-based network sites (e.g. Bandcamp and Soundcloud). Streaming services such as Spotify and Pandora offer legal access to huge catalogs of music, while bit-torrent services such as Soulseek[6] present an updated take on file-sharing, following in the footsteps of Napster. If I had started my M.A. project 10 years later, I could have saved hundreds – maybe even thousands – of dollars because I would not have had to buy the music to hear it. There is still plenty of music that is not available online (see Anderton, 2016), there is a lot more music available online; access has been decoupled from ownership. People can access more music more easily than ever before, most people still do not hear more than a small slice of it.

The casual fan can often easily access artists and albums that might have been otherwise unavailable, or at least, more difficult to hear. Despite increased access to the ever wider variety of popular culture products in circulation, tastes and consumption have not kept pace; most people still consume a fraction of what is available (Hesmondhalgh, 2007). It is not a new problem. After the Frankfurt School tirades regarding popular culture, specifically "that whole sphere of music whose lifeblood is standardization" (Adorno, 1945, p. 212), 20th century

---

[6] Of all of the streaming services I have mentioned, Soulseek is the only one I have not stumped with an inaccessible request.

pop music charts showed increasing measures concentration *and* musical diversity (Burnett, 1992; Lopes, 1992; Peterson & Berger, 1996). But, by focusing only on the very popular, the studies missed the huge swath of music influencing listeners outside of the most widely available, mainstream options. Even studies that looked for new entrants into the charts (Dowd, 2004),relied on data from a widely heard, but still very small subset of available music. Studies of musical diversity have tended to rely on quantitative data, which only can only explain musical taste within a limited vocabulary of genres, which is specifically a problem for survey-based studies of musical taste (Peterson, 1992). Genres of music are a blunt instrument in themselves. For example, when a survey asks if you like "rock music," what kind of music do you think of? Early R&B influenced artists like Chuck Berry and Elvis Presley? Hair metal like Guns'n'Roses or thrash-inspired metal like Metallica? A survey tool is ill-prepared to tackle the fluid nature of musical genres across time or individuals. Fluctuations in genre classifications mean that studying musical diversity quantitatively over time may not be measurable without "impossible resources of time and energy" (Hesmondhalgh, 2009, p. 274). Exploring how people develop diverse musical tastes requires a different, more qualitative approach.

To understand how people chose a more diverse selection of music, I wanted to study a group that actually did that. Instead of trying to extrapolate a broad, but less accurate, theme of diversity across large fan groups, I looked to the groups of fans I had known and worked with before, who regularly sought out the lesser heard to build tastes that went deep and wide and spanned several genres. As my graduate coursework came to a close, I had started DJing again at WHPK, having been inspired by the shows I had been listening to on WFMU, a freeform station in Jersey City, New Jersey. WFMU DJs seemed to draw on an impossibly broad set of

tastes on music for each program. Freeform radio DJs presented an ideal group to explore how individuals could develop deep, diverse musical tastes.

In this dissertation, I will explore how freeform radio DJs at WLPN in Chicago chose music for their programs by drawing on their investments of labor as music fans and curators. The first chapter will explain the history of freeform radio in terms of formatted music radio in the United States, as well as college and community radio, which are the predominant types of stations that host freeform programming today. In the second chapter, I outline my participant observation method, including foundations for the method, site selection, participant selection, and the definition of participation in this study. The third chapter introduces and explains the theoretical framework I used to analyze my field notes: I employed Bourdieu's concepts of field and the forms of cultural capital. Within his structure of fields, WLPN can be defined as an institution in the field of freeform radio, as well as the field of independent music in Chicago, both of which will be discussed in that chapter as well. In the fourth chapter, I identify the role of the freeform radio DJ as a curator, among other possible terms that include gatekeeper and cultural intermediary. The fifth chapter examines how WLPN worked to establish itself as an institution in its fields, which includes a discussion of how institutions can confer institutional cultural capital to individuals. As an institution, WLPN presented DJs with a broad, but still specific, definition of the station audience and shaped the overall sound of the station by selecting and training DJs. The sixth chapter turns to the DJs for an examination of how they used the form of embodied cultural capital, which can also be understood as personal or tacit knowledge, to choose music for their shows. The DJs often built broad show descriptions that could accommodate a wide variety of music and drew on personal programming philosophies

that guided their choices. They also demonstrated some of their embodied cultural capital when they talked about music, but not uniformly. The final findings chapter focuses on the objectified cultural capital the DJs used, which mostly consisted of their own vinyl records and 45s, offering an opportunity to explore ideas of authenticity in music sharing cultures, as well as how DJs use other technologies alongside and in partnership with their record collections. The conclusion discusses the implications of my research for scholars in the cultural industries perspective, with a specific eye towards how Bourdieu's emphasis on power obscures some of the most important aspects of musical participation, namely, happiness.

My research has been sharply shaped by my own experiences in the fields of independent music in several roles. I knew, for example, that developing diverse musical tastes and then sharing them with an audience took work. Anyone, or any algorithm, can put together a collection of sounds, but making it listenable requires expertise and investment. When I observed my DJs selecting tracks or listened to them describe their record hunting adventures, I considered their investment as labor. This dissertation is an investigation of their work, the work of weirdness.

II. FREEFORM RADIO

A.   <u>**Introduction**</u>

Music radio has a long history of trying to understand its all-important, invisible audiences; the second radio broadcast closed with a call for listeners to write to the broadcaster, who was an engineering professor, at his lab in Massachusetts (Barnouw, 1966, p. 20). Stations and networks have had to develop strategies to figure out who might be listening, what encourages them to tune in and, maybe most importantly, stay that way. Radio stations share a desire to keep audiences listening so "the skill of programming is a negative one, to ensure that the switch is never used and the dial never touched" (Barnard, 1989, p. 92; Hennion & Meadel, 1986). To attract and retain audiences, radio stations have to have some idea of *who* is listening and *what* kinds of programming keeps them tuned in.

To understand how freeform radio stations approach the challenge of attracting audiences, it is essential to first understand how formatted radio stations identify, define, and program to their audiences. Formats organize radio content into a recognizable pattern that help audiences identify the content; formats often describe the genre of music (e.g. hard rock, R&B, or hits of the 80s, 90s, and today). Format can also be understood as the syntax of radio: how the commercials, songs, chatter, and news flow together in a carefully scheduled order through the program and broadcast day. Rodman (2016) builds on genre research in film, literature (Altman, 1999) and television (Mittel, 2004) offering that formats operate like "blueprints" that guide both the programmer and the audience's expectations. It is a common language of production and consumption that satisfies both sides (p. 236). Format radio, then,

can be understood as a radio programing strategy that anticipates and serves audience's

expectations, as evidenced by data about audiences, within broader categories of genre or

style.

The first consistent use of the term comes up with Top 40, who incorporated industry

and audience data (Chapman, 1992, p. 14). But, stations have used versions of formats since

the very beginning of radio; the Top 40 twist was a turn to programming strategies that became

increasingly more specific and data-driven, often using centralized decision-making processes

that have had the effect of standardizing content across stations in the majority of cases. The

history of music radio presents several examples of how programmers have used data to

present "a product of the interpretation and anticipation of their audiences' needs" (Hendy,

2013, p. 71), though there are also examples of how disregarding the data has been just as

productive in reaching audiences. The exceptions have produced a few of music radios

strongest innovations, including its genesis.

The history of formatted radio sets the tone for the emergence of freeform radio as an

alternative approach in the 1960s. Many cite the "underground rock" FM stations as the roots

of freeform (Barnard, 2000; Barnouw, 1968), but modern freeform radio draws on the longer

history of innovations in music radio, as well as the history of community and college radio,

which are the types of stations most likely to feature freeform programming nowadays. This

chapter will address the evolution of formatted music radio and how formatting strategies set

the stage for the emergence of freeform radio on the FM frequencies, as well as the histories of

community and college radio.

B. **Formatted Radio**

The strategy of explaining programs to audiences via formats emerges early: the first "Radio Music Box" offered by a fledgling Radio Corporation of America (RCA) came with a subscription to *Wireless Age* that featured a program schedule that communicated when certain genres of music (e.g. "classical" or "hillbilly," which is now known as "country") in set blocks (Barnouw, 1966, p. 79). Because early stations aimed to reach a wide group of tastes, the "patchwork" approach offers an early version of formatted radio that helped audiences connect with programs they would enjoy (Simpson, 2011, p. 8). The strategy used radio programs to sell radios.

Music radio used data to plan programming from the beginning, but the early innovations came from going *against* what it had predicted about its audiences tastes. In 1921, Westinghouse (who made radios) to a risk when they supported Chicago's KYW, the first dedicated music station in the United States. Until that point, broadcasts with the best ratings had been election results and sporting events; music was included, but it was not the primary content. When Westinghouse handed their transmission control to Mary Garden, the beautiful and beloved general director of the Chicago Civic Opera, they hoped her approach would boost radio sales. Audiences surpassed all expectation: "At the beginning of the season there were thought to be 1,300 receivers . . . By the end of the opera season 20,000 sets were reporting in operation in Chicago" (Barnouw, 1966, p. 88). The enthusiastic (and profitable) audience reaction cemented music's place as an on-air staple, taking programming in a new direction, against what the data might have predicted.

As more people bought radios, stations sprouted up nationwide, offering a wider variety of content to smaller, local markets. To better organize the scattershot growth, Congress founded the Federal Radio Commission (FRC) in 1927, which became the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in 1934. Early FRC legislations favored larger radio networks, who began overtake the small, local stations that had sprung up around the country (Chapman, 1992, p. 4). Within 3 years, 10% of stations in the US had closed. All were independent and mostly educational (Barnouw, 1966, p. 209, 216). As larger networks commanded more broadcast time, sponsored radio and commercials returned to fashion, along evolving into more carefully planned broadcasts developed with an eye for marketing potential (Chapman, 1992, p. 4). Smaller stations joined networks who took over the broadcasts with programs that reflected their advertisers' interests.

The effects on programming were dismal: 1920s radio music came to consist of live conservatory style music, that was so bland, it was termed "potted plant music" by one program director. Music on the radio could not have been more different from the music capturing adventurous, live audiences; African-American migration had expanded the newly titled "jazz" to Northern American cities (Barnouw, 1966, p. 126 - 28). In an attempt to satisfy advertiser expectations by playing predictably popular music, radio had lost its edge. But, as live radio music stalled, relaxed rules regarding recorded music resulted in two very different, but equally important developments in radio programming: the resurgence of niche stations and the subsequent rise of Top 40 radio.

In an effort to keep radio stations focused on education, and not entertainment, Herbert Hoover and the Department of Commerce had banned playing phonograph records on

air as anything but filler or in case of emergency (Chapman, 1992, p. 4). The FCC initially reinforced the limitations by requiring stations to identify when they played recorded music, "so frequently as to stigmatize them" (Barnouw, 1966, p. 217), but they relaxed the policy in 1940. The new rule cut back required announcements for recorded music to every thirty minutes and let stations use their own discretion on the wording. That same year, artists also lost any ability to enforce the prohibition against broadcasting their records, which was often printed right on the record label. The Supreme Court declined to review a case regarding a violation of that rule, which finalized the initial judge's order in favor of the record owner, who could now broadcast his possession as he pleased (Barnouw, 1966, p. 217). Advertisers even came around when they saw quick results of spots played during recorded music programs (Fisher, 2007, p. 12). Stations now had legal freedom and financial incentive to play recorded music, but the pushback from the music writers and publishers, as well as musicians, created the opportunity for audiences to really hear something new.

The American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP) owned the rights to most all of the popular recorded music of the time. With a surge in demand for their product, ASCAP attempted to raise royalty rates. Stations boycotted and turned to music in the public domain and the newly formed Broadcast Music Inc. (BMI), which featured lesser known artists compared to ASCAP. Stations, smaller labels, and record promoters came to form a "grassroots music industry" that opened the audience's ears to new genres like bebop, blues, and bluegrass (Fisher, 2007, p. 12-13). In turn, the industry network supported the new wave of smaller, unaffiliated stations sprouting up along the AM dial. As larger media companies shifted their attention to television, the proportion of unaffiliated stations rose to almost 50%

nationwide by 1946. Without much of a budget and hefty operating costs to manage,

unaffiliated stations came to rely on phonograph records to fill the hours (Chapman, 1992, p.

12). And unaffiliated stations could to take risks with their smaller audiences because they did

not work with large advertising budgets. For example, some smaller stations played (the

unfortunately named) "race music."[7] Race music drew white audiences, but only in small

numbers. Major networks could not be bothered for such small, disparate tastes and sponsors

dropped out when there was too much black-made music on the air (Chapman, 1992, p. 13).

Unaffiliated stations could take more risks to introduce niche audiences to new music.

At the same time, radio's role in record sales set the groundwork for a new type of

format that connected the two like never before. The American Federation of Musicians called

a strike that kept their musicians from making recordings. Even with no new recorded music for

nearly a year, radio promotion continued to fuel record sales. Instead of radio stations, record

companies ultimately satisfied the demands for more money (Fisher, 2007, p. 13). Records, 45s

specifically, came to dominate the music industry, pushed to the top by radio stations and the

brand new Top 40 format.

A disappointment to his family of Storz beer fame and fortune, Todd Storz bought

KOWH in Omaha in 1949. KOWH was the first station to feature Storz's famous contribution to

format radio: Top 40 (Fisher, 2007, p. 3 – 4). These types of acquisitions were happening

nationwide: investors acquired marginally profitable, unaffiliated stations for cheap, building

broadcast networks by purchase instead of applying to the FCC for a license (Chapman, 1992, p.

---

[7] Race music was performed by black musicians, though the labels, and stations that played those labels, had white owners.

p. 14). The stations also took risks with programming as they attempted to make the stations

not just financially viable, but profitable. The legend of Top 40 (as told by Storz) is that he had

the idea while watching diner patrons – and eventually the waitress – put money in the jukebox

to hear the same song multiple times. The real story is less glamourous, but still interesting

from an audience research point of view: Storz received the results of a University of Omaha

industrial testing project that had asked about radio preferences. The study of his station

concluded that not only were music shows the top preference, but that the audience wanted to

hear their favorites multiple times (Fisher, 2007, p. 8 - 9). The data showed what audiences

knew they wanted to hear, which is what KOWH came to deliver. Within a year, almost 50% of

Omaha were regular listeners, up from just 4% when Storz had bought the station. The success

drew snickers from other stations at first, but the audiences came in droves, along with the

advertisers (Fisher, 2007, p. 10). Top 40 went nationwide on Storz's networks (which quickly

multiplied) and his competitions' stations followed suit. Staying on top of the artists, songs, and

albums in the Top 40 became a data-driven process using multiple sources of audiences'

existing tastes. Commercially oriented music stations used audience data from their own

station, as well as jukebox plays, record sales, sheet sales, and bandleader requests, to

condense everything into a single program of popular music. By the 1950s, using audience data

to play the hits became more widely known as "format" radio (Chapman, 1992, p. 14). The

definition of format radio here makes an important inclusion: format radio refers to the

categorical organization by genre or style, but also to how those categories are determined by

audience demand as understood by data.

Top 40 transferred programming decisions from the on-air talent to the program

director (Barnouw, 1966, p. 84; Simpson, 2011, p. 12). The first use of the term "Disc Jockey"

also comes from the Top 40 programming strategy: the Disc Jockey rides the carefully

determined pattern of music, musical genre, commercials, and news, keeping audiences tuned

in (Chapman, 1992, p. 14). In Top 40 and eventually most of formatted radio, the DJ has nothing

to do with choosing the music or the content, even though the audience might hear it that way.

Relying on audience data to make programming decisions creates something like a

feedback loop, but closer to a station-fulfilling prophecy. Hennion and Meadel (1986) described

the cycle in their anthropological study of RTL, a Luxembourg-based "periphery station" that

broadcast to a French audience from outside their nation-run media's border. They noted how

the station programmed music to audiences at certain time slots, supported by data that

proved audiences tuned in for that type of programmed music at that time. In other words, RTL

created, and then satisfied, the same demands. Hennion and Meadel (1986) also observed

similar "blueprints" in the ways the station programmed certain types of music ("popular and

young" and "mostly female") at specific times of day (the morning) for specific audiences

("younger, working class, and masculine) (p. 290). RTL conflated time slots, audiences, and

artists, building a program schedule based on what artists were right for that time of day.

Hennion and Meadel (1986) argue that the centralized programming strategies they observed

did not only program to an audience, but actually built that audience with its programs, much

like Top 40: Top 40 radio made the hits popular to play to listeners who loved to hear the hits.

As Top 40 radio became the dominant style on AM radio, newly available FM

frequencies renewed the opportunities to reach a smaller audience who were interested in an

alternative. Most major networks had no financial incentive to explore the possibilities of FM, even though interest had increased through the 1950s. Networks wanted extend the broadcast day beyond the AM curfews, television's command on everyone's attention had finally slackened, and stereo recordings had created a more popular demand for high-fidelity systems and sound. Advertisers, however, remained disinterested because of the lack of concrete data on FM audiences; they had come to rely on predictable results from pre-determined programming. Compared to the reliable Top 40, FM audiences were poorly defined and challenging to market to (Sterling & Keith, 2008, p. 123). New content also remained prohibitively expensive without advertiser demand. Major networks could not afford new programming without an audience demand in place, but smaller stations took a shot. By the early 1960s, FM programming strategy fit into two categories: a re-broadcast of the same content from the older sister station on the AM dial or a new, more ambitious type of programming that attempted to reach the adult audience who had lost interest in only hearing the hits.

Only 20% of FM stations existed without an affiliation to a larger network with an AM presence, but the minority established audiences with more sophisticated tastes drawn in by the hits of yesterday. KABL in San Francisco pioneered this formatting strategy, which came to be known as "beautiful music." The format featured the sweeping sounds of artists like Henry Mancini, now known as "easy listening." It might sound tired now, but it was the alternative. Beautiful music shifted the syntax of Top 40 programming by building in room for sweeping sets of music that would later become a hallmark of the FM dial. WFMT in Chicago took advantage of the FM opportunity to broadcast classical music, along with Presidential press conferences

and a talk show hosted by a young Studs Terkel. The WFMT station owner invested $50,000 in the record collection[8], sharing international music festivals and operas in their entirety (Sterling & Keith, 2008, pp. 114-115). Unaffiliated FM stations, like their AM predecessors, used their broadcast power to reach a new kind of audience by experimenting with what would hold their attention before freeform rock stations came along.

Unaffiliated FM stations also developed alternative funding models that relied on their audiences instead of advertisers, setting a precedent for public and non-profit radio. Beautiful music stations sold on subscriptions and program guides, tapping into the interest of their listeners. That same station owner at WFMT took an even more direct approach: he went on-air twice in the station's first year to ask the audience for money. And they responded with donations (Sterling & Keith, 2008, p. 114-5). Unlike the stations who needed to rely on the reliable audiences they had created, the smaller audiences of the independently owned stations could take risks because their audiences wanted – and supported – something different. Listeners over the age of 25 stopped tuning in for the predictable pop on the AM dial (Sterling & Keith, 2008, p. 129). By the mid-1960s, FM radio stations had quadrupled in just a few years and attracted a newer, broader group of listeners, expanding the FM audience well beyond its previously small boundaries.

C.   Non-Duplication And The Rise Of FM

The FCC's 1964 program duplication restriction inadvertently accelerated the audience migration to FM. Majority major networks with AM and FM positions played the same

---

[8] That's an estimated $315,000.00 to $1,650,000.00 in 2017 on MeasuringWorth.com.

programming on both frequencies to save money. The FCC declared it "a waste of valuable

spectrum space" (Federal Communications Commission, 1965, p. 119). The 1964 ruling forced

stations in cities with more than 100,000 people to limit their duplicate programming to 50% of

their broadcast week (Federal Communications Commission, 1965, p. 119). Even though the

ruling was not fully implemented until 1967, it left Top 40 stations (among others) with hours to

fill (Sterling & Keith, 2008, p. 133). The FCC ruling forced stations to bring on more talent to

program original content.

The new FM stations sought to bring in audiences with a different approach to

programming: instead of playing the popular, the stations would draw from a wider catalog to

introduce audiences to artists and albums. The rise of underground rock radio coincides with

the rise of the LP; 45s, featuring single songs, had been the dominant musical object for popular

music listeners until the 1960s (Simpson, 2011, p. 24). Albums meant a wider range of tracks

from the artist, offering the DJ more options to share. At New York's WOR-FM, the first

underground rock music station to serve a major market, the format supposedly came from a

DJs flip decision to play [the Association's "Requiem for the Masses,"](#) (perhaps a coincidentally

pointed choice for an underground station) which generated a flood of excited calls. The station

earned a local reputation for playing innovative, new music (Simpson, 2011, p. 102). Stations

that did not categorize their shows by genre or any other category came to be known as

"freeform" radio.

Early rock radio can, and has, been be described with several terms, including

underground, "progressive, alternative, freeform, psychedelic, and even the 'anti-format'

format" (Sterling & Keith, 2008, p. 129). Here, freeform is one of adjectives that describe the

music. Several individuals have received credit for coining the term "freeform." San Francisco freeform DJ Tom Donahue used "free form radio" in 1967, using it to describe his own style of playing a 3-4 song set without talking between the tracks (Elborough, 2009, p. 285). DJ Bob Fass at WBAI in New York also used the term "freeform" when he explained his show, *Radio Unnameable*, "set out to show that all music [be it] rock, classical, folk, classical. . .relates to each other and that none of it has to be categorized. . . .The show was completely free, and there you had freeform" (Sterling & Keith, 2008, p. 131). The unifying principle was that DJs had more autonomy to choose the content for their shows. They rejected the established role of the Disc Jockey down to the term: they preferred to be called "announcers," whose role was to announce the songs of a larger set (Sterling & Keith, 2008, p. 133). Freeform stations featured individuals who independently chose a wider range of music for their audiences.

The social and political climate also favored an anti-establishment aesthetic. Broadcasting typically taboo content drew in more new audiences (Sterling & Keith, 2008, p. 129). Underground radio of the mid-60s took on an anti-capitalist agenda: DJs would often downplay on-air advertising or take on sponsorships from of alternative vendors and products, such as headshops (Sterling & Keith, 2008, p. 130), not unlike alternative newspapers taking "outlaw advertising" like sex shops (Benson, 2003, p. 123). Underground radio gave American men growing up in the 1960s an alternate site to negotiate manhood, in sharp contrast to the more dominant images of militarized men during the Vietnam War (Simpson, 2011, p. 106). The radio programming reflected and contributed to the decade's legendary cultural experimentation and the (majority) male DJs could use their airtime to oppose political and aesthetic oppression.

Freeform radio evolved as an innovative, alternative approach to some social mores, but the atypical approach did not extend very far into gender. Women are, not surprisingly, underrepresented in the early days of freeform radio, though not entirely absent. KMPX had a show hosted by five women DJs that lasted through the early 1970s. Other types of FM stations featured more women on-air, especially as journalists on National Public Radio and female music DJs with dedicated audiences (Sterling & Keith, 2008, p. 133-4). But, while there may have been more female DJs, many gender norms remained in like with most of the music industry. Chauvinism pervaded the station management at many stations (Simpson, 2011, p. 104; Sterling & Keith, 2008). Simpson (2011) identifies the subtler sexism that appeared in the station's directives to DJs that they should not play any manufactured or "bubblegum" music, which was primarily aimed at younger, female audiences. Simpson also cites a 1968 *Rock World* record list for any "self-respecting" freeform station, featuring 123 artists, only 8 of which included female vocals (Simpson, 2011, p. 8). Even in an environment that encouraged musical experimentation, playing music for or made by women carried some stigma.

Freeform radio stations did not remain underground, or freeform, for long. As audience sizes increased, corporate ownership took notice and FM stations began to shift towards a more profit-oriented, Album-Oriented Rock (AOR) format (Sterling & Keith, 2008, p. 133). The name explains the approach of playing albums as an alternative to Top 40. DJs lost more and more of their control over the broadcast as the 70s set in. An example of the shift can be seen in a memo from the program director at New York's WPLJ-FM, an ABC owned affiliate:

> We currently have three record lists. There is an A list of hit singles. There is a B
>
> list of currently popular albums. . . There is a C list of standard progressive rock

oldies. This list at this time is in your heads and includes familiar tracks of Dylan,

Beatles, Stones, etc. In the next few days, we should have a C list available to

you. . .The key time zones -- :00, :15, and :45 (indicated by the dot) should be

filled with A, B, C track . . .In the daytime there should be a minimum total of

four B tracks. . .In a four day period, you should have played every item on the A

list at least one. We will be having weekly music meetings on Tuesday to discuss

new records, recommended tracks, and the A, B, and C lists. (Memo from WPLJ-

FM 1971 New York in Keith, 1997, p. 60)

As of the writing of the memo, DJs could still use their own discretion on what constituted a

"familiar track," but the content describes an increasingly standardized selection process,

communicated in writing and through weekly meetings. WPLI management now played a

significant role in deciding what records would be played and when to feature new music.

When FM stations became profitable, programming innovation stalled. Before the end

of the 1970s, around 2,000 FM stations nationwide would not even require a DJ, having shifted

to automated music programming. The DJ's only role became to speak in the scheduled spaces

between the pre-selected tracks (Sterling & Keith, 2008, p. 137). AOR morphed into "Classic

Rock" and "Classic Hits" by the 1980s, drawing on the same canon of hits from the previous

decades. Rothenbuhler (1985) described AOR programming strategies: the music director and

program director at the station worked with a music consultant in another state to build the

playlists for the coming week; the music director reviewed relevant trade sheets and industry

publications to get a sense of what was being played, purchased, or promoted at other radio

stations so their station could stay current; then the group would discuss which tracks would be

suitable for broadcast at their station in a weekly meeting. Successful programmers had knowledge of the radio industry knowledge, not knowledge of the community or knowledge about music (Rothenbuhler, 1985). Radio programming returned to its commercially successful patterns of playing to, and subsequently creating, their audiences' existing tastes.

The history of formatted music radio presents a cycle of serving and experimenting with audience tastes while unaffiliated stations could take risks, using different strategies to determine what would make their audiences appear. But, once a new trend could be defined and programmed, radio networks moved into to standardize their programs and attract advertisers with more reliable audiences, leaving little room in the structure for risk-taking by individual DJs. Freeform radio has its roots in the individual experiments that pushed radio programming into new direction, but also in non-commercial radio stations who had more flexible funding structures and greater ability to experiment with their audiences.

D.   College and Community Radio

Community and, even more frequently, college radio stations are presented as an antagonistic alternative to commercial, mainstream radio. College radio earned a reputation in the 1980s and 1990s for playing a more diverse selection of music, similar to freeform FM stations in the 1960s, but "not all college stations of the time followed alternative music formats, and college radio was not the only form of radio that programmed alternative music" (Kruse, 2003, p. 76). The real diversity of college and community stations is the diversity of approaches they use to construct and communicate with their audiences, which, in community radio especially, can be defined at the station level.

Non-commercial college and community radio stations have had to develop their own funding structures without advertising revenue or, in the early years, federal funding. Around the same time the FCC ruling supported the rise of FM radio with the non-duplication rule, the United States Congress passed the Public Broadcasting Act in 1967, which created the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), followed by the networked National Public Radio (NPR) in 1970 (Sterling & Keith, 2008, p. 146). NPR and CPB stressed using their bandwidth to share more educational content, free from some of the pressure to secure advertisers thanks to their federal funding.

Community radio stations, like the independent radio stations of the 1920s, had a strained relationship with the newly former federal radio organizations. Despite a broadly shared mission centered on educating the public audience, NPR management frequently clashed with its local stations over content: community stations resisted surrendering air time to centrally determined programming. As NPR struggled to resolve internal conflicts and build an audience, the CPB implemented new funding criteria that excluded many community stations. CPB grants could only be awarded to stations with paid staff, certain operating hours, and additional, external financial support (Sterling & Keith, 2008, p. 146). Community stations could no longer rely on the federal funding that had kept them on air.

In response, community radio stations organized into their own network, based on a collaborative, collective system of governance. A group of community radio broadcasters met for the National Alternative Radio Konvention [sic] in 1975 (History and Awards, n.d). The meeting produced the National Federation of Community Broadcasters, who provided support to community stations nationwide on how to secure a signal and train staff, eventually trading

content on tape, via an exchange process known as the "bicycle network" (Sterling & Keith, 2008, p. 148). Unlike the centralized structures of commercial format radio, the NFCB imposed no limits on programming; they provided a support system for decentralized stations nationwide. Community radio stations could serve their (then) hyper-local audiences in whatever ways the station and its DJs determined would be most productive.

The CPB attempted to push college stations out to make more room for their affiliates in the early 1970s, giving the stations until 1978 to increase their bandwidth to 100 watts. College stations only initially needed to broadcast at 10 watts for a Class D license to operate. To the surprise of the CPB, most did (Sterling & Keith, 2008, p. 144). Investing in a college stations makes fine sense from a campus communications perspective, especially in a time before email alerts. College stations enabled a hyperlocal broadcast network with a young audience, broadcasting news, music, or even being used in emergencies[9]. Some college campus radio stations also established an early reputation for innovative and experimental programming. *Friends*, the first radio series focused on gay issues, was broadcast in 1960 by WGTB-FM, a campus station owned by Georgetown University, a Catholic school with a distinctly strong anti-homosexual stance at the time (Sterling & Keith, 2008, p. 118). As the century continued, college radio would strengthen its reputation as a style of radio that offered audiences a more diverse, alternative selection of music.

---

[9] Consider, for example, how useful a college station would have been at the University of Texas-Austin in 1967, when a gunman began shooting from the clock tower. The local station, KTBC, broadcast remotely from the campus, but a campus station likely could have been even quicker to tell students, faculty, and staff on campus to seek shelter (The History of News Radio 590 KLBJ, n.d.).

College stations gained a reputation in the music industry during the 1980s, when they played a central role in establishing audiences for then smaller acts like R.E.M. and U2 (Kruse, 2003; Azeraad, 2001). Commercial FM freeform stations had established an audience taste for more diverse, DJ-driven programming, which some college stations picked up by playing the rock, punk, and new wave that more mainstream rock stations did not feature. As the (small, but significant) audiences followed, major record labels took notice.

The profitable relationship between college radio and the mainstream music industry came as somewhat of a surprise because neither the musicians, nor the stations, expected this kind of success. As King Coffey, the drummer for college rock favorites the Butthole Surfers, explained "There was no radio [playing underground rock] besides college radio. People had to learn about this [underground] music by reading underground publications and listening to college radio" (Coffey in Azerrad, 2001, p. 190). Major labels established promotion departments specifically to reach college radio music directors and encourage certain albums for airplay (Kruse, 2003; Azerrad, 2001). The College Music Journal (CMJ), founded in 1987, published monthly charts to indicate what albums had received airplay at specific stations, which helped labels know where their promotion had been successful. Playing the label's choices, in turn, helped college radio stations build libraries with promotional copies from stations. As the relationship between record labels and college radio stations grew stronger, many fan complained about the demise of college radio, or rather demise of "the prototype of the 'authentic' college radio station" (Kruse, 2003, p. 73). In the early 1990s, after Nirvana and its sonic ilk became multi-platinum recording artists, "the alternative explosion sucked college radio far deeper into the belly of the mainstream music industry" (Azerrad, 2001, p. 494).

26

College radio retained some of its reputation as a source of more experimental, alternative music, but many fans and audiences bemoaned its seemingly new ties with the mainstream music industry. But, the connections between college radio, commercial radio, and the mainstream music industry are more complicated than the common perception.

Not all college stations embraced the alternative format; many operated as commercial stations to prepare students for careers at formatted radio stations (Kruse, 2003). It was not uncommon for stations to emulate mainstream radio stations to train their student staff and reach a wider audience, which meant taking control of some aspects of the content. Steve Albini, the producer and musician, was repeatedly fired from his morning DJ slot at WNUR at Northwestern for playing loud, aggressive music. In his terms, which reflect a very prototypical college radio attitude, "The patsies that were the student administrators of that radio station were fuckin' mainstream radio wanna-bes. . .I got a kick out of just being a thorn in their side" (Albini, in Azerrad, 2001, p. 314). Some station staff *did* want to be in mainstream radio, which meant learning how to attract and retain listeners with an advertiser's interest in mind. Freeform radio, which let DJs make most all of the musical decisions, did not prepare students for radio careers. Kruse (2003) cited an entertainment lawyer who put the two objectives into direct conflict, describing the key issue of college radio in the 1980s and 1990s as "whether college radio serves to prepare people for jobs in the industry, or whether that's a secondary function to actually providing a community-access, free-form radio format" (Simons in Kruse, 2003, p. 83). College stations who wanted to accomplish the former needed to avoid the latter, and many did.

Stations that did self-identify as an "alternative" also did not subscribe to a uniform definition of that term. In areas with several college stations, some college stations, such as WVCR at Siena College in Albany, broadcast mainstream music *as* the alternative on airwaves that already have several college rock options (Kruse, 2003). As Wall (2007) showed in his work with three US "alternative" college stations, each station presented a different idea of what the term meant for their stations. And, the use of "alternative" remains a problematic term when describing even those prototypical college stations because college radio has relied on major label support from the very beginning. Plenty of college stations played non-mainstream, non-major label artists, but this was never uniformly the case.

And, not all of the stations that focused on alternative music used a freeform approach. Many college stations, even those focused on underground content, still employ some sort of formatting structure, most often to create data that supports their relationships with record labels. Non-commercial college stations make fewer demands on their DJs, often requesting that DJs play a certain number of tracks from albums on one or more pre-determined lists during their shows. As a friend and former music director explained to me, the albums that receive airplay end up on that station's CMJ chart, offering data to record labels on which stations should continue to receive promotional copies. Alternative college radio DJs might have more freedom to choose music that their peers in commercial or commercial college radio, but most college stations are not completely freeform.

Unlike alternative college radio, community radio stations also did not attract the same attention from record labels (Kruse, 2003, p. 78). Individual DJs build relationships with certain labels, but, there is no version of CMJ for community radio, so labels do not have easy access to

what receives airplay. Also, because community radio defines its audiences at the station level, the data on what people tune in for (assuming the station even bothers) has a very limited use outside that station; data on what works at one community station is unlikely to be much good at forecasting what will work at another. Community radio stations may adopt formats to communicate with their audiences what to tune in for, but can also be more open to the freeform programming that puts DJ autonomy at the center of their individual show's programming strategy.

E.   **(More) Modern Radio**

Formatted, commercial radio became even more centralized as the century came to a close. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 removed the upper limit nationwide station owner, meaning a single company could now buy hundreds of stations nationwide. Limits on ownership within a market slackened as well. The FCC increased the number of stations that could be owned by one entity in proportion to how many stations existed in that market. In smaller communities, with 14 or less stations, one company could own as many as a 36% of the radio stations (Sterling & Keith, 2008, p. 179-80; Rodman, 2016, p. 242). Centralized ownership, of course, meant more standardized programming. Clear Channel was perhaps the most notable beneficiary of the turn: within three years of the Telecommunications Act, they owned nearly 1,000 stations, many of which featured the same, centrally developed content (Sterling & Keith, 2008, p. 183). Formatted radio audiences can tune into multiple stations that play similar rotations of the same artists, albums, and songs. Since the year 2000, formats have multiplied, but remained reliant on the existing tastes of their audiences by promoting nostalgic programming that draws from a wider range of previously successful hits (Rodman, 2016, p.

246). There may be more options, but these options tend to play the same songs they played a few decades before, when those songs were new.

In the last decades of the 20th century, pirate radio stations became more prevalent in the United States, offering a platform to share content that was too provocative for the major radio networks. Pirate radio has its roots in offshore radio in Scandinavia the late 1950s, though the most well-known example, Radio Caroline, did not become a broadcast presence until 1964 (Chapman, 1992, p. 27); "pirate" radio refers to their lack of official state endorsement, but also to the fact that pirate stations broadcast from off-shore boats, outside of any national regulations. In the United States, the FCC received proposals for lower wattage micro-stations, often intended to serve poorer neighborhoods in cities across the US, but rarely approved them. US radio pirates operated on land-based unlicensed micro-stations in the 1980s and 1990s, using their up to 5-mile broadcast radius to share hyper-local, often politically dissident, news and content with their immediate community (Sterling & Keith, 2008, p. 161). United States pirate stations focused less on music and more on political content, but offer another example of an alternative radio structures developed to serve more specific audiences without catering to data-driven understandings of their tastes. It was a small, but significant radio movement: when pirate stations surged again during a mid-1990s FCC deadlock regarding more licenses for micro-stations, commercial and non-commercial radio stations joined forces to stall any progress on adding more competition to the dial (Sterling & Keith, 2008, p. 164). This offers an important reminder that all radio programming, with or without a financial imperative, must attract an audience. Even though the ideals of pirate radio might be closer to freeform radio, they both struggle to find audiences who seek out them out and stay tuned.

More recently, satellite networks like Sirius and internet "radio" stations like Pandora and Spotify have attempted to serve audience needs even more specifically. Satellite radio stations do not need to rely on the limited number of broadcast frequencies; Sirius Radio, for example, offers 994 stations for their subscribers to choose from, ranging from team-specific sports stations to music stations curated by well-known artists such as Pearljam, Willie Nelson, and Bob Dylan, as well as lesser known authorities such as Handsome Dick Manitoba from the Dictators and Aquarium Drunkard, a music blog site that highlights lesser heard artists, old and new. Audiences pay in advance for more options. Pandora, by contrast, takes immediate direction from the listener's feedback: she can approve or skip songs based on her preference, which influences the choices that will come next. It might appear to be the opposite of formatted radio, which draws in large audiences with organized blocks of predictably popular music, but both use the exact same strategy of appealing to the audience's pre-existing tastes. The listener might be able to customize her broadcast, but she is still choosing from a set of songs that the organization has decided on through data analysis (Pandora, for example, uses the Music Genome Project). Attempting to zero in on specific, crowd-sourced patterns of approval, or "hyperaffiliation," does not necessarily expand audience tastes (Rodman, 2016, p. 250). In both instances, audiences have more choices to affiliate with, but they still choose stations with some individual taste or expectation of what genre or style of music will be played.

And, even more recently, community radio stations have experienced their largest period of growth. In January of 2011, the Local Community Radio Act re-opened several spots on the FM frequency for smaller, lower wattage stations. The FCC invited applications for Low

Power FM (LPFM) stations in 2013, creating opportunities for non-profit organizations to claim

a small stake on the broadcast airwaves (Local Community Radio Act, n.d.).

https://www.prometheusradio.org/local-community-radio-act). One of those organizations, the

Public Media Institute, successfully applied for a new community radio license and founded the

freeform station in this study: WLPN, 105.5 FM, Chicago. Even with more radio options than

ever, organizations still seek out opportunities to serve audiences with different perspectives

on programming. What remains to be understood is how these stations find, attract, and retain

their audiences.

F.   Conclusion

The history of music radio, radio formats, college radio, and community radio provide a

robust context to understand how freeform radio, which uniquely centers on DJ autonomy,

defines its audience differently. Music radio has always relied on data about its audiences. And,

even though this dissertation focuses on freeform radio, it is important to resist "the

temptation to assume that formatting and programming according to the charts [or even

audience data] is bad" (Kruse, 2003, p. 74). By using data on what people like, formatted radio

helps guide audiences to products they enjoy, even if those products are restricted to a small

sample of the music that is available (Hesmondhalgh, 2008). Regardless of their approach or

funding structures, all radio stations seek to attract and retain their audiences. Charts and

audience data offer one way to understand the invisible audiences who do not audibly clap and

cheer when their favorite song comes up. But, innovation has come from new methods of

understanding audiences, including the way freeform stations and DJs approach the same

challenges. Freeform radio stations struggle with the same need to attract audiences, but their

strategies rely on individual DJ decisions that shape the broadcast. What is less understood is

how freeform radio stations draw in audiences without presenting a clear expectation of what

any given broadcast might include. The history of experimentation in radio, including freeform,

confirms that audiences will respond to innovations and expand their expectations of what

radio stations can offer. Public, community, and college radio stations attempt to draw

audiences who want a more educational or progressive alternative, but what that means is also

constantly in flux. What remains to be understood is how freeform radio stations balance the

DJ autonomy that creates their less predictable programs with attracting an audience.

III: PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

A.   Introduction

Qualitative research is nearly impossible to replicate: the research rises from

observations and conversations that happen in context at a specific place and time. In another

site or time, with different participants or a different researcher, everything could (and likely

would be) different. Because the research cannot be reproduced, qualitative researchers must

find other ways to explain how they made the choices that shaped their fieldwork and analysis

so readers can assess the validity of the research. Becker (1958) proposes a "natural history"

model that he and his colleagues used, which I have employed in this dissertation. Becker and

his colleagues would present a detailed account of how the researchers had gathered and

analyzed their observations, along with the data and conclusions, to help the reader assess the

basis of their conclusions and the conclusions themselves. By accounting for how she made all

of her choices before and during fieldwork and analysis, the researcher presents a demystified

blueprint of exactly what she did at each stage to get from being in the world to presenting it to

others as academic research.

As the introduction explained, I arrived at my field work with something of an insider

perspective.[10] To explore how freeform radio DJs choose music for broadcast, I became a

station volunteer at WLPN in Chicago, IL for three months. I used a participant observation

method to work with DJs during their shows. I chose the method to collaboratively construct an

---

[10] Coffey (1999) notes that anthropologists have tended to over-emphasize the importance of non-native
approaches, and even the mere possibility of approaching any field as a stranger. Studying as a more "native"
researcher has become more common (Kanuha, 2000; Percival, 2011).

understanding of how freeform DJs made decisions, though the account reflects my own

perspective on our shared experiences at the station. In this chapter, I have documented the

choices, and biases, that shaped my research, including how I chose my method, the station I

studied (WLPN), the DJs, and my role as participant. In the next chapter, I will discuss how I

approached analysis.

B. **Participant Observation**

My research is grounded in the idea that there is no objective truth, but rather that

humans construct all truths within the physical and social world, or constructionist[11]

philosophy. The symbolic interactionist perspective emphasizes the importance of interactions

between people and objects such that "All knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as

such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between

human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social

context" (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). Research methods from the symbolic interactionist perspective

aim to get as close to the interactions as possible (Crotty, 1998). Interview[12], ethnography, and

participant observation all lend themselves to a symbolic interactionist perspective, with key

differences in how the researcher approaches her participants.

---

[11] Constructi*vism* describes the internal, individual meaning-making, while constructio*nism* presents the social, collective version of the same (Crotty, 1998).

[12] Interview methods allow for the researcher to speak directly with her participant, asking questions or having a conversation, depending on the style (Becker & Geer, 1957). Interview methods offers the benefits of a direct, verbal explanation of how the participant understands her activity, but the researcher must rely on the interviewee's account.

An ethnographic researcher focuses on observing her participants during their activities, instead of relying on the participant's account offered by interview.[13] Within the broader category of ethnographic methods, the researcher can choose how much to participate herself. Ethnographic researchers often have conversations in context, using the quieter moments of observation to solicit more specific information or hear more if the participant voluntarily offers some clarification or explanation (Becker, 1958). The two activities – observing and participating – can be combined in multiple ways depending on the researcher's approach (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994; Gold, 1958, Junker, 1960, Spradley, 1980). Wolcott (2008) advocates for constructing an ethnography from three activities: experiencing, enquiring, and examining. The first, experiencing, most closely maps to traditional descriptions of observational ethnography: the researcher experiences, primarily by seeing and hearing, events. By enquiring, the researcher takes a more active role by soliciting information. Finally, examining incorporates archival materials, along with materials that collaborators may have provided. Wolcott's construction includes the opportunity to observe, discuss, and bring in external resources to examine the issue from multiple perspectives.

Participant observation is its own method (Wolcott, 2008), but can also be considered a sub-strategy of ethnography that emphasizes the experience component. Participant observation explicitly includes joining the participants in context, which can blur the lines between researcher and subject. Agar (1996) correctly notes that the ethnographer is not an instrument: she shapes and is shaped by the research context. For example, the gender, race,

---

[13] Wolcott (2008) advocates for the term "collaborators" to stress the shared construction of the account, however, I have chosen "participants" which better describes the role of the DJs in the research phase, with less confusion on who did the analysis and write-up. Both terms are a far preferred alternative to "subjects."

class, and ethnicity of the researcher may affect the types of information she can access.

Instead of attempting to erase or ignore such biases, a participant observer must instead

account for their effects in during her research (Agar, 1996; DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002; Merriam,

1998; Ratner, 2002). The researcher cannot help but shape the research as an active participant

in the context and her collaboratively built research.

Effective participant observation research requires some level of rapport between the

researcher and her participants; relationships make for better research (Whyte, 1979).

Researchers might just "hang out" with their participants, which helps participants get to know

the researcher outside of her research agenda (Bernard, 1994; DeMunck & Sobo, 1998).

Rapport connects to reciprocity as well. Members of the research context give up information,

time, and energy, inviting a researcher to temporarily join their community, which calls for the

researcher to return some form of compensation, such as payment or extra labor (deMunck &

Sobo, 1998). Because the researcher likely receives some credit, or even a credential (e.g. a

Ph.D.), it is important to recognize ways she can give back to her context.

C.   Choosing A Station

I chose to study freeform radio came because of my experience as a DJ and fan. I had

hosted my own show at WHPK from 2000-1 and again from 2005-7. I also regularly tuned into

WFMU, a preeminent freeform station in Jersey City, NJ. I knew, from my own experience, that

building a two hour show every week took work, ahead of time and in the moment. Because

freeform DJs also tend to work unpaid, they seemed like an ideal group to explore how people

chose music without their personal income at stake.

Logistical criteria (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010) determined how I chose a station. I live

and work in Chicago and needed to complete my fieldwork alongside other professional

commitments. Limited time is a common concern for researchers and should be considered

carefully in advance of starting any research project (Wolcott, 2008). I started with the Chicago

stations listed on Wikipedia's "Freeform Radio" page: WZRD at Northeastern University, WLRA

at Lewis University, and WIIT at the Illinois Institute of Technology ("Freeform (radio format),"

n.d. In Wikipedia).[14] After communicating with WZRD, I shifted to stations that did not have an

affiliation to a university or college because I did not want to manage an additional layer of

approval.[15] I found WLPN when a friend recommended the brand-new station as a potential

research site and another friend, Lawrence, mentioned he hosted a show there. WLPN seemed

ideal as a non-affiliated freeform station and the location was perfect: the station is in

Bridgeport, a neighborhood on the southwest side of Chicago, halfway between my job and my

house[16]. Lawrence connected me with the WLPN Station Director, Logan, and station owner,

Ed, with an email titled "My grad student pal Emily…." (Lawrence, email, July 1, 2015). After a

few emails back and forth, Logan and I arranged to meet at the station to talk more about what

the project would entail on both sides.

---

[14] I ruled out WHPK, which does not meet the strict definition of "freeform." DJs needed to stay within their genre formats, specifically observing the boundary between rock and rap. I had assumed DJs would ignore the rule, but the rock format chief explicitly explained that rock format DJs should not play any rap music under *any* circumstances. The rap format chief had requested the rock DJs observe this boundary more carefully.

[15] WZRD had an especially strained relationship with their host institution, Northeastern Illinois University, which is not uncommon. Some "wizards" (their term for DJs) had concerns I was working for Northeastern's administration because a few years ago they had been locked out for six months after the station had been threatened with a "mole" from the administration (email, April 12, 2015).

[16] I had also started considering approaching CHIRP radio, which played "a wide mix of local, independent, lesser-heard, and just generally good music from a variety of genres and eras," ("About Chirp Radio, n.d.) but working with CHIRP would have been a hefty commute up north.

We met in August at the Co-Prosperity Sphere, the multi-purpose gallery and performance space where WLPN broadcast from. It appeared to be a renovated store front with huge display windows on both sides of its corner placement.[17] On that first day, they had not yet built the broadcast booth and the whole space was open, with a bar in the center and chairs scattered around the room. The station set-up was in the back under two blue neon signs featuring the station's logos. Logan was working upstairs in a loft-like space cluttered with books, magazines, and an ashtray. He wore a Wu-Tang Clan shirt translated into Thai.[18] Logan, I later learned, had lived and DJed in Thailand for several years and only recently returned to the United States (Logan, field notes, February 2, 2016). He asked me to explain my project, which I presented in vague terms of how people, specifically DJs, make musical choices. When I finished, he asked me to look through the schedule to send him some potential candidates; he would advise and help with outreach. He suggested 8 DJs who sounded like potentially good fits. I also offered that since my method involved participation I would be happy to take on volunteer duties during the shows or as the station needed (field notes, August 18, 2016). I wanted to ensure I reciprocated any hospitality to host me and my dissertation field work.

D.   **Participant Selection**

I used a judgemental sampling process to identify participants: I purposefully chose DJs who I believed would provide the best information (Fetterman, 2010), in partnership with

---

[17] One of them was marked with a bullet hole. During my time at the station, they would build a broadcasting booth in the front of the space with a window to let passersby peek in, but only after the safety concerns had been adequately addressed (station meeting, field notes, September 15, 2016).

[18] I had worn a vintage 70s shirt dress in an attempt to look cool and appropriate for work and I felt overdressed.

Logan. After our meeting, I reviewed all of the online show descriptions on the WLPN website to select additional potential participants. I looked for DJs who hosted primarily music (not talk) shows without a genre-focused theme. I also tried to avoid shows that built collage-type programs by mixing and layering music because I considered these types of programs to be closer to *making* new music than *choosing* music.[19] I sent Logan a list of 21 DJs who seemed like potentially strong choices. Logan returned an annotated list with helpful comments on who produced shows at home, who hosted infrequently, and a few shows that were more talk-based than the descriptions indicated. I resent a list of 12 DJs that had regular shows, produced in the studio at WLPN. Logan contacted all of the DJs in the group with upcoming shows and I followed up with 6 programs in total: "Thrift Score" with Joe Bryl, "Country My Way" with Lawrence Peters, "Planet Catie-O" with Catie-O, "Isms" with Betty Heredia, and "Sonorama" with Charly and Eddy.

Even with the careful planning, some shows did not ultimately meet the original criteria. Lawrence hosted a genre-specific show, Country My Way, when we worked together. When I had first approached Lawrence about participating, he was hosting two shows at WLPN: The Mutant Hit Parade, which included "power pop, psych, rock, post-punk, folk rock, soul, with a mix of new jams, and lesser known older action… all about the great melodies, hooks and riffs" ("Lawrence Peters, Mutant Hit Parade," January 6, 2016), and Country My Way, "A program of old-skool [sic] country records including classics, rarities, and even some newer stuff in that style" ("Lawrence Peters, Country My Way," 2015) Because I knew his tastes ran much broader

---

[19] DJs in the dance/house genres, as well as DJs in hip hop communities would resoundingly agree with me here, as would their fans.

and his program did play a wide variety of lesser heard music, I knew he would be interesting to work with for the project and chose to include him. Additionally, Betty's show featured an hour of collage-type DJ set, which I learned on our first day working together. Catie-O also played with timing, overlapping songs into layers of sound throughout her show. The criteria evolved as mixing tracks emerged as a strategy that was closely associated with choosing.

In November of 2015, I started attending radio shows with two DJs: Lawrence Peters and Joe Bryl. In January of 2016, the circle expanded to Catie-O, Betty Heredia, and the Sonorama team, a collective of one to three DJs. I ultimately worked with six DJs on five shows for three months, observing 6 – 8 hours of programming with each DJ. Four DJs (Joe, Lawrence, Eddy, and Charly) were men and two (Catie-O and Betty) were women. I did not ask the DJs for their ages, but a few offered the information in course of our work together; the oldest DJ was 62 during my fieldwork. Most of them had grown up in the Midwest, though Charly had come from Mexico. Catie-O and Charly were married, Lawrence and Joe were currently single, Eddy was engaged, and Betty did not offer any information on her relationship status. None of the DJs I worked with directly mentioned having children of their own, though I never directly confirmed that with any of them. They all hosted shows and other creative pursuits, which they also balanced with other employment. No one played music full-time for their living, though Joe's job came the closest: he was the bar manager at Maria's Community Tap, which included selecting and giving feedback to DJs who played there, as well as playing records himself on occasion. The rest of the group had jobs in the service industry, retail, and healthcare, along with some paid DJ work in live settings. At WLPN, they were not paid for their work, which left them mostly free to program their shows without fear of losing a paying job or any earnings.

All participants completed online consent forms that asked for permission to use their real DJ names which, in some cases, were also their legal names. I could not offer much benefit to participate besides a very small promotional opportunity, which is why I requested they use their real names.[20] I did not compensate them for their time, but I paid for a few beverages when we met outside of the station (or, in the case of Sonorama, at the station).[21]

All of the DJs I contacted agreed to participate. And, while I did not observe Logan as a DJ, he shaped the project at every level, taking time to meet, helping select DJs, and reach out to potential participants – all before the fieldwork even started. Logan often spent 12 or more hours a day, most days a week, working at the station himself (Logan, field notes, January 20, 2016). His time, like mine, was also a limited, valuable resource. The DJs took extra time to meet with me or answer additional questions outside of their shows. Whether or not I offered my own help, everyone offered theirs to participate in the project, which made me try harder to reciprocate as a temporary participant in the community. I was able to structure my participation to support my research, while making a small contribution back to the community that had generously agreed to help me.

E.   **Participation**

What it means to "participate" can vary widely between research contexts and evem within the context itself, where participating might include a few roles. I chose to participate as

---

[20] If you, the reader, would like to hear the specific shows from DJs I worked with, I included links in this chapter to their program pages. WLPN broadcasts in the Chicagoland area as 105.5 FM and worldwide from lumpenradio.com. Tune in now!

[21] When Catie-O and I headed to Maria's Community Tap for our interview, Joe was working the bar and provided our first round on the house (Catie-O, field notes, January 20, 2016).

a station volunteer, which was a somewhat familiar role at WLPN. As a station volunteer, I had

a "peripheral membership role" which enabled me to have interactions that helped to develop

my identity as an insider, without participating in the primary activities (i.e. DJing) (Adler &

Adler, 1994, p. 380). My responsibilities as a station volunteer included helping to produce the

shows, logging the DJs playlists, and helping with fundraising events as needed. Logan directed

and supervised my work, which gave me some distance from the DJs and helped clarify my role

as a volunteer when DJs resisted my help. I also acted as an audience member because I

listened to the shows live during broadcast. For a short time, I became a tangential community

member at WLPN, acting in a secondary role to support the station and its DJs while I

conducted my research.

I ran the mixing board during broadcasts, switching between music and microphone, for

all of the shows I worked on with the exception of Sonorama, where Charly, who has extensive

radio experience and did almost everything himself (field notes, February 2, 2016). The other

DJs had little to no radio experience, so I helped with production to give them one less thing to

manage and free up some of their time to talk to me. After I had worked a few shows, Logan

also used the time to leave the station, sometimes running errands for WLPN (Logan, field

notes, December 1, 2015). The production role gave me an ideal vantage point to observe the

DJs and ask questions during the music-filled moments, as well as listening to the music itself.

All DJs were required to type up their playlists because WLPN need to submit playlists to

the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) to maintain their license to

play most music. Logan asked everyone to submit typed lists after their show and

recommended DJs use the computer in the broadcasting booth to log their playlists, but many

continued to keep only hand-written records. Joe Bryl wrote out his playlists in a Spongebob

Squarepants notebook (field notes, November 18, 2015). Lawrence used loose leaf paper

contained in a metal clipboard box, and Betty kept track of things in a hard-to-follow order in a

notebook as well. Sonorama and Catie-O did not have a system to record their playlists. I knew

from my own show how difficult it could be to record everything accurately during a broadcast

– and how challenging it could be to adapt to a new system.[22] I offered my help to a mixed

response. Sonorama seemed relieved and happy to have a playlist secretary (Sonorama, field

notes, February 2, 2016). Lawrence seemed reluctant to have me type the set list, explaining he

kept his records on paper to annotate the lists with information on how the music sounded. I

gently pushed back because Logan had just emphasized the importance of typing the set lists

until Lawrence agreed that he would write out his lists and I would type them (Lawrence, field

notes, February 2, 2016). Catie-O also did not want to type up her playlists as she worked, but

Logan encouraged her to accept my help because she often did not write out her playlists at all

(Catie-O, field notes, February 1, 2016). Transcribing playlists gave me more information on the

artists, songs, and albums the DJs played from and support the station in my role as a

volunteer.

   During the radio shows, I used the time when songs played to ask questions, often using

the music to start the conversation. I did not prepare questions ahead of time, but reacted to

the music as I heard it. When there was nothing to say, I acted as an audience member, making

notes on music I liked or music that sounded familiar to me. Because of my experience as a

---

[22] While I was at WHPK, we switched to an online logging system, Radioactivity.fm. Judging by the many mass emails from the WHPK Station Manager asking, cajoling, scolding, and threatening the DJs to enter their playlists, I was not the only DJ who found the changed responsibility a challenge.

music fan and in radio, I had assumed I would be familiar with much of the music, but this was not so. I recognized a handful of artists here or there, mostly popular ones, and the occasional obscure psych track.[23] Even if I did not know the artist, musical knowledge often served as a starting point for a discussion about the music: offering a comment on something that sounded good or a comparison to another artist or song would often to start a conversation about how the DJ found and chose that song or artist for the show, which would often branch into larger questions of their musical history. The conversations about the music provided much of the material I used to explain how DJs had prepared their shows.

I met with two DJs after their shows to continue the conversation because, in both cases, their shows did not allow much time for talking. Catie-O arranged and rearranged her music during the show, so she could not talk for more than a few seconds during the program. We met for an interview-like discussion after the show (Catie-O, field notes, February 1, 2016). Because Lawrence DJed entirely from 45 records, there was also nearly no time for to answer questions because most tracks clocked in under 2 minutes. We had an unstructured conversation over coffee after his show one night that focused on his musical history and approach to his program (field notes, January 20, 2016). Like the conversations during radio programs, I did not prepare questions, but covered similar topics. In both cases, I let the DJs and the context shape the course of our conversation to learn more about their perspective.

In addition to helping with broadcasts, I attended station meetings and helped at WLPN events and fundraisers, including a food truck/beer tasting event hosted at the station-affiliated

---

[23] The two examples I noted were when Catie-O played Rupert's People on February 15, 2016 and Joe played the much lesser heard Kaleidoscope from Mexico (not the US or UK bands of the same name) on January 26, 2016.

Marz Brewery and Krampusfest, a darker version of a holiday party/art show featuring a masked Krampus who spent the night harassing guests. Neither included the opportunity to observe music selection, but, contributing to events was a way that many DJs also participated at the station. Lawrence participated as a volunteer DJ at a station fundraiser with the local Publican restaurant (Lawrence, field notes, January 20, 2016). Joe once made a point to notice that while he had not attended the station's "Bridgeport's Got Beef" event, he had paid for tickets to support the station (Joe, field notes, November 18, 2015). Volunteering outside of my research role helped to connect me with the station community. After Krampusfest, I commented to Logan that I had been a bit intimidated by the Krampus character, who had been aggressively taunting people (singling out people attending alone, like me) in keeping with his character. Later on, during the show, Logan checked in on us through the inside window between the studio and the performance space, holding up the cardboard Krampus mask to tease me (field notes, December 9, 2015). By participating as a volunteer, I had earned the opportunity to have an inside joke with the station staff and become better integrated as a temporary community member.

I took limited notes during the broadcasts and conversations to stay in the moment, only jotting down the most minimal of words to jog my memory later or writing out quotes when I felt the participant had best summarized their perspective. Directly after observation, I would head to a coffee shop down the street to type everything I could remember as quickly as possible. Sonorama's show finished after the shop had closed, so I would type those notes at home (or, once, in my car waiting for a local train to pass). My field notes went in every direction: I aimed to capture as much as possible of my own recollections, noting personal

feelings in italics within the notes. Keeping separate notes helped to remind me of my own biases in the moment (e.g. when was I tired, when did I have work on my mind) and to separate my feelings from my observations.

F.   Conclusion

My presence as a volunteer gave me a familiar set of activities at the station, but I was primarily identified as a researcher – which resulted in some amusing, confused reactions from other station members. During my second visit to the station, Leah, another station staff member,[24] came to the broadcast booth to help with a technical issue and asked politely, but somewhat hesitantly, if I was doing my research "right now" (field notes, November 25, 2015). A month or so later, Ed came to say hello to Joe and asked me directly, but with some skepticism, "Are you learning anything?" (field notes, January 6, 2016). In both cases, I offered that while it might not look like much at the time, I was paying close attention and would be typing my notes directly after I left, secretly pleased I had managed to find a role that did not compromise my role as a researcher. My research did not appear intrusive because it did not appear to be anything at all.

Without a clear agenda, it was easy to be confused about how or what I was looking for. Participant observation answers a research question in terms of "understanding a particular organization or substantive problem rather than demonstrating relations between abstractly defined variables" (Becker, 1958, pp. 652-3). The researcher enters the field with the intention of discovering what issues exist in the lives of her participants, instead of testing a hypothesis of

---

[24] Her official title is "Underwriter," but in my time at WLPN I observed her organizing fundraisers, marshalling volunteers, helping to lead meetings, and supervising shows ("About Us," 2017).

proof or disproof. She may well have theories on what types of subjects will be relevant, but symbolic interactionist perspectives create hypotheses more than they test them. The theoretical perspective emerges from interactions with the community, not the other way around (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999). The open structure allows the researcher to work without an established target for fieldwork, remaining open to whatever issues her participants bring to the research. Participant observation can be considered less a specific technique, "but a mode of being-in-the-world characteristic of researchers." (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994, p. 249) During fieldwork, a participant observer does not hunt down the answers to a question, but acts and reacts in context to learn more about the questions that arise there, in the very interactions that constitute the local, social reality.

Field work seemed to be a success, both for me and for WLPN. The DJs did seem bothered or disrupted by my presence, which had allowed them to act more naturally. I had pages of observations and conversations to draw on, as well as my own personal account of the process. The station management had a chance to work on other things when I served as a volunteer too. In designing a participant observation project, it is important to recognize the credential at stake for the researcher and the sacrifice (however small) the participants make to help. The flexible role of "participant" can allow for true reciprocity without compromising the data. A research relationship grounded in trust and fellowship enhances the researcher's ability to better understand her group, specifically where they might benefit from her help.

IV: ANALYSIS & THEORY

A.   Introduction

Analysis distinguishes participant observation as research, distinct from participation as garden-variety life. A participant observer might just look like another DJ or student or Japanese factory worker, but when she records and analyzes her experiences, she transforms them into her research (DeWalt, DeWalt, & Wayland, 1998). But, faced with a small mountain of field notes, I struggled to find a way to make sense of everything I had observed into a coherent analysis of how freeform radio DJs chose their music. Several detailed discussions that had informed the fieldwork choices, but I found little to guide my analysis. Analysis remains a murky piece of the qualitative process, often relying on the researcher's "ability" to find and address distinctive patterns instead of a offering a more systematic process (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Merriam, 1998). Through the "mindwork" of interpretation, researchers can "see" the patterns within the activities such that "*culture is revealed*" (Wolcott, 2008, p. 71, italics original). Analysis felt mystical. Ethnographic researchers have considerable freedom, or rather a lack of clear guidance, on how to approach their pattern-making.

To organize my analysis, I ultimately decided to employ a series of theoretical structures developed by Pierre Bourdieu, a familiar figure in studies of taste and cultural production. Bourdieu's (1986) "The Forms of Capital" presented a convenient taxonomy to understand how institutions, embodiments, and objects acted as distinct, but connected, forms of cultural capital according to the logic of the fields of freeform radio, which exist in relation to the larger fields of music radio and cultural production.

Bourdieu's theories have been used several times to help explain musical cultures and subcultures (Hesmondhalgh, 1998; Kruse, 2003; O'Connor, 2008; Prior, 2008; Prior, 2011; Savage, 2006; Thornton, 1996). His emphasis on the interrelated social processes that shape cultural production have earned a wide application in sociological studies of cultural production and reception for their almost intuitive relevance to studies of the music industry and music radio in particular (Park, 2014). Bourdieu's theories stress the importance of financial capital without reducing everything to its pursuit. For studies of media production[25], Bourdieu's ideas of cultural and symbolic capital help to circumvent "the all too common tendency to blame everything on concentration of ownership or advertising" (Benson, 2006, p. 190). Instead of finding active or passive audiences, Bourdieu presents consumers as connected participants in cultural production who share a homology with the producers of their culture (Benson, 1999), very similar to how Hendy (2013) had identified audiences as co-producers of radio.

B.   **Capitals and Fields**

Bourdieu's theoretical perspective distinguishes economical capital (i.e. money) from symbolic capital. Bourdieu defines capital as "accumulated labor . . . which, when appropriated on a private, i.e. exclusive, basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor" (Park, 2014, p. 12). Labor can take the form of economic capital when it produces a paycheck, but symbolic capital represents the less tangible rewards of labor. Symbolic capital rests on knowledge (connaisance) and recognition

---

[25] Hesmondhalgh (2006) notes that Bourdieu's focus on literature and art limit the applicability of his theory to the wider scope of media production. While Bourdieu did not address mass cultural production directly, his focus on cultural consumption offers a comprehensive perspective on the reception of all culture, including mass culture.

(reconnaissance), that produce symbolic value when others can understand them and, perhaps

more importantly, contextualize them within the larger field (Johnson, 1993). Symbols gain

value as capital when individuals can successful wield them "to compel attention and/or

agreement" (Park, 2014, p. 14). Symbolic capital acts distinctly from economic capital as

another resource of power and prestige in social spaces that have identified specific symbols as

valuable: "the conditions that allow symbolic power to be wielded via symbolic capital require

an audience that grants authority to the communicator" (Park, 2014, p. 14) In other words, the

group must recognize the power of the symbol to act as capital.

To explain how different groups identify symbolic capital differently, Bourdieu organizes

the social spaces into "fields." The logic of a field determines what types of capital its members

recognize as valuable, such that "the social rank and specific power which agents are assigned

in a particular field depend firstly on the specific capital they can mobilize, whatever their

additional wealth in other types of capital" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 113). By conceptualizing fields as

semi-autonomous, with their own logic, Bourdieu attempts to circumvent the deterministic

arguments that have individuals acting only within a prescribed structure. The opportunity of

his field theory is to examine the internal rules that govern the sphere, with specifically how

agents create, confirm, and change the understandings of what is valuable within their own

groups (Benson & Neveu, 2005). Fields offer a way to understand "structures of differences"

which are grounded in "the structure of distribution of the forms of power or the kinds of

capital which are effective in the social universe under consideration – and which vary

according to the specific place and moment at hand" (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 32). Instead of

attempting to describe an over-arching, all-knowing perspective on social life, Bourdieu's fields

present a perspective that examines how fields establish value *differently* than other fields might.

While Bourdieu grants some autonomy to fields to determine their own logics of value, but all fields exist in relation to the "field of power," which is "the space of relations of force between agents or between institutions having in common the possession of the capital necessary to occupy the dominant positions in different fields (notably economic or cultural)" (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 215). Like all fields, the field of power defines its capital, but in this case, the capital must take a form that can be recognized across multiple fields as powerful and valuable. Financial capital offers an obvious example: money is valuable because lots of fields recognize the value of money. Political power offers another: the state (e.g. France) can act as a field of power by regulating resources with financial or judicial interventions that impacts multiple fields (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 33). Fields do not have complete autonomy to decide their own logics of capital; they must do so in relation to the dominant field of power. Fields create a social space with a "structure [that] *refracts*, much like a prism, external determinants in terms of its own logic . . .The degree of autonomy of a particular field is measured precisely by its ability to refract external demands into its own logic" (Johnson, 1993, p. 14). Fields can reinterpret the demands of the field of power, sometimes even by actively eschewing them, as is often, if not always, the case in the field of cultural production.

The relationship between the field of power and other fields presents one of primary struggles of social life. He notes the boundary between the field of cultural production and the field of power as the most contentious (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 43). The field of cultural production are the artistic fields that, he argues, acts as an "anti-economy" (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 40). The

fields of cultural production oppose the field of power's most common forms of capital and

"symbolic value is assigned to those works that resist the blandishments of money and power"

(Park, 2014, p. 37), an opposite reaction to the many fields that recognize cash as king.

Bourdieu further divides the field of cultural production into sub-fields of large-scale (mass) and

restricted production (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 53). Large-scale, or mass, production fields maintain a

closer relationship with the economic pole while fields of restricted production, where

consumption happens primarily within the field itself enjoys a greater autonomy "measured by

its power to define its own criteria for the production and evaluation of its products" (Bourdieu,

1993, p. 115). The field of restricted production is further divided into sub-fields that enjoy

varying degrees of autonomy from the field of power and from each other. Different genres of

work in the field can be distinguished by the cost (economic or symbolic) of the price of the

product, the size and social qualities of the audience, and the length of the production cycle.

Each factor can be manipulated according to the logic of the field to produce more or less of

either profit and distinguish one genre from another (Bourdieu, 1996). The opposition between

genres gives way to its orientation towards an audience size. The smaller, restricted or "pure

production" pole finds artists and producers creating work for their colleagues, while the large-

scale production finds a larger, more diverse audience that generate a strong economic profit

(Bourdieu, 1996). In these fields of pure production, autonomy arises by refusing to recognize

economic capital as the marker of value, turning instead to internal, field-based logics of

cultural capital.

Bourdieu (1996) offers the literary field as example to explain how the fields of cultural

production operate differently. Within the field of literature, repertory theater sits on top of

the economic hierarchy, closest to the field of economic power, because it draws large

audiences with repeated productions of popular plays and musicals. Poetry, with its small

audiences who seek out new work, sits at the bottom, further away from the field of power.

Poets make less money, but the field "continues to attract a large number of writers, even if it

is almost totally devoid of a market" (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 114). Because, poets are not in it for

the money. They are in it for the prestige. They are in it to be famous poets and, because most

audiences pay less attention to poetry (which is a shame, but still true). In the restricted field of

poetry, approval comes from other poets. The prestige of writing something that resonates

with the internal audience of colleagues confers a more powerful measure of symbolic capital.

The inverted structures co-exist because of the differentiation between the genres that

produces separate audiences.

But, in most cases, fields are sites of competition, internally and in relation to each

other. Bourdieu emphasizes that "A field is a field of forces and a field of struggles in which the

stake is the power to transform the field of forces. In other words, within a field, there is

competition for legitimate appropriation of what is at stake in the struggle in the field"

(Bourdieu, 2005, p. 44). Bourdieu locates conflicts between the fields of power and cultural

production, but also between individuals in fields, who *vie* (in the English and French senses of

the term) for social position.[26] Becoming the most popular actor on Broadway or earning the

---

[26] Much of Bourdieu's work on individual development is addressed in his concept of habitus, which takes shape through its owner's active navigation of social life. Bourdieu (1984) defined "habitus" as a deeply ingrained set of understandings that is both "a structure and structuring structure." (Bourdieu, 1984, 171). Put simply "Habitus is a socialized subjectivity," (Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992), where the individual shapes and is shaped by her own personal, ever-evolving history of interactions and understandings of the social world.

title of "poet laureate," means besting the others who could hold the same distinction, as well as fighting to establish the importance of such championships.

Bourdieu presents social life as games that people play, knowingly or unknowingly, but always willingly. The idea that "playing is worth the effort" (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 77) or "illusio," explains people's belief in the value of the game and the relevance of the stakes. Most social games operate invisibly because individuals play without *acknowledging* the game, i.e. the illusio is invisible even to players. But, by competing and accruing resources through labor, individuals acknowledge the importance of the capital and the games they play to get it.

C.   The Field(S) Of WLPN

WLPN acted as an institution in the field of freeform radio, which exists in opposition to the field of formatted radio. The field of formatted radio could also be described as the fields of music radio, since nearly all music radio stations in the United States use format structures. As described in a previous chapter, freeform radio operates with a different type of logic. Freeform radio assigns symbolic value to playing a more diverse body of music, with less focus on what will appeal to well-defined audiences that can be sold to advertisers, i.e. further from the field of power than formatted radio, much of which is commercial radio. Freeform radio assigns the powerful role of choosing the music to the DJ, while formatted stations tend to choose music in a centralized structure according to data on audiences; one struggle between these fields is who and how to make programming decisions. DJs at freeform stations act as individual curators in their stations. As a future section will describe, WLPN defined themselves as a

freeform station to establish a unique identity as an institution, but well within the noted boundaries of the larger field of freeform.

WLPN also existed within the larger field of independent music, specifically the scene in Chicago. The term "independent" is a bit of a misnomer because the smaller, more restricted, fields of music production have never operated completely free from the larger, mass music industry, or the economic field of power (Hesmondhalgh, 2009; Kruse, 2003). Even if it is not accurate, it is frequently used (and often discussed, in my experience) by people who consider themselves to be participants. Kruse (2003), who uses the term to describe independent rock and pop more specifically, notes that the fans and members she worked with identified "indie" as a sound or geographical source of music as much as an economic relationship (p. 8).[27] I chose to broaden the term to include a wider variety of musical genres, but the field of independent music in Chicago could be defined in Kruse's (2003) terms: "geographical sites of localized musical practice and the social and economic networks that exist within these contexts" (p. 144). In my research, I noted how WLPN and its DJs interacted with other music institutions, such as bars, record stores and other radio stations, some of which acted in opposition to more mainstream, mass musical structures (e.g. smaller music venues, record shops). Many of the DJs I worked with had roles throughout this field, many of which seemed to draw on the same forms of symbolic capital I observed at work when they chose music at WLPN.

---

[27] In my MA thesis, I used "indie rockers," which made nearly all of my interviewees cringe when I used it; they all claimed they did not identify with the term for various reasons. One interviewee offered that she preferred "hipster," which was a new term she had just heard.

D.   **Cultural Capitals At WLPN**

Bourdieu outlines the role of the social scientist as "to describe a *state* (long-lasting or temporary)" of struggle within the field on what the symbolic resources are, which forms "the frontier delimiting the territory held by the competing agents" (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 42-3), who attempt to shift that value to something else. The analyst must identify the specific interests of the field through research, as well as the "strategies of accumulation (which may or may not be based on conscious calculation)" (Johnson, 1993, p. 8) because of the illusio at work. To apply field theory to media production, like freeform radio, requires an understanding of how roles are understood and acted upon, the rules of capital within that field, and how much or what capital each agent has (Park, 2014). I investigated the role of the DJ as a curator, which will be discussed in the next chapter. To identify the non-financial, symbolic forms of capital in play, I used Bourdieu's forms of cultural capital to categorize and analyze my observations.

Bourdieu identifies the forms of cultural capital, along with social capital, as resources that confer symbolic values in fields; cultural capitals can, with the right conditions, as well be converted to financial capital (Bourdieu, 1986). He describes three forms of cultural capital: the embodied, the objectified, and institutionalized, each of which corresponds to a category of resources that can be used to grant power and status to its owner or user. The structure of forms gives shape to the hazier idea of what a symbol is and how people use it.

I returned to my notes and used nVivo to organize everything into three main nodes: objects, institutions, and embodiments or "understandings" as I came to think of them during the coding. Next, I sifted through each collection, sorting the snippets into specifics. What were

the objects? What were the institutions and relationships with them? What did the DJs know, say, and do during their shows? I organized each example at its most granular level at first, zooming in on, for example, different types of objects (e.g. 45s, LPs, CDs, and mp3s) and then stepping back to classify objects into related groups (e.g. vinyl objects and digital objects). The collections organized my observations into the specific the forms of cultural capital WLPN DJs used to program their shows, all of which are presented in my findings chapters on each form.

E.   Conclusion

In addition to providing a convenient structure for analysis, Bourdieu's ideas also seem to resonate with the lived experience of being an independent music fan. I had previously used his work in my MA thesis on indie rock subculture because it seemed to make perfect sense – and I was not alone. Park (2014) also comments that his own interest in Bourdieu came from his experiences in college radio. Bourdieu's descriptions of groups that value symbolic power over financial profit seemed to be written *about* the DIY punk scenes described in Azeraad's (2001) chronicle of the "American Indie Underground." When he noted, with a hint of snark, that among the *new* petite-bourgeoisie, "One can confuse Bernard Buffet with Jean Dubuffet and yet be quite capable of hiding one's ignorance under the knowing silence of a pout, a nod or an inspired pose," (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 91), he could be talking about a college radio DJ confusing Jimmy Buffet with Jimmy Cliff. I know because I have seen that look - and even used it myself in some instances. Bourdieu illuminated so many questions about how and why independent music felt so different. Why, for example, did so many people stop liking a band once they became popular? Why wouldn't fans be, if anything, *excited* that artists they enjoyed now made more people happy and likely received more support for doing so? Bourdieu

58

provided an answer: as fields become more autonomous from other fields, the genres become more distinct because only the field and its participants, and not just anyone, are able to recognize the relevant values, such that "the value of the credit of recognition ensured by consumption decreases when the specific competence to be recognized in the consumer decreases" (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 115). Simply put, bands are only cool when a smaller group of the right people know about them.[28]

Since my previous work, however, I had gotten out a bit more. I had worked in other groups in the Chicago's field of independent music and I was less convinced I understood what was going on. This dissertation seemed an ideal opportunity to test Bourdieu's theoretical perspectives by using them to organize my analysis of how individuals made musical choices in the field of freeform radio, which would allow me to understand how people drew on a wider range of music than just rock and pop. I also hoped a clearer picture of the resources in play would help me to better understand the struggles at work in and around the field of freeform.

---

[28] A modified version of the joke that opened my MA thesis: How many independent music fans does it take to screw in a lightbulb? Zero. Lightbulbs used to be great, but now everyone uses them and they just don't shine the same way they used to.

V: GATEKEEPERS, CULTURAL INTERMEDIARIES, AND CURATORS

A.   <u>Introduction</u>

The role of the freeform radio DJ incorporates aspects of radio DJ and live DJ roles. In radio, the role includes being the voice on-air, but not much more. Barnouw (1966) notes that the Canadian engineering professor who sent out the first radio broadcast – a greeting followed by a recording of [Handel's "Largo,"](#) could be considered the first DJ (p. 216-17), but the term itself came up with Top 40, but those DJs did not have any role in choosing the music; that first DJ could more accurately be considered a *freeform* DJ since he chose the piece. Freeform rock DJs in the 1960s rejected the term for that reason; they preferred to be called "announcers" (Sterling & Keith, 2008, p. 133). But, modern freeform radio DJs seem to accept the term because of its more modern affiliations with live DJ culture. Live DJs frequently choose their own music, sometimes in organized sets (e.g. wedding DJs or how the DJs in this study played in clubs), but also in mixes and remixes, which often generate entirely new music. DJs in house, dance, and hip-hop genres well as hip-hop DJs – along with DJs who produce their own mixes outside of any specific genre – seem more like artists because they create new musical pieces. Freeform radio DJs, like other radio DJs, share sets of other people's work without necessarily creating new work themselves.

Radio programmers have been described as "gatekeepers" and "cultural intermediaries" because their work involves selection for audiences, but neither term seemed to fit here. After a discussion of how both have been used for similar purposes, I will advocate that the term "curator" best describes the role of the freeform DJ. Curator, along with cultural intermediaries,

has been coming up more frequently as audiences themselves have more opportunity to choose their own pieces of culture to consume, which will be discussed in the chapter's conclusion.

B.   Gatekeepers

Radio studies has attempted to explore radio as a mediator between musical products and musical audiences. Barnard (1989) employs the term "gatekeepers" to describe the role of radio programmers in the United Kingdom. He borrowed the term from studies of journalism that identified gatekeepers as broadly defined "forces" that impact how items pass or do not pass through various "gates" (Lewin, 1947 in Shoemaker & Vos, 1991). White (1950) picked up the metaphor for his work on how one wire editor chose what news to publish in a small city paper, finding the process to be "highly subjective" (p. 386). The focus shifted from gatekeeping as a series of environmental influences, to the work of one individual, the gatekeeper, who made decisions on what content was passed along to their audiences. In popular culture studies, gatekeepers control which pieces (e.g. movies, books, songs) pass through their gates (e.g. distribution, print, broadcast) to audiences (Shoemaker & Vos, 1991, p. 20).

Applying the term to radio is problematic. The metaphor of gatekeeping implies that radio programmers sift and select materials without any alteration or even influence from the audience on the other side of the gate (Ahlkvist, 2001). The audience plays a key role in radio programming. But, gatekeeping also obscures radio's role in transforming culture, excluding the "fundamental labour of selection, transformation and recomposition" (Hennion and Meadel, 1986, 287), which is a primary focus of the work here. The "gate" of radio, for example, impacts

audiences perceptions' of what is being played, as seen in the many occasions where radio has actually created audiences (e.g. Top 40, college rock) in through the labor of selection.

C.   **Cultural Intermediaries**

Others have turned to the term "cultural intermediaries" to better explain the role of radio as a partisan participant in the culture industry (Hendy, 2013; Percival, 2011; Negus, 2002). Understanding DJs as cultural intermediaries takes on radio's unique position "in short, to be nothing but an intermediary, radio is the privileged site for understanding the reality of mediators and the effectiveness of the transformations they make" (Hennion & Meadel, 1986, p. 287). But, though the term may carry a more immediate resonance, its development and usage has become somewhat problematic as its definition has shifted.

Bourdieu used the term "cultural intermediaries" in his discussions of both cultural taste and cultural production (1984). His usage of the term "cultural intermediary" was developed with a specific focus. While Bourdieu barely brought up the more modern cultural productions of his time, he used the term to call out the mass media, including "producers of cultural programmes on TV and radio," as "the new cultural intermediaries," who "have invented a whole series of genres half-way between legitimate culture and mass production" (Bourdieu, 1984: 325-6).[29] Bourdieu's original usage described a sub-set of the newly emerging petit-bourgeoisie, who grew as a result of and as an audience for the expanded offerings of the

---

[29] Bourdieu (1998) does not use the term to discuss musical production, but he locates cultural intermediaries on a graph of social positions on page 5 of *Practical Reason* that identifies an association with "guitar," a presumably popular instrument, and "corporal expression," which could mean dancing? Or hugging? It is hilariously unclear.

cultural industries; Hesmondhalgh (2008) comments that Bourdieu meant the term to describe critics, but the roles have multiplied since.

More recently, the term has more directly incorporated the idea of how cultural intermediaries introduce new content into the mass media and "use the media to accomplish their pedagogical work of shaping consumer tastes, as tools for the dissemination of their cultural wares and middle-brow culture more generally" (Maguire & Matthews, 2010, p. 407). Cultural intermediates act as agents that bring smaller, restricted culture to wider audiences who demand large-scale production. They also frame the new goods with the necessary explanations and interpretations. (Maguire & Matthews, 2010). Cultural intermediaries make choices based on their own tastes, acting as producers and representatives of their audiences (Maguire & Matthews, 2010, p. 408), gaining their authority through "the ability to read the market of receivers, appraise aesthetic worth or potential, identify with the brand or company and so forth" (Maguire & Matthews, 2012, p. 557). The cultural intermediary goes beyond their own taste to select products that audiences with respond to, capable of influencing others by being "one of them" (Maguire & Matthews, 2012, p. 557). Others argue the term may be too broad to accurately describe the complicated, and plural, roles it has been used to describe (Hesmondhalgh, 2006; Nixon & duGay, 2002), but freeform DJs have individual autonomy, so these concerns can be considered less relevant.[30] But, the term has other challenges.

---

[30] Hesmondalgh (2006) calls for a more specific understanding of the division of labor between the groups that mediate both production and consumption. Citing Ryan (1992), Hesmondalgh (2006) takes issue with the singular usage of the term, noting that selecting culture includes "a number of different roles performed sometimes by different people, sometimes by the same people" (p. 227). Because the roles often represent a variety of interests, the resulting content has been mediated several times before it reaches an audience.

Cultural intermediaries have a specific agenda to bring culture to larger audiences, which is not as relevant in the field of freeform radio, which relies on different understandings of value. The terms stresses the relationship of the intermediary as the go-between for more mainstream cultural production and the smaller, more independent spheres. It implies the role of translator, explaining to audiences why they should like certain products and predicting where they will be successful. The motivations are unclear, but seem somewhat nefarious: cultural intermediaries introduce audiences to new items so those audiences will consume (i.e. buy) them. This did not fit with freeform.

D.   **Curators**

"Curator" offers another increasingly popular term for cultural selectors that comes from the art world. The term originates in Roman times, around the year of 100, when the empire used "curatores rei publicae," or "curators of public affairs" to enforce public order and financial well-being in the Roman provinces (Balzer, 2014; Nowotny, 2013, p. 61). The term was most often applied to deputies in more remote locations, such as Africa (Nowotny, 2013, p. 61), where presumably there was more care required to maintain the interests of the Emperor. "Curatores" also came to refer to guardians and tutors in the same period. By the Middle Ages, the term encompassed both roles, when "curatores" meant the parish priest, who acted as bureaucrats and spiritual advisors, guiding their congregations in matters of faith and law (Balzer, 2014, p. 30-31). The evolution of the term shows a shift in the subject of the caring, moving away from imperial interests into specific groups of people.

The more modern understanding of the noun, "curator," and its verb form, "to curate," arise in the 20th century art world (Obrist, 2014). Early museum curators acted as preservationists in museums, with little to know decision-making responsibilities; the role of modern art curators has its roots in the organizers of salons, which sought to eschew the commercial aspects of the emerging art market in favor of more high-minded, academic processes of selection (Balzer, 2014, p. 37). The idea of a curator as an artist in her own right comes after the 1960s, as the perspective on the role of the curator shifts "from a caring, meditative, administrative activity toward one of mediation and performative activity akin to artistic practice" (O'Neill, 2012, p. 87). The taste of the curator now decided how museums collected and shared it with audiences, marking a shift from conservationist to connoisseur (Balzer, 2014, p. 46). In the 1970s and 1980s, the curator was "a proactive agent in the communication chain," acting as the mediator that connected artists and audiences (O'Neill, 2012, p. 25), which became increasingly true as the century approached its close. The star curator (e.g. Hans Ulrich Obrist) is a product of the 1990s, when museums attempted to grow their audiences to compensate for more restrictions on federal funding in the 1980s (Balzer, 2014, p. 57). The art world has come to consider the curator an essential figure, akin to artists in their capacity to confer meaning, but without (in most cases) making the art themselves.

Not unlike freeform radio DJs, curators have been cited as having more autonomy than other administrative agents in the art world, even when the roles overlap. For example, curators at major commercial art fairs act as both dealer and decision-maker (O'Neill, 2012). Curators do not have complete autonomy: they must find support in the social networks of the art world and actively participate to build relationships that support their authority, including

other curators. The networks of art production also remain under the control of the financiers: in order to curate something for an audience, someone must provide the space or, in this case, airwaves to broadcast on. Curators and art institutions must still at least capture the attention of those who provide the means for their survival, be that through audience donations or major federal grants. Those sponsors may be supportive or sympathetic to new directions for the work, provided they "are set up in a way that ultimately confirms their narrative" of what is possible to include in the broader categorization of the field (Žerovc et al., 2015, p. 111-119). Curators cannot choose just anything without connecting the new direction to the possibilities of the field as they exist.

But, the partial autonomy still allows for curators to push the boundaries of audiences. Žerovc et al. (2015) explains the similarities in the rise of the curator and the theater director. Theater directors became established figures in the late 19th century as theater expanded into more spaces and became increasingly sophisticated and complex (Žerovc et al., p. 203). To move forward on innovative ideas that might not fit within established conventions, directors became more autonomous by partially defying tradition, while still working with and within some of its constraints. In other words, "the autonomisation of the director has meant greater autonomisation of the performance – at the same time, it is also obvious that this in no way means the end of 'classic' repertory theatre. Old and new have found ways to coexist" (Žerovc et al., p. 204). The rise of the curator did not mark a clean, clear, complete break with other ways of collecting and displaying art, but incorporated some of the same practices to challenge expectations about what could be included in an exhibition (Žerovc et al., 2015). Instead of curtailing the creativity of artists, "both artists and curators partake equally in the resistances,

conflicts, and divisions that run *through* the field of cultural production as a whole" (O'Neill, 2012, p. 102). The curator acknowledges existing conventions, by using, reacting, or resisting them, in collaboration with artists to participate in the discourses of what the medium might be.

Their collaboration does not imply friendship, or even mutual understanding[31], but it does present an opportunity to understand a role of selection that has some, but not complete, autonomy from an industry model. Curators work within industries and organizations that have restrictions, but they are also given the freedom to directly mediate the audience's experience according to their taste as a curator, which can be influenced by, but may be different, than their personal tastes. More modern curators offer "a display of taste or expertise that lends stylized independence to the act of caring for and assembling" (Balzer, 2014, p. 33). The former act is important to include so that curating retains an important connection to the idea of caretaking, "cultivating, growing, pruning and trying to help people and their shared contexts to thrive" (Obrist, 2014, p. 25). In connecting the new usage to its original term, a curator chooses with care, but without catering to, audiences to help them learn with thoughtful mediations of their medium.

E.   Conclusion

---

[31] Balzer (2014) opens his book with an anecdote from Art Basel Miami Beach, a notoriously commercial art megafair where Canadian artist Bill Burns flew an airplane banner reading "HANS ULRICH OBRIST HEAR US" in a nod to the superstar collector meant to "express (and parody) the desperation and vulnerability felt by contemporary artists when fathoming the internationally known directors, curators and collectors who could make or break them," which is a theme of Burns' work (p. 14).

Freeform DJs, like curators, act independently and reasonably autonomously, within some institutional constraints. Both work in media that shapes the reception of the work they have chosen, taking their audience into account without attempting to reinforce their existing tastes (even though they may well do so, or not). The point is that they have some recognition of choosing work for *others* to consume. They make their choices with a recognition of how their selections fit within a larger musical context: "The DJ is a respectable artistic figure when he or she refers to values of knowledge and authenticity besides doing their regular job of musical entertainers" (Bartmanski & Woodward, 2015, p. 24). As curators, freeform DJs educate audiences be choosing music that, carefully, condenses a body of expertise into a listening experience.

Curation has become a bit of a buzzword in cultural industry circles, going well beyond its applications in the art world. Obrist (2014), cites "the proliferation and reproduction of ideas, raw data, processed information, images, disciplinary knowledge and material products that we are witnessing today" (p. 23). In a time with more music to easily draw and choose from, people need more help choosing; selection becomes all the more important for consumption. Using a term that has come to be associated with expertise confers the benefits of sounding more sophisticated. In commercial applications, "curate," instead of "choose" or "select," adds "an air of glamour and authority" (Balzer, 2014, p. 82). But, using the word as a synonym for "choose with purpose" opens it up to nearly anything. To paraphrase the title of Maguire and Matthews (2012) article on cultural intermediaries: so, are we all *curators* now?

There are two important clarifications that, when applied, keep the definition manageable. The first is smartly summarized as follows "Gathering things, connecting them,

sharing them with others in a way that positions one as a taste-making host: sounds fund, doesn't it? That is precisely why everyone is now doing it. Yet it is still not okay to call yourself a curator if you haven't yet acquired that professional designation" (Balzer, 2014, p. 120). I would argue that we use the term "professional" loosely, but keep the idea of an organizational blessing intact; there must be another individual or group of individuals who agrees to manage the many other roles of the cultural production, freeing the curator to focus, mostly, on curating. This is especially useful for a study of freeform radio, where individual DJs must choose music autonomously, but with an ear towards how the expectations the station has set with its audience. Secondly, curating implies a relationship that considers the audience and chooses *care*fully for them. As noted earlier, caring does not mean choosing things they might like, but instead choosing with some purpose for them in mind. Curators may use their own tastes, but only as those tastes have some connection to listeners, spectators, or any other participants who will consume that media. Within these broad limitations, understanding how individuals in organizations use care and love to mediate cultural products for others has plenty of opportunities.

In choosing the term I would use, it was the connection to caretaking that cemented my conclusion that "curator" was the most accurate term. Instead of restricting access to the wide body of available culture or attempting to influence what their listeners might consume in the future, each DJ took time and care to present a unique set of music that would introduce their audiences to a lesser heard, often unheard, body of music. It was work to do it. Even when DJs directly stated that it was not, their care for their selections - and by proxy their audiences, however imaginary - was obvious.

VI: INSTITUTIONALIZED CULTURAL CAPITAL AT WLPN

A.   Introduction

When I began at WLPN, they had launched their online station, but planned to broadcast as a terrestrial radio station within a few short months. As the station management and owner explained, it would reach much further than they had initially predicted, which presented an even more exciting opportunity (field notes, September 13, 2015). Various delays stalled the process of getting on the radio airwaves and WLPN did not broadcast terrestrially for another year, but the possibility remained an exciting one for the station. Someone flipping through frequencies in the ever-present traffic of I-55 might just stumble on WLPN and catch something different, and appealing. By going terrestrial, WLPN had the chance to reach a far larger audience who might otherwise not have known them. The reach of their reputation could establish them as an institution in Chicago and as one of the few freeform stations in the United States.

In Bourdieu's terms, WLPN was looking to build its status as an institution, capable of offering institutional cultural capital to the individuals who participate. By expanding beyond Bourdieu's limited examples of educational institutions, institutional cultural capital can be useful to understand relationships with institutions, as well as how an "institution" establishes cultural power in a field. There have been several documented examples of institutional cultural capital at work in the field of independent music, but I observed less of this at WLPN than I expected. The one potential example of an institution that conferred capital, Maria's Community Bar, was problematic because of shared ownership with WLPN. But, I observed how

WLPN established its reputation as a freeform radio station by choosing and training its DJs to play music that fit with the station's definition of freeform radio and its own audiences. WLPN worked to balance DJ autonomy with its own expectations as an institution, ensuring people could positively recognize the station as an approachable, but out there, radio station.

B.   Institutionalized Cultural Capital

Bourdieu describes institutionalized cultural capital as the investments of time or other energies to develop an affiliation with an institution that is recognized in that field. Bourdieu first published the piece in *The Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, which might explain why he focused exclusively on educational institutions. The concept, fortunately, is flexible enough to be accommodate other types of institutional affiliations that also confer power or status in a cultural field. The power of institutionalized cultural capital lies in its ability "to impose recognition" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248). When others recognize the affiliation, "it institutes cultural capital by collective magic" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248), the ethereal feeling social consensus about which institutional affiliations bring the right kind of recognition. Institutionalized cultural capital often provides a qualification that others in the field can positively recognize. At the level of the individual, it might be a degree, though plenty of fields do *not* recognize formal education as a useful affiliation (e.g. film professionals, tattoo artists, even the President of the United States in some cases[32]). Educational institutions can be considered one type of many potential types of institutions in play.

---

[32] Because I added this point late in my writing, I asked for help from my Facebook network thinking of fields that actively looked down on an educational credential. They offered all of the examples I used here, along with one I could not even begin to address: several of them noted and cited articles that in the field of police work in the

By expanding the concept to include other institutions, institutionalized cultural capital explains how individuals use organizations in their field to evidence cultural competence throughout their lifetimes. In the broader definition, institutionalized cultural capital separates the qualified from the hobbyist, who holds "the capital of the autodidact, which may be called into question at any time" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 247) Professional experience often trumps amateur practice. Professional experience also provides an example of how Institutionalized cultural capital can directly convert financial capital: people with more institutionalized cultural capital can better compete for positions with a recognized credential on their side, as well as commanding a higher price for their more experienced labor (Bourdieu, 1986). Since many people finish their schooling early in life, expanding the concept to include workplaces and other organizations offers an opportunity to examine how people continue to accumulate institutional cultural capital into adulthood.

With a wider lens, the concept can also lead to discussions of how institutions earn the power to be recognized, which is arguably more complicated in fields that do *not* participate in public rankings and other open displays of academic preeminence. Institutional cultural capital offers an opportunity to understand how institutions build and exchange institutional cultural capital and power.

The questions that structure an analysis of institutional cultural capital begin with *what* institutions offer recognized credibility. Are they educational, professional, or some other kind? How does an institution earn its recognition, and how does it maintain it? What are the

United States. For prospective professional police, an affiliation with an institution of higher education actively works *against* an applicant, opposite to how institutional cultural capital should work.

conditions of affiliation? How can the affiliations be converted to financial capital? How does the institutional affiliation serve as symbolic capital? All of these questions help to interpret data about both the institution(s) and the individuals in the field who recognize the institutions as powerful in some way.

The benefits of institutionalized cultural capital should not be confused with the profits of social capital, even if there are many instances of overlap. Social capital refers to the resources of one's social network, including the size of the network and the resources made available through the relationships (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 249). Institutional cultural capital refers to the benefits of an association with a recognized organization, distinct from the individuals who may operate it. Social capital describes the resources gained from relationships with others, while institutional capital describes relationships with recognized institutions. To use an example from a field of education: during graduate school admissions, students are encouraged to solicit recommendation letters from faculty with whom they have a good relationship because those letters tend to be better. Social capital is the benefit of the relationship that results in a better letter. Institutional capital is the impact of the university's name under the faculty member's signature; the institutional affiliation of the letter writer confers another benefit for the writer and the applicant by association. But, in other examples, like fraternities, a huge piece of one's affiliation with an institution *is* the social relationships between the individuals in that organization; sneaking a few Greek letters into a job interview can present examples of institutional *and* social capital at work. Any relationships with individuals at institutions must be closely examined to understand which resource might be in play.

The field of independent music offers plenty of examples of individuals using institutional cultural capital to gain positions of authority. In the 1990s, college music radio directors, who chose records for college airplay, received job offers or internship opportunities at record labels (Kruse, 2003, p. 76). The student's station affiliation might not have made her practically valuable to the label, but she received the opportunity because of her important role in an institution where she could get the label's music played. Similarly, Kruse (2003) notes the inter-institutional relationships of the Illinois independent music scene: college radio stations often worked in partnership with record stores (p. 82).[33] Plenty of members of independent music scenes could tell similar stories of the benefits of affiliation with influential organizations, so I expected to see evidence of institutional cultural capital in the stories of how DJs came to WLPN.

But, I did not observe that WLPN DJs used much institutional cultural capital to secure their positions at the station, even though they had been chosen by the station for their positions. Charly and Eddy from Sonorama and Lawrence had all worked at other independent radio stations Radio Arte in Chicago and KJHK in Lawrence, Kansas, respectively (Lawrence, field notes, January 20, 2016; Sonorama, field notes, February 2, 2016), but their affiliation did not seem to matter much for their positions at WLPN. With the exception of Lawrence, all of the DJs had learned to play records live before they started on the radio. Every DJ I worked with brought experience DJing at live events, but from a variety of venues, almost none of which seemed any more influential than the others. Playing live served as an essential part of

---

[33] As an employee of Reckless Records and former WHPK DJ, I frequently observed a reputation that worked positively *and* negatively, sometimes even just in the span of a conversation.

accumulating the embodied cultural capital of knowing how to choose and play music for audiences. One particular venue, Maria's Community Bar, presented a potential example of institutional cultural capital because WLPN and Maria's Community Bar can, in some senses, be considered a single institution. Maria's sits just down the street from WLPN's broadcast studio and is (tangentially) owned by the Public Media Institute, which also owns WLPN. Joe was Maria's Music Director and Sonorama, Catie-O and Betty had all DJed there before starting at WLPN. Lawrence, who DJs live around Chicago, had been approached by Ed Marszewski, the Director of the Public Media Institute to host a show. Ed, a local entrepreneur of independent culture, had started WLPN, along a small empire of cultural endeavors, including the Public Media Institute (PMI), the umbrella organization for Lumpen Magazine, a free culture magazine, Mashtun, a journal focused on craft beer, and now a new station, WLPN or Lumpen Radio. He also co-owned Maria's Community Bar and Packaged Goods, a liquor store and bar located just down the street from the brick and mortar home of PMI, Marz Community Brewing, and Kimski, a new Polish-Korean fusion restaurant located in Maria's.[34] Because Ed has an ownership role in both institutions, which are closely connected in many ways, the DJs did not so much use institutional cultural capital to secure shows as WLPN, but did benefit from having worked for the larger organizations.

In terms of institutional reputation, Maria's had similar expectations to WLPN for the type of music their DJs would play. Joe manages Maria's, which includes organizing the DJs (Joe, field notes, January 6, 2016). Joe also expected Maria's DJs to go beyond the often heard. He

---

[34] I had Ed him many years ago at Reckless when he shouted at me for not putting up LumpenFest posters in the windows. He later came back to apologize for losing his temper. I am reasonably confident he did not remember the incident or me.

had recently had to email a DJ who tried to play to the crowd with Madonna's megahit

"Holiday." He expressed a staccato confusion over the incident, asking "Why play Madonna at

Maria's?" Maria's, he continued, is a specific kind of place, known for serving a diverse array of

beers and the music should reflect a similar aesthetic (Joe, field notes, January 20, 2016). The

music needed to be listenable, but distinctively eclectic. A DJ who could successfully play music

at Maria's could likely do the same at WLPN, which suggests that Maria's could be considered a

source of institutional cultural capital. But, because the institutions *are* so closely affiliated, it is

difficult to argue that the individual DJs used any institutional capital to secure their shows. The

overlap does speak to one way that WLPN built and maintained their status as an institution, by

building on the reputation of the music at Maria's. WLPN station management had the

opportunity to "vet" many of their DJs ahead of time by hearing what kinds of music they play.

C.   **Defining Freeform**

Along with DJs and their formatted peers, freeform stations also define their audiences

through their programming. How the station approaches the loose mandate of "freeform" also

varies from station to station. The one principle is that DJs choose the music for broadcast at

freeform stations; DJ autonomy is the "free" in "freeform." Because DJs select their own music,

freeform stations frequently feature more widely varied programming, "as different as the

personalities of DJ's." (O'Malley, 2006), which defies a coherent listening experience across

programs. A diversity of programmers makes for a diversity of programs and individual music

DJs often curate a far larger variety of music than can be heard at on other stations. The

station, as the institution, exerts some control to ensure it attracts its intended audiences. To

understand how individual DJs make decisions, it is important to first understand how the individual freeform station defines "freeform."

Modern stations often communicate their approach on their websites. WLPN describes their station and their audience as:

A non commercial radical radio station from Chicago (on 105.5 FM) that showcases innovative ideas, *plays highly curated music*, [emphasis added] and broadcasts commentary on the issues of our day. . .for the people that live and work in the city, *people everywhere that love Chicago's underground cultures*, and *people who love the idea of freeform radio* [emphasis added] wherever they are. ("About Us," 2017)

WLPN references curators and defines their multiple audiences directly. Calling out audiences also speaks to their identification as a community radio station: they define their community in local terms, as well as the larger taste group who likes the music. WLPN does not directly define itself as a freeform station, but as a station programmed for that audience, using a familiar logic from formatted radio.

Other freeform stations approach their programming differently. WFMU, the longest running freeform station in the United States, does not refer to their audiences. Their description explains their programming in sonic categories, including:

flat-out uncategorizable strangeness to rock and roll, experimental music, 78 RPM Records, jazz, psychedelia, hip-hop, electronica, hand-cranked wax cylinders, punk rock, gospel, exotica, R&B, radio improvisation, cooking instructions, classic radio airchecks, found sound, dopey call-in shows, interviews with obscure radio personalities and

notable science-world luminaries, spoken word collages, Andrew Lloyd Webber

soundtracks in languages other than English as well as Country and western music.

("About WFMU," 2016)

The description warns the audience that they might be tuning into any number of sounds,

friendly or otherwise. WFMU approaches freeform as an opportunity to provide a space for

radio curators to play anything – even popular music, which was less acceptable at WLPN. Over

the last 15 years, WFMU DJs have played Madonna, 120 times, which includes 6 spins of

"Holiday" but does not count the 4 plays for her early punk band, the Breakfast Club, or any

remixed versions ("Basic Playlist Search," 2017). WFMU encourages DJs to play anything they

choose without a station audience in mind – or at least without defining one publicly on their

website. The two station definitions call out lesser heard music, but highlights two different

interpretations of the loose mandate of freeform.

D.   Curating Curators

The self-definitions of freeform stations offer a quick, cursory understanding of what

that station might be "about," but the strategies stations employ to meet and maintain these

expectations speaks to their ability to act as institutions. At WLPN, I observed how station

management helped define their programming by choosing many of their DJs and educating

them at station meetings.

The importance of choosing the right DJs to maintain the station's expectations came up

in a conversation with Logan about instances when DJs did not met them. WLPN management

had chosen all of the DJs I worked with, though some DJs at the station arrived as volunteers

(station meeting, field notes, September 19, 2015). Two months into my research, Logan noted

the station had approximately 40 DJs, but that not everyone had advanced to have their own

show. Some of the younger volunteer DJs had been playing music that did not fit with the

station, which meant Logan would need to talk to them about making more appropriate

choices. It was not a quality issue, but a station identity issue: Logan noted that while he

enjoyed artists like Erykah Badu or D'Angelo, other radio stations play them, which ran counter

to WLPN's identity as a platform for music that did not receive airplay on other stations. DJs

were actively instructed to play things they did *no*t hear at other stations, in an odd inverse of

how Rothenbuhler's (1985) station management standardized their programs *in* line with their

peers. When I offered to help by sharing the call with the station management at WHPK, I joked

that that those DJs might just as likely play two hours of experimental artist Merzbow and

Logan clarified: for drive-time, the music also needed to be listenable. Not just any lesser heard

music would do. What the station needed was volunteers to play the pre-programmed set lists

from other DJs, but, Logan explained, it was a tough sell to get someone to come in, press play,

and then wait to chime in with "You've been listening to DJ Joe Bryl" (Logan, field notes,

January 26, 2016). DJs wanted to choose their own music, not play set lists from someone else,

but not every DJ could program the kind of shows that fit with WLPN's emerging status as an

institution.

The balance can be difficult. With so much music to draw from, and a mandate to be

diverse and strange, it is easy to misstep – or, rather, miscue. One listener's cool, electronic

fantasy with an abstract Kraftwerk's "Mitternacht," for example, be another listener's angular

migraine nightmare. To help DJs understand the station's audience and expectations, station

management more explicitly explained WLPN's approach to DJs at station meetings. Logan

summarized the contradiction nicely: "I do want our weirdness to be accessible." (Logan,

Station Meeting, September 13, 2015) Earlier in the same meeting, the Director, Ed, had also

noted that DJs could play all sorts of sounds, including "squirrels chattering or me farting" but

that it should also be "listenable" (Ed, Station Meeting, September 13, 2015). WLPN

management monitored the shows to ensure the DJs found the right balance. As a freeform

station, WLPN gave DJs the autonomy to choose their own music, but used their trainings to

communication the parameters that served the station's goals of playing music their audience

would recognize as the right "highly curated" mix of weird and approachable, eclectic and

likeable, strange and accessible.

E.   Conclusion

WLPN's approach highlights a key paradox of freeform radio programming: DJs are

"free" to choose anything, but within the station's expectations of what that might mean.

WLPN's management asked DJs to play unfamiliar, but accessible, music, building from their

own centrally determined station. Other stations might approach programming differently.

WFMU's description, for example, included sounds that might be considered difficult to listen

to by a majority of audiences, alongside some familiar artists and songs from mainstream radio.

But, with a closer perspective, the work that WLPN put into choosing and training its DJs shows

that freeform radio requires some attention to ensure it reaches an all-important audience of

any kind.

Since my fieldwork has concluded, WLPN has completed its transition to a terrestrial radio station, occupying 105.5 in Chicago with a broadcast range of "about half of Chicago and some surrounding suburbs west of the city" ("It's Really Happening. . .", October, 2016). During my time at the station, the listening numbers I saw never cracked double digits. I did not make a point to look, though halfway through my fieldwork, I recorded that Lawrence had 5 listeners online, which was more than double the amount I had seen up until that point (field notes, January 20, 2016). The first 2017 edition of the WLPN website newsletter indicated that their new popularity had caused a spike in requests to host a show. The same communication spoke to the challenges of accommodating these requests noting the "16 months trying to figure out how to select, program, and train our collective of DJs" and that "if you do want a show, please listen to the station and see if you can offer something new and complementary to the diversity of audio action that is already on our station's lineup" ("Professional Broadcasters Update, January, 2017). To have a show at WLPN has started to become a sought-after opportunity. As the station gains listeners, their status as an institution may grow more powerful and following the minimal, but complicated, expectations for programming may be all the more important. The DJs I worked with, however, had plenty of experience choosing music for others and needed little training to understand how to make the right music for the WLPN audience.

VII: EMBODIED CULTURAL CAPITAL

A.   Introduction

On our first day, Joe explicitly stated "There's no planning or thought that goes into this. They don't pay me enough for that" (Joe, field notes, November 18, 2015). But, he was wrong: there might not have been any immediate planning, but Joe had plenty of preparation that went well beyond any explicit organization for a single show. The other DJs noted wanting to spend *more* time pulling, planning, and curating their shows in advance (Catie-O, field notes, February 1, 2016; Betty, field notes, February 8, 2016; Lawrence, field notes, January 20, 2016 and February 2, 2016). For our second show, Betty explained she had planned to take a couple hours to knock it out, and ended up spending seven planning and preparing (Betty, field notes, February 22, 2016). Outside of the time spent actively assembling set lists, all the DJs seemed oblivious to the hours they had already spent learning, collecting, and planning to prepare for their roles as freeform DJs.

In the freeform radio context, the audience is invisible, unable to exert much external demand. The studio computer reports how many people have tuned into the stream and their location, but there is no mention of toe-tapping or turning up the volume. Their approval can only be inferred by their continued presence – and that is still an unreliable metric. Freeform radio DJs, then, create their program and the idea of their audience. They can use their embodied cultural capital, which can also be understood as *personal knowledge*, to make decisions on what to play without a financial imperative to keep an audience happy – or even a tangible, well-defined idea of who might be listening. All of this is done within the small field of

WLPN, where the autonomy and ability to challenge audiences with new music keeps the

station output reasonably standardized in its diversity.

B.   Embodied Cultural Capital

Bourdieu introduces embodied cultural capital as "long-lasting dispositions of the mind"

(Bourdieu, 1986, p. 243), but quickly moves the metaphor beyond the brain and into the body.

The concept can be understood, in nearly literal terms, as "the form of what is called culture,

cultivation . . . [that] presupposes a process of em-bodiment, incorporation" (Bourdieu, 1986, p.

244). Embodied cultural capital describes the deeply personal body of expertise on how to

move, act, and talk in any given situation, the results of hours, days, and years of practice in a

field, at the exclusion of other activities.

Bourdieu was not the first, however, to recognize the importance of the invisible

understandings. Nearly three decades before, Polanyi (1958) identified "personal knowledge"

in contrast to the all-powerful importance assigned to objective knowledge, which was the

dominant form of knowledge in his native physical sciences (he had started his career as a

chemist). Personal knowledge accounts for the ways in which individuals built on their own

experiences to make decisions in the social world. Polanyi and Bourdieu identified several of

the same characteristics in their descriptions.

Both used the body as a metaphor. Bourdieu noted that accumulating embodied

cultural capital required the sustained personal effort of self-improvement: "Like the

acquisition of a muscular physique or a suntan, it cannot be done at second hand" (Bourdieu,

1986, p. 244). Polanyi (1958) also likened personal knowledge to skin, noting how it wrapped

the individual without much of her consideration (p. 64). In both cases, the metaphor highlights how the understandings became incorporated into the individual's body. Bourdieu's comparison further highlights how embodied cultural capital becomes inscribed upon the body, while Polanyi noted the body as "the ultimate instrument of all our external knowledge" (Polanyi, 1966/2009, p. 15). In each case, their concepts of knowledge go beyond the mind and into the lived, corporeal experience of its individual owners. The metaphor stresses how embodied knowledge surrounds the individual, shifting and changing without much notice or thought.

Both also note how automatically individuals use their embodied, personal knowledge as a resource. Bourdieu explains that because people accumulate embodied cultural capital through the lifetime, it often appears effortless and automatic as a way of being, even for the individual herself. The individual receives the profits in her field, usually in the form of authority. Properly placed into play, embodied cultural capital looks and feels automatic, so integrated into its applications, it is nearly invisible (Bourdieu, 1986). Polanyi begins his perspective on human knowledge with a similar observation that "*we know more than we can see*" (Polanyi, 1966/2009, p. 4) His ideas of *tacit knowledge* goes into more detail. Tacit knowledge cannot be easily explained, but operates in similarly automatic ways to embodied cultural capital. Individuals may not be able to explain everything they know, but the ingrained expertise can be observed at work in their practice.

Bourdieu and Polanyi note the importance of early experiences in childhood that develop personal knowledge, but also explain how the process of building the embodied forms of expertise extends through the lifecycle. Polanyi identifies "a set of convictions acquired by

our particular upbringing," similar to Bourdieu's habitus (Polanyi, 1958, p. 203). In addition to his work on habitus, Bourdieu also explains that children in more privileged households receive better benefits because the family transmits embodied cultural capital in two ways: first by starting to accumulate capital at the earliest possible moment, and then allowing the accumulation to continue during any initial "time free from economic necessity" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 246). The children who spend the longest possible time accumulating cultural capital before the responsibilities of adulthood set in benefit from "the best hidden form of hereditary transmission of capital" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 246): they must take the time to build their own body of cultural experience, but have the most possible free time to do so.

But neither theory limits acquisition to childhood. Bourdieu also notes "cultural capital can be acquired, to a varying extent, depending on the period, the society, and the social class, in the absence of deliberate inculcation, and therefor quite unconsciously" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 245). His caveat opens the concept to be able to observe how activities of self-improvement can be relative within fields and pursued throughout the life course. Bourdieu presents accumulating embodied cultural capital as a lifelong practice, which brings up questions of how people use time and financial resources to develop embodied cultural capital as adults. For Polanyi (1958), he notes describes how individuals continue to build knowledge by working in groups throughout their lives (p. 211). Adults have less time to play, but still participate in building their expertise. To fully understand how people use their embodied cultural capital or personal knowledge, it is essential to ask how adults spend their time and money in their fields.

Finally, both Bourdieu and Polanyi assign note the importance of language to evidence and effectively mobilize resources of embedded knowledge. Because of the strained

relationship with financial capital, Bourdieu (1986) notes that embodied cultural capital is also "predisposed to function as symbolic capital" (p. 245). Symbolic capital is tied to both the ability to use language and symbols "to compel attention and/or agreement" (Park, 2014, p. 14). Those with more symbolic capital can talk the talk and, when they do, people in the field listen and tend to agree. Polyani outlines a similar requirement of recognition that puts audiences and communicators in active roles of symbol management (Polanyi, 1958, p. 205). Also, by locating conversation at the center of the all-important interpersonal relationships that are the building blocks of his view on the social world, Polanyi further emphasizes the role of talk as an essential component of the individual's experience and expertise.

To understand how DJs used their embodied experience, the questions focused on how the DJs communicated with their audiences. How did they organize their communications in shows and sets? How did they choose their shows and why? What knowledges did they draw on? How did they use language? What other symbols can be used to communicate with the same type of authority? How did they acquire their specific expertise? And, did they share it in a way that audiences could understand them as experts? Questions like these explore how people develop personal and socially approved tastes, and what investments are required to do so fluently.

C.   **About the DJs**

I first met Lawrence in 2002 when he played drums in a psychedelic rock band, The Plastic Crimewave Sound. Since I've known him, he's always played in a variety of bands, along with bartending at the Hideout, a small bar and music venue hidden in an unnamed

neighborhood behind the Home Depot on North Avenue. He grew up in Colorado and Kansas, where he DJed at KJHK, before moving to Chicago and his Midwestern roots shine through in his friendly, honest enthusiasm for making, playing, and discussing music; country is only one genre of many that Lawrence loved. For the last five years or so, he has fronted had his own band, The Lawrence Peters Outfit, "a scrappy honky tonk band from Chicago, boasting a mutt pedigree as long as any you'll find in the city's country music scene" ("Lawrence Peters Outfit," 2012). The band's name makes an on-point nod to Lawrence's consistent sense of style. He blends masculine function with vintage fashion such that he always looks practically dressed and impeccably, coherently stylish. He shaves his head but sports a bushy, blond Winnfield mustache and goatee. When he arrived for one show in the Chicago winter, he wore a vintage yellow and black checked cardigan over a Loretta Lynn t-shirt, Carhartt workman's pants, work boots and a woolen plaid cap. His style also extends to his accessories. He carried his 45s records in a "Peters High Velocity Shells" wooden crate, a lucky antique find that bears his last name. He carried a small velvet brush to clean his records, ingeniously designed to hold a bottle of cleaning solution and a brush cleaner inside (Lawrence, field notes, January 5, 2016). He brought style to every aspect of his DJ endeavors, down to his tools. Even for radio, he looked the part.

I have known Lawrence longest, but I started fieldwork with DJ Joe Bryl. During our first show together Joe hosted "Thrift Score," which he also hosted as a live DJ night at Maria's. He described Thrift Score as playing the odd, unique pieces that can be found in there and in second-hand shops - records that look like they might be a bit out there, from the cover, song titles, or who plays (Joe Bryl, November 18, 2015). Joe was 62 when we worked together, the

oldest of the DJs I worked with.[35] He revealed his own, impressive musical history as a DJ in

small fragments throughout our time together. He did not, for example, mention he co-founded

and ran Sonotheque until our fourth show together. When he did, he did so matter-of-factly,

without any pretension or expectation that I would be as impressed as I was. He mostly wore

non-descript clothes, sometimes featuring the names of beer companies, signaling a

promotional giveaway; he carried his flip phone in a repurposed Tiger Beer koozie. He

approached his work at WLPN with a similarly functional attitude, such that even his strong

opinions came out like matter-of-fact statements, built over decades of experience.

When I approached WLPN with the project, Catie-O was the first DJ that Logan

recommended I reach out to. I listened to one of her shows before we started working together

and I immediately understood why Logan had suggested her: in a two-hour show, she shifted

seamlessly shifted through Balkan folk music, old-school hip hop, electronica, and a super

slowed Donovan track, the only piece I recognized. She dressed in colorful clothes and her bike

helmet had ping-pong ball eyes like a Kermit the Frog head. In addition to DJing and working at

a local wine store, she is a sculptor and visual art curator. She had just finished building a

"Coffin Bass" when we met; she had been inspired by her father-in-law's terminal illness. The

piece was a giant bass guitar that sat the long way on the floor, like a covered cradle, and could

hold up to two people in the body. When it was played, externally by rocking across a bow

across the strings, the people inside could feel the vibrations of the sound in the darkness. She

had also been the primary hostess of Krampusfest, the mildly frightening fundraise I had

---

[35] Four years ago in an interview, he joked he was the second oldest DJ in Chicago at 58, only behind Herb Kent, who has since passed away (Ferguson, 2012).

attended. When she discussed her projects, including DJing, she brought a serious, but joyful, enthusiasm for sharing experiences she had created with audiences.

Betty had a similarly excited attitude for her work. We met in person for the first time when we started working together on her show. She arrived in the nick of time, offering a huge smile upon meeting me and explaining she had been caught up working on a few art projects at home - and job applications. She was between jobs at the time. In my notes, I described her as possibly around my age, "medium everything" with short, thick brown hair, wearing a sweatshirt with a worm on it and carrying a beautiful blue record bag with an orange and yellow sun. She brought a no-nonsense style to the show. She had the least amount of DJ experience of anyone I worked with. She had only started DJing a year before, joining a series called "Wax On, Wax Off" at the Mutiny, a grungy, rundown space just off the overpass on Western and Logan Boulevard. They would host just about anything that brought in a dozen people, so the space accommodated a diverse roster of local projects, including the collaborative DJ night where people brought records and rotated through a few songs each. Since then, she had joined Joe at Thrift Score and DJed in a few places around the city, including Maria's. Though she identified as primarily a visual artist, her own career spanned a few musical institutions: she had worked at a Chicago jazz venue, HotHouse "doing almost everything" (Betty, field notes, February 8, 2016), followed by 8 years at the record store Dusty Groove, where she moved when HotHouse closed. She also asked me several questions, expressing a curiosity that seemed to permeate her cultural practice as well; she seemed excited about learning about music and learning to share it in interesting ways as well.

Sonorama was a DJ collective of three DJs, though I only ever met two: Senor Eddy and Charly. The third DJ, Eddy's brother Marlowe, had two kids which made it difficult to attend a weekly show. Charly grew up in Mexico and his glasses have the colors of the flag banded on the stem. He grew up with music everywhere: his family kept it on, his uncle made him Spanish punk rock mixtapes, and his neighbor had a Sonidero, an outdoor PA system that broadcast music from a record player into the neighborhood. The owner played what he wanted, so Charly heard a mix of salsa, mambo, and other music from 6:00 AM to 2:00 AM every day. Charly's wife, Valerie, is also a DJ at WLPN; her show features a mix of more modern Latin music and community commentary. Eddy grew up in Chicago and nearby Berwyn. His parents offered less musical encouragement, but he found ways to do it on his own. As a teenager, he hosted secret, DJed parties in the open apartment above his mother's store with two sets of music: one in the front and one in the back.[36] Charly and Eddy met at one of those parties when Charly showed up and asked to play music. He put on the [Nortec Collective](), a band that Eddy had never heard before and, as Eddy excitedly explained, mixed traditional, Mexican music over more current beats (Sonorama, February 2, 2016). They kept playing together, forming Sonorama in 2010 as "DJ collective that is known for energizing dance floors and sound waves with a unique blend of vintage Latin sounds" ("Sonorama," 2015). They hosted their first radio show at Radio Arte, a station owned by the Mexican Museum of Art. After the Museum closed the station in 2011, they broadcast shows from their own blog and social media sites, before

---

[36] Eddy arrived at the store one Halloween to find his mother had taken down all the decorations. So, he lied to his mother, who did not like Halloween much to begin with, and said it was for a party in a few weeks that he would cancel. He followed her home to Berwyn, turning at an intersection to return, reset, and host the Halloween party that night anyway (Sonorama, February 2, 2016).

joining WLPN in November of 2015 (Sonorama, field notes, February 9, 2016). They also

started their own record label, Sonorama Discos, in 2015 ("Sonorama DANCE PARTY," 2016).

Their show was the latest show I worked on, running from 8:00 to 10:00 PM and Logan had

noted that they usually brought beer with them, despite the prohibition on food and drinks in

the studio. For the first show, I brought a bomber of Marz beer with me, figuring I could gift,

share, or finish it myself to fit in. Instead, they offered me one of theirs almost immediately and

replaced it as soon I finished. They were excellent, experienced hosts.

Each DJ brought up an instance of being exposed to new music during his or her own

musical evolutions, which helped them accumulate their embodied cultural capital as music

listeners and fans. But, they had continued to home their embodied cultural capital throughout

their varied careers in music and now in freeform radio. The musical history of each DJ spoke to

how they developed their individual musical tastes, and the ability to work with audiences.

D.   The Shows

In keeping with the central tenet of freeform radio, WLPN DJs could define their own

shows within the broad parameters provided by WLPN, without necessarily adhering to a

specific genre – or even keeping the outline of their show consistent. The DJs I worked used a

variety of ways to explain their shows, often offering loose descriptions that could

accommodate any number of musical sounds. Joe, Betty and Catie-O described their shows

without any inclusion of what types of music they would play. And, Sonorama and Lawrence

worked so deeply within such huge categories, their selections could still be completely

unpredictable, even when they themed their programs. The open-ended show structures left

plenty of room to make changes and choices for every broadcast, so the DJ could rely on his or her own knowledge to curate each program in their own ways.

Joe alternated between two shows in the beginning. The first time I worked with him, he hosted a Thrift Score program for the radio. Our second show together was an intentionally different program, a psychedelic, blues, free jazz spiritual show (Joe, field notes, November 25, 2016) with no title. In the New Year, he changed the show title to "Eclectic Ladyland," specifically so he could play a different theme of music every week. He closed the new program by telling his listeners to "expect the unexpected" (Joe, field notes, January 6, 2016). He had grown tired of limiting himself to only playing thrift score music and wanted to play the other things from his vast musical collection; the new show description intentionally spoke to variety. He explained he sometimes used a similar approach with his DJ name, akin to the Portuguese author, Fernando Pessoa. Pessoa used what he called "heteronyms," or different pseudonyms that corresponded to the genre he chose to write in. Joe had come up with the idea on his own: instead of DJing as "DJ Joe Bryl," he would promote himself as "DJ Joe Mama" when he spun underground dance or "DJ Mix" when he played psychedelic music, only later learning about Pessoa (Joe, field notes, January 20, 2016). In our time together though, he was always DJ Joe Bryl with an ever evolving show, but in other contexts he used his show descriptions, and even his name, to give listeners a sense of what they might be in for – even when that might be the unknown.

Betty and Catie-O also kept their show descriptions purposefully broad from the outset, allowing for flexibility to curate their sets without pre-defined expectations of what it might include. Betty described her show, "Isms," as "the things I think are necessary" (Betty, field

notes, February 8, 2016). She did not want to be tied into playing all hip-hop, or any genre, during her program. "Planet Catieo" presented as "mixes from a vast array of music samples and recorded sounds are layered, modified and compiled together to portray parts of the nonsense poem by Lewis Carroll" ("Catie Olsen/Planet Catieo," 2015). Without any more specifics on what kinds of sounds might be included, Catie-O could choose from any range of genres, songs, artists, and snippets to create two hours of musical gibberish. They could choose a new direction for every broadcast, though other DJs developed plans in advance.

Senor Eddy admitted that the freeform could be a bit much for him sometimes, so Sonorama often planned a theme for their shows each week: they texted and used a shared spreadsheet to figure out what they would each bring to play. At our first show, they had themed it around the representations of African heritage in Latin music, in honor of the United States Black History month. Charly hosted the next two shows without Eddy and took a more freeform approach without including an explicit theme, though he included more tracks by Black Latin artists, some of which directly addressed racial issues in the lyrics (Sonorama, field notes, February 9, 2016; Sonorama, field notes, February 23, 2016). Sonorama promoted their show as "vintage Latin sounds," drawing from an impossibly broad musical landscape, though they categorized shows or sets by country. They might focus on a theme, genre, or time period, but never limited the playlist to one nation; they aimed to express the diversity and specificity of Latin music (Sonorama, field notes, February 2, 2016). A more specific show description at WLPN still left plenty of latitude to explore a huge sonic landscape, within a weekly theme or with a less developed plan.

Similarly, while Lawrence themed his show in the country music genre, he had built-in

flexibility to share music from a host of lesser heard sub-genres by specifying it was *his*

approach to county music, "Country My Way." The show arguably had the strictest boundaries

because he chose a specific genre from one nation, but he chose <u>his</u> approach in an attempt to

include as much variation of what his audience might think of as "country" music. He had

considered a weekly theme, as well as the idea of hosting the show as an underground version

of the classic, 70s AM country stations he used to listen to. In that set-up, he considered

featuring the same few songs every week as his version of the standouts, so "I could have hits!"

(Lawrence, field notes, January 20, 2016). He ultimately decided <u>this</u> would be too much work,

however, and chose to focus on not repeating songs. He still used his show to introduce his

audiences to as much new (to them) country music as possible.

At WLPN, DJs created shows that drew on their own, embodied knowledge of what

audiences would respond to. In formatted radio stations, all of this works the other way

around: stations identify audiences through data and build programs based on the music the

audiences already like. Instead of data, WLPN relied on the embodied cultural capital of the DJs,

trusting them as curators that would be able to reach their desired audience with the strength

of their musical choices. Audiences might have some idea of what they would hear when they

tuned in, but not necessarily. DJs did not always directly communicate their plans to audiences,

but instead created a program that might appeal to an audience they created on the spot.

E. **<u>Programming Philosophies</u>**

Even when WLPN DJs made spontaneous choices, they did so within a general, personal

approach that shaped their choices. Ahlkvist (2001) examined how commercial radio

programmers also used personal logics, alongside data, to choose music for broadcast; he

identified four *programming philosophies* that underscored their selections, two of which

appeared to be present at WLPN[37]. His *musicologist* and *surrogate consumer* philosophies both

incorporate the taste, knowledge and judgment of the programmer, but in different directions.

The surrogate consumer attempts to represent the tastes of her audience by playing music she

thinks will appeal to them based on her understanding of that taste. The musicologist programs

according to her own, more informed and superior tastes to educate audiences on music they

might not otherwise here. For the musicologist, the challenge was "balancing their personally

high standards (music they are proud of) with what the market will bear (music they can justify,

but do not personally like)" (Ahlkvist, 2001, p. 347). At WLPN, I observed DJs using musicologist

philosophy, which was no great surprise since WLPN had chosen DJs for their expertise in music

and, without a defined audience or "market to bear," they had more latitude to play from their

own expansive tastes. I also observed some examples of DJs using the surrogate consumer

philosophy, where DJs identified their audiences tastes, either because they had an idea who

was listening or because they were playing music that they themselves enjoyed. I also identified

two additional philosophies: the *creator* and the *synesthete*.

---

[37] The other two philosophies relied more heavily on industry data and seemed less relevant here. The *programming professional philosophy* relied on audience research to choose music. The *conduit philosophy* aimed to support the record industry by relying on the record label data on what would keep audiences tuned in. However, even in the conduit philosophy, taste played a role: one programmer noted he would not "'put anything *really* horrible on the radio'" (Ahlkvist, 2001, 351, original emphasis).

Even without a personally defined audience, the DJs considered their overall responsibility to introduce their audiences to music that may have gone unheard. In this way, DJs acted as musicologists, but needed to keep the WLPN audience in mind. Joe summarized a common theme when he explained that his role was to "raise the opportunities for people" by introducing them to new music (Joe, field notes, January 20, 2016). He did not DJ to a specific group of people, but he still attempted to make a connection when he relied on cover versions of well-known songs – sometimes, he worried, too much (Joe, field notes, November 25, 2015). During our first show together, his Thrift Score set included covers of David Bowie's "Life on Mars," the Byrds' "8 Miles High," Donovan's "Mellow Yellow," Procol Harum's "Whiter Shade of Pale," and a few Beatles' tracks as well (Joe, field notes, November 18, 2015).[38] By including covers, he created a listening experience that was both familiar and new, using songs that audiences could like anticipate and be surprised by. He used a similar strategy in reverse when he would play the deeper cuts from a well-known artist. During a more psychedelic-soul show, he played a lesser heard track off War's Life is a Ghetto, noting that everyone only knew the hit from that record, "The Cisco Kid," but no one knew the other songs (Joe, field notes, January 6, 2016). He did not seek to avoid mainstream music as a DJ, but he tried to "make the connection" between artists in larger sets of new and interesting music (Joe, field notes, January 20, 2016). He used his vast knowledge of music, as well as his collection, to curate sets of tracks that would be new and familiar to his audience.

---

[38] The linked and playlist tracks are provided as examples of covers of these songs, not the actual songs Joe played; I did not record the versions he used.

Lawrence, Sonorama, and Joe considered their listeners as similar to themselves, which could be considered a surrogate consumer philosophy. Lawrence described his programming strategy as "what I would want": getting to tune into a bunch of new, exciting country music that he had never heard before. I observed the Sonorama DJs learning from each other during their program, passing record sleeves back and forth to read the information printed on the covers; their audience on-air might have been small, but when they DJed together, they DJed for each other using predictably high standards, honed over years of partnership (Sonorama, field notes, February 2, 2016). Joe described his overall DJ style, as well as his fellow DJs "trying to do what we are doing here" as "looking for a new high." (Joe, January 20, 2016) They played to their own tastes, which tended towards the lesser heard and obscure, using a hybridized approach that could perhaps be considered a "surrogate musicologist."

On one show, Lawrence played a set of Johnny Cash songs for a specific audience he knew had tuned in from Colorado after a mutual friend and Cash fan had passed away. This was the only instance I observed a DJ play specifically for an audience and going against his own tastes. Lawrence appreciated Cash's work, but he preferred to play lesser known artists (Lawrence, field notes, February 2, 2016). In this case though, the show was an act of caring for his audience, who were also his friends.

Betty created an "imaginary audience" to help guide her choices, inventing a show with a creator philosophy from her own ideas of who might she might like to be listening. Betty's show ran from 4:00 to 6:00 PM and she tried to play more up-tempo music for the first hour, playing to an "imaginary audience" of a friend who was stuck working late (Betty, February 22, 2016). Her tastes played a strong role, but she limited herself to playing more energetic tracks

for her created listener. Lawrence but also wondered about a hypothetical listener, turning the dial and maybe learning something new about country music (Lawrence, field notes, January 20, 2016). Putting audiences, however constructed, introduced guidelines to work within. For Betty, it was choosing a specific speed of music and for Lawrence, it was to continue pushing himself to introduce a wider variety.

Catie-O did not create an audience, but instead relied on a further developed aesthetic perception of the music to choose her set, employing a *synesthete* programming philosophy. She played a [Jacco Gardener](#) song early in a set on a winter evening and explained she would not play this in the summer because it was both minimalist and in a minor key. She noticed the setting sun and said it was almost still too bright outside to be playing it (Catie-O, field notes, February 1, 2016). Her decision did not come entirely from her own taste: she liked the song, but also had strong ideas on how it would fit into a cold Chicago evening. She directly drew connections between the experience of music and other sensory experiences to create an overall experience for her listeners, even if she did not know them and had to rely on her current surroundings to inform her decisions. Other DJs may have been doing the same without thinking, but Catie-O directly identified her strategy of taking cues from the physical world to give shape to her programs.

The live audience also only offered one, and often very small, segment of the show's potential listeners. WLPN did not have a terrestrial broadcast during my fieldwork at the station, so the audiences was only able to listen online. I rarely checked the computer that reported the streaming audience, but when I did, the numbers stayed firmly in the single digits. DJs did not seem to pay much attention to the numbers. Lawrence noted the importance of the

audience listening over the archives that WLPN also made available online. He was careful not to repeat songs in his show in case people might "binge listen" through his programs (Lawrence, field notes, January 20, 2016). Sonorama also used the archive to share their broadcasts with a wider audience. They had been internet DJs before they started at WLPN; they had used a blog to share sets with an internet-based audience who followed them. They shared their WLPN shows online too: Charly posted them to an internet DJ collective named Radio Co-Me-Me that he participated in (Sonorama, February 2, 2016). Lawrence, Eddy, and Charly all considered the extended lifespan of their music beyond what the audience of-the-moment might hear, programming into the future as well.

A DJ who works in a well-defined genre has the benefit of similarity built right in. [Iron Maiden](), [Motorhead](), and [Judas Priest]()[39] all have their own take on heavy metal, but they also feature the same driving guitar, heavy drums, and power vocals that makes a quick set of the three artists reasonably coherent. Freeform DJs at WLPN, by contrast, must create the coherency across genres. Catie-O described building sets as "evolving clusters. . .it's almost like they can be friends, [these] little clumps" of music that sort of goes together (Catie-O, field notes, February 1, 2016). The sonic connection between, for example, [Stereolab](), [Ananda Shankar](), and [Screaming Females]() might not be as immediately apparent; the skill is bringing disconnected sounds together into a coherent set. Lawrence also noted trying to match up music by a similar sound, regardless of artist, time period, or sub-genre (Lawrence, field notes,

---

[39] The track linked here is not available on Spotify. I substituted the version by the all-female tribute band, [Judas Priestess](), that was available and makes the same point.

January 20, 2016). DJs needed a deep, almost intuitive, knowledge of how their music sounded and how to spot the connections that build a bridge.

For each DJ, their personal philosophies helped guide their selections as articulations of their own embodied cultural capital. Without a defined audience, they could program in nearly any direction they liked. Ahlkvist's (2001) work points to how DJs made individual decisions within a closely defined structure, but my observations at WLPN speak to how people make decisions when they have more room to build their *own* structures. The WLPN DJs used their knowledge and experience to define their programs and their audiences, as well as building the connections to wrangle an impossibly diverse collection of songs into a coherent set for their audience to experience. The DJs' embodied cultural capital included both the knowledge of their genre, but how to share that music with others, even when they did not know who those others might be.

F.   Live Audiences

Audience visibility marks a key difference between DJing on the radio and DJing live. A live crowd can immediately respond to the music in any number of ways and "It is in this shared space and time that DJs are able to observe and interact with bodies in motion and attempt to elicit response through the choice and use of recorded sound" (Borschke, 2011, p. 933). The live audience might demand more attention from the DJ, either directly through requests or indirectly as paying customers. DJs may not have the freedom to play for a community like their own, but must contend with an audience who wants to use the music differently – for dancing, drinking, or tub thumping. All of the DJs I worked with had experience DJing live and the

contrast helped further examine the different ways they used knowledge to choose music for in-person audiences.

Catie-O compared herself to a sculptor, explaining that she feels sound builds the space in the same way physical objects do. When she DJs, she brings a wide variety of music so she can read and react to the crowd. She tries to pick up clues on what they might like by observing how old they are, what race they are, and how they move. She often (though not always) tries to keep the mood of the room steady at first. When I saw her DJ at Maria's, she opened with "See No Evil," by Television, which is the opening track on their canonical, but lesser known, "Marquee Moon." It drew me in immediately by connecting us with a shared taste; it is my favorite track on the album (field notes, November 19, 2015). Then she tries to push their boundaries and get her audiences to react to what she's playing. She tries to find tracks with "a little bit of grab" to shift the response even they might expect; she offered the example of the time she got her friend's metal band, Cyanide, to dance to a J. Geils Band song at a party (Catie-O, field notes, February 1, 2016). They may not have been classic rock fans, or even dancers, but the right track and the right time brought them to the floor. When she needs to get the crowd's attention, she uses the Chipmunk Punk cover of Tom Petty's "Refugee," an odd, and often unfamiliar, version of a megahit that even the most casual of rock fans can usually sing by memory. She does not use it often, but it usually gets a few people to raise their head and notice the music; she gets a reaction (Catie-O, field notes, February 1, 2016). Catie described her audience in positive terms, like a gracious hostess with excellent taste, able to use her significant knowledge to shape her guests' experience. She attempted to anticipate their

demands, while also pushing them to explore slightly different types of music that might defy the audience's expectations.

Joe expressed a different perspective on interacting with his live audience, casually remarking one day "I don't give a shit what the crowd wants" (Joe, field notes, January 20, 2016). He quickly followed that this was not elitist, but part of the job. He did sometimes prioritize more accessible music during busy, weekend nights when it competed with conversations and activity. He might play more experimental music early on a Friday, but by 10:00 PM or so, the music needed to be understood alongside the talking. Music, he continued, has a rhythm and the DJ had to find the right rhythm (Joe, field notes, November 25, 2015). Keeping the audience meant finding something that kept the crowd in good spirits, but playing directly to the crowd could be challenging because it could draw requests.

Requests offer an interesting, if backwards, way that heteronomy arises from demand. Left to their own devices and/or radio shows, DJs might play a diverse array of music that is unfamiliar to most audiences. But, the audience might demand the same old songs, which become the non-normal offerings for DJs used to playing the weirder stuff. Joe offered that for Friday night at 11:00 PM he might bring a stack of rare soul 45s that are perennially popular with DJs and, more recently, music fans. When he plays them, people will come up and request something they know, which is usually something he does not bring. Then, he continued, they will ask to see what he *does* have, even though it won't matter because they won't recognize it, but it will be the something that they like because he understands their tastes. He knows that the same audiences that like Motown will probably also like the smaller labels that emulated, or even originated, that sound. He lamented that DJs did not get the same advantage as chefs:

when the Hot Doug, formerly of Chicago's Sausage Superstore and Encased Meats Emporium which was known for its unique variations on the classic hot dog, serves a polish sausage, it is not the standard polish sausage that just anyone sells, but it is Doug's exceptional take on a Polish sausage (Joe, field notes, January 20, 2016). Diners love it, even if it's not the same thing they are used to. Casual music fans can be less adventurous.

But, as Catie-O noted in a similar comparison to bar patrons, "Not everyone cares what they're drinking" (Catie-O, field notes, February 15, 2016). Some audiences, like patrons of all kinds, pay less attention. When Lawrence DJs live, he assumes most people are not listening, so he is almost surprised when someone comes up to ask about the music. But, when he plays a well-known hit, people to come up with other requests, which are often more hits. Lawrence thinks the hits are boring and those tend to be the only songs people know (Lawrence, January 20, 2016). With his focus on playing lesser heard country music, he wants to push audiences, so he leaves out the hits to keep audiences from trying to make *him* stick to what *they* know. In this case, that connection over a shared taste goes too far, such that the live audience might want to jump in and start to control the music themselves, but they do not have the expertise to do so. Lawrence and Joe tended to stay away from playing easily recognized music that encouraged people to start asking for their favorites instead of letting the DJ shape the room. They ignored the audience's demands to hear the same old songs.

In the live context, the audience does retain some authority as the market: a DJ often must pay some attention to the listeners to ensure she gets paid. A DJ might be paid a flat sum for the evening or a portion of the bar take, but in either case, a DJ who clears the room does

not get invited back[40]. A live DJ trades her embodied cultural capital of what to play for financial capital, so she must be somewhat successful at reading her audience and keeping them happy to successfully make the exchange. Playing music presents an opportunity for altruistic exchange: the DJ plays music that makes her audience happy, so they continue to pay her to enjoy their evening. Even Joe, who openly stated he did not care what his audience wanted, admitted to playing music that would be acceptable for certain times at Maria's and he recognized that his audiences might want to hear certain things, even when he did not oblige.

G. **Language**

Both Polanyi and Bourdieu recognize the language as the articulation of tacit knowledge and embodied cultural capital, respectively. How the DJs talked about music offered another way to see their embodied cultural capital of musical knowledge. When they spoke on air, they often used the time to share more information about the music they played. Lawrence, for example, always made a point to share the tasty puns embedded in song titles, such as "Crying for Seven Days (That Makes One Weak)" (Lawrence, field notes, February 2, 2016). Senor Eddy also passed me a record cover during the show to point out its title, "Being a Gramaphone Essay on Cuban Jazz: The Jawbone of an Ass." He explained on-air that the jawbone is an actual instrument in the music: the rattle of the teeth adds another layer of percussion (Sonorama, February 2, 2016). Knowing the details came from having a curiosity that went beyond sound and into the information on how the music was made at every level, including the packaging, titling, songwriters, song meanings, artists, and any number of little details that could be

---

[40] Before one of my first DJ gigs, a colleague at Reckless advised that it was actually the *bartender* who needed to be kept happy. His or her recommendation would ensure a re-invitation.

gleaned from taking the time to pay attention. By sharing the details with the listeners, the DJs displayed and shared their own knowledge with their listeners. The package of an album – the songs, the cover, the notes – serves an educational purpose, "whose effects was that of teaching listeners the skills and dispositions required for their satisfaction" (Straw, 2011, p. 234). Radio broadcasts divorce the music from their paratexts, so the DJ must fill in the gaps, building on their own knowledge to educate their audiences.

General musical knowledge presented another form of cultural capital, though I observed less of this than I expected. Obscure facts about a certain artist's previous band or a lesser known production credit can be bandied about in polite conversation as a status signal in some musical fields. WLPN DJs were not unfamiliar with status displays of musical know-how, but did not often employ such tactics with me or in other interactions that I observed. Lawrence offered one example of shutting down a Waylon Jennings fan who had been going on about what a "bad ass" Waylon had been. Lawrence asked if that fan had ever heard Jennings' cover of MacArthur Park, a simpering, sweet megahit later covered by Donna Summers (Lawrence, field notes, December 2, 2016). Knowing more meant ending the argument - Waylon Jennings might seem like an outlaw to some, but he had a sappy, superstar side as well – and Lawrence dismantled the fellow fan's argument with one quick fact. The information, and knowing how to use it, gave Lawrence a bit more power in that conversation since his musical knowledge meant having a counterpoint at the ready. But this was an isolated example of that kind of talk.

I did not observe DJs competing with each other, or me, to display the most knowledge, though they did discuss the importance of knowing about the music they played. Charly

106

frequently offered facts about the music and often translated the gist of the lyrics for his English-speaking audience (Sonorama, February 2, 9, & 23, 2016). Lawrence wished he had more time for research so he could share more information about the music with his audiences. He spent part of one show looking online for the name of a well-known Chicago country musician, taking it personally that he did not know the artist's name off the top of his head. He scanned the internet for the answer while muttering he was "being a dick" for needing to look it up at all (Lawrence, February 2, 2016). He expected himself to be an expert along with a DJ.

Catie-O, by contrast, did not take much stock in musical facts. She noted that she frequently mixed up information on the labels, so she was not an especially reliable source for more information, even when it was right in front of her. For example, she once listed off a band name to me as "EMI," which I recognized as the label; the band was actually Bow Wow-Wow. She did not take backtracking very seriously, noting that people can, and do, just use the Shazaam app to identify an artist by sound (Catie-O, field notes, February 1, 2016). People who want to identify music can use an app in many cases to identify what is playing. She does not participate in sharing musical facts as embodied cultural capital; she shares music and sound instead. Not every DJ subscribed to the idea that knowing the facts of the music mattered as much as the music itself, but the knowledge still served as an asset for many DJs to educate their audiences.

While sharing knowledge emerged as another form of embodied cultural capital for some, sharing music appeared to be the primary way DJs communicated with their audiences. WLPN gave DJs a platform to share the listening experience with audiences; they could go further than talking about music to let listeners have their own reactions. DJs could present the

evidence of their tastes in a way others cannot: "Every music fan knows that moment of frustration when one can only sit the person down and say (or, rather, shout) despairingly 'But just listen to her! Isn't she fantastic!'" (Frith, 1998, p. 4) WLPN DJs could go further. They had secured their positions of authority as curators in part because of their embodied cultural capital to serve as experts, able to use the radio platform to choose music for others. Knowing about music is one form of embodied cultural capital, but understanding how to share it was more relevant for the WLPN DJs. WLPN DJs asserted the authority to choose music for others by displaying the right understanding of how to choose music for others – not just talk about it.

H.   Conclusion

Both Bourdieu and Polanyi offer theoretical perspectives that seem to accurately describe the automatic, but well-honed, ways that DJs understood and chose music for their audiences, both live and at WLPN. Their knowledge of music, as well as what music would speak to audiences, offered one form of embedded knowledge that both theorists attempted to define. The learning process started early and extended through their careers as music fans and DJs. They communicated with music and language to display their expertise for audiences, establishing the authority that had granted them the sonic space to speak. And, as will be discussed in the next chapter, their knowledge extended to their bodies, which offered another space to see them as experts in their field, even if they could not always explain their expertise directly. Both concepts give shape to what can be a difficult to define aspect of social life.

But, the key difference is that where Bourdieu finds competition, Polanyi (1958) finds conviviality, "the primitive sentiments of fellowship" (p. 209) as the root of interactions

throughout the animal kingdom, but especially for humans. Instead of seeing struggle, he

identifies two forms of "pure conviviality, that is, the cultivation of good fellowship" (p. 210).

The first centers on communication, which promotes fellowship through the simplest of

conversations. In addition to making "a direct contribution to the fulfillment of a man's purpose

and duty as a social being" (p. 211), conversation helps groups work more effectively together

because they come to understand (and maybe even like) each other. Consider, for example, the

manager who says "Good morning" instead of walking in silence to her office. She creates a

shared experience centered on her hope that everyone has a good start to his or her day. The

pleasantries are important: she also likely gets more from that group. The second form of pure

conviviality happens at the group level, with "a participation in joint activities. . .By fully

participating in a ritual, the members of a group affirm the community of their existence" (p.

211) and distinguish themselves from other groups who do things differently.

Polanyi's perspective works up from the individual, while still leaving room for how

authority and tradition shape the social world (Sen, 2009). To use an example from Polanyi's

first career, he looks first to the nanoparticles, then the atoms, to understand the chemicals

and their place in the universe; chemical and physical laws still apply, but the perspective

centers on the micro-level. Organized society arises from "the framework of interpersonal

obligations imposed by the social lore of the group" (Polanyi, 1958, p. 212). Modern social

organizations take shape from sharing *convictions* via institutions of culture, such as churches,

schools, and museums, sharing *fellowships* in convivial group rituals and interactions, *co-

operation* to share a financial or materials advantage in the economic system, and *authority or

coercion* that act as the "public power" that maintains three aforementioned institutions

(Polanyi, 1958, p. 213). His view presents a social world defined by attempts to collaborate instead of compete, which is much closer to what I saw in the DJs at WLPN.

In some sense, I had expected DJs to be protective of their strategies and pedantic with their knowledge, but instead I found a group of people who devoted their labor towards making themselves *and others* happy with their expertise. Despite the amount of time the DJs spent preparing, they approached their shows at WLPN with joy. Catie-O noted her show at WLPN was "an honor" (Catie-O, field notes, December 15, 2015). When I asked Lawrence about the differences between DJing live and DJing at WLPN, he gleefully replied "it's two versions of the best thing ever" and later noted that at the station he was "a pig in shit" sharing his music with others (Lawrence, field notes, January 20, 2016). The DJs I worked with approached their programs with the passion of music fandom; their shows were not just an opportunity to promote their paid gigs or use up time on air to reveal their superior tastes. They willingly worked to share their music with others because they loved to do so, fitting much more closely with Polanyi's ideas of social organization.

VIII: OBJECTIFIED CULTURAL CAPITALS

A.   <u>**Introduction**</u>

Most radio stations, including freeform, offer their DJs a music library to program from.

Commercial freeform stations in the late 70s boasted more diverse libraries than their

formatted peers: because record labels could not predict what the freeform DJs might play,

they sent a wider variety of promotional albums (Neer, 2001). A freeform station's collection

offers an opportunity for DJs to explore new music, digging into a body of resources likely far

larger than what they might own. Lawrence recalled his days at KJHK, a college station in

Lawrence, Kansas, where one of the posted rules included pulling at least one album from the

library once a show. Lawrence would often show up at hour early to pull records from the

library, noting not every DJ utilized the library, but he saw it as a "fun challenge" (Lawrence,

field notes, January 20, 2016). Access to a massive library meant hearing more music without

the investment of purchase; DJs who could secure a position at a freeform station had the

opportunity to build their musical tastes for free.

At WLPN, however, there was no space for a library. WLPN DJs could build their own

relationships with record labels and secure promotional copies, but they could not store any

musical objects (e.g. CDs, records) at the station because there was no room.[41] Without a

library to draw from, WLPN DJs needed to bring their own music to host a show, which did not

appear to be a problem for the ones I worked with: all of them had personal music collections,

---

[41] WLPN did maintain a small collection of digital tracks, which they grew through regular requests to DJs to contribute (Station Meeting, field notes, September 15, 2015; Joe, field notes, January 6, 2016). The station used the collection to fill in programming space between DJs, as well as covering for a DJ who might run out of music or even miss a show (Sonorama, February 9, 2016).

some of which included thousands of albums. Every DJ used vinyl objects, both LPs and 45

singles, to build their shows. On our first show together, Charly noted that they were "100%

vinyl today," before explaining it was a joke: Sonorama only plays vinyl because all of them are

"record nerds" (Sonorama, field notes, February 2, 2016). Joe would sometimes improvise on

the station ID by introducing WLPN the station "where we put the LP back into radio" (Joe, field

notes, January 20, 2016). The DJs used other mediums on occasion, including CDs (Joe, field

notes, November 25, 2015, January 6 and 25, 2015), an iPod (Catie-O, field notes, February 15,

2016) and a laptop (Betty, field notes, February 2 and 22, 2016). But, most all of the shows

played records or 45s, if not exclusively, then for a majority of the time I spent with them on-

air.

Working with WLPN DJs offered an opportunity to investigate why and how records

have retained their value as the dominant musical object in the field of independent music.

Musical objects serve as an important example of objectified cultural capital for DJs to bring

authority to audiences and vinyl records and 45s emerged as the most valuable objects. I was

able to observe how DJs used vinyl along with other musical objects, like CDs, laptops, and

digital tracks, to curate their sets for audiences. Discussing the differences between the

technologies demonstrated how vinyl records continued to influence their choices and, in some

cases, how they used other media to program and prepare for their shows. Examining how

their acquired their musical collections spoke to their investment in securing the right forms of

capital and how other forms of cultural and social capital supported their work. Finally,

watching them play music cemented the connection between objectified forms and embodied

forms of cultural capital, when their fluid motions displayed an ingrained expertise honed by

practice. Even as other technologies and forms of music become available, WLPN DJs did not

significantly alter their existing practices, but incorporated some of the new affordances into

their habits. As internet-based technologies have made it easier for others to access musical

objects and knowledge, vinyl's appeal as a symbolically valuable form of objectified cultural

capital becomes clearer.

B.   **Objectified Cultural Capitals**

In Bourdieu's taxonomy of the forms of cultural capital, objectified cultural capital are

the "goods" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 243). The objectified form includes both the object as well as

the embodied cultural capital to use or appreciate it. Accumulation goes beyond buying

something: the owner must know how to use the object, "either in person or by proxy"

(Bourdieu, 1986, p. 247). The owner must be able to summon the know-how, even if she does

not have it herself. Conversely, the user must have access to the objects to learn to use them.

The record libraries mentioned in the introduction provide a convenient example of one way

DJs have access to objects without ownership; record libraries have little value to the station if

they sit on the shelves, so stations make them available to DJs who, by sharing the music on air,

establish the value of the music collection to the listening audience and wider community.[42]

Objectified cultural capital accumulates in a mutually dependent loop of access and practice to

develop the necessary familiarity with the object. Ownership is often only one way—and one

step—into using objects as capital in a field.

---

[42] Another interesting study would be how DJs choose from a library, which would offer a different strategy of how
DJs made decisions from a larger collection that they might be less familiar with than their own.

In a broader sense, Bourdieu is describing the process by which objects are also culturally commodified in specific fields. A purely Marxist analysis of objects as commodities would rely on their financial value as products of and within the capitalist system, but discussions have expanded the value of commodities beyond their financial value. Buchli (2004) argues for a broader perspective that ties commodities to a relational, material culture perspective that considers "commodities as things in a certain situation . . .[where] the commodity situation in the social life of any 'thing' [will] be defined as the situation in which its exchangeability (past, present, or future) for some other thing is its socially relevant feature" (p. 10). The commodity situation can include the commodity phases where objects gain and lose their commodity status, the objects' candidacy for commodification, as well the context in which the objects exist (Buchli, 2004, p. 10). If we consider commodification as a situation instead of a distinctive quality, we are better positioned to understand when, why, and where objects take on culturally specific values for some groups and not others.

Musical objects, and even music itself, exists as a socially and culturally created commodity. Like any commodity, "music does not sir around exuding commodity status—it has to be *commodified*, and in ways that are different than other commodities" (Taylor, 2007, p. 283). In his history of the player piano, Taylor (2007) correctly notes that cultural commodities often take on multiple lives through their production, reproduction, and consumption. The commodity value of the music itself relies on the technologies that facilitate the migrations; - the technologies act as connected, but distinct, commodities. Studying music from a material perspective has been an increasingly popular approach in musical studies, offering a way to understand the meaning of the music by understanding how its objects circulate (Straw, 2012).

114

The same approach offers insight into how and why fans and producers in specific genres (e.g.

punk, Top 40, independent music) gravitate to specific objects. In this case, a material culture

approach helps to explain why vinyl records have remained the standard stock of DJs, even as

other technologies have provided more convenient alternatives.

A material culture perspective also helps to explain how objects also come to serve as

capital: if the commodity value explains why people *want* the object, then objectified cultural

capital can help to explain why people *use* the object. Bourdieu makes a clear distinction that

objectified cultural capital are only "effective capital insofar as it is appropriated by agents and

implemented and invested as a weapon and a stake in the struggles which go on in the fields of

cultural production" (Bourdieu, 1986, 247). People who have and can use relevant objects have

more power in their field—and they must struggle to keep it that way as other members of the

field bring new objects. The conflicts over what confers cultural authority mean the actual

objects that confer power are always in flux. Objectified cultural capital evolves with how the

people in the field use it or don't, so change is to be expected. Objectified cultural capital offers

a flexible category that focuses on how people use objects as opposed to objects in and of

themselves; objects only act as capital if the individuals in the field use them to struggle for

power.

But, Bourdieu's obsession with power obscures the other meanings that objects take on

in cultural contexts. Objects can retain power even as they are not striking down, or even

against, other forms of cultural production. Vinyl records have a distinct history in DJ culture

that draws on their specific affordances as objects, as well as their status as symbolic

communicators of the dedication and knowledge of the DJ. My research, along with others,

finds that the considerable work of acquiring vinyl is not an attempt to bring down other musical objects, or even strike a blow to the larger music industry. The DJs I worked with incorporated other technologies into their programs, in addition to and as part of their work to build their music collections. They still acknowledged vinyl's status as the most culturally valuable musical object, but not as a weapon. It was, instead, a carefully crafted set of tools that helped them communicate their individual labor and expertise when they presented music to audiences.

C. **Musical Objects: Vinyl et al.**

It was interesting, but not at all surprising, that the WLPN DJs I worked with tended to use vinyl more often than other technologies. In some cases, DJs used vinyl exclusively. Even as the music industry ushered in new technologies, live DJs, specifically electronic dance music DJs, remained committed to vinyl (Bartmanski & Woodward, 2015, p. 97). The physical affordances of vinyl records had been instrumental (quite literally) in the rise of sampling in hip-hop and dance music. As early as the 1970s, DJs had been taking snips of songs (e.g. the James Brown-Lyn Collins' "WOO! YEAH!" or the opening drums from the Bongo Band's "Apache") to remix into new tracks, "a musical dissection made possible by the character of vinyl as a medium of sound reproduction" (Borshcke, 2011, p. 933). Early DJs would put tape on the records to mark the samples they needed, or even etch the sample into acetate (Borschke, 2011). Audiences could watch the DJ mix, scratch, and spin their records into brand new tracks, combining playing and performing into a new way to share music with audiences. In the 1990s, as record companies marketed CDs to home consumers, "vinyl became the DJ-friendly party-making machine" (Bartmanski & Woodward, 2015, p. 25). DJs continued to rely on vinyl records

as their primary medium to make music for their audiences, even as other technologies became

available. Not unlike the relationship between live theater and cinema, vinyl offers a different

experience with different qualities than digital music, such as its presence as a tactile object

(Bartmanski & Woodward, 2015, p. 30). The strategies of mixing and remixing were developed

within the affordances and limitations of the records as an object.

But even for DJs who did not mix their records into new tracks, vinyl remained the

preferred technology because it had come to communicate one's expertise, knowledge, and

commitment to music. Vinyl came to be seen as more "authentic" than its alternatives.

Authenticity here is defined as "a credible and warrantable performative sign which members

of a cultural community perceive as integral to the values and beliefs of that community"

(Bartmanski & Woodward, 2015, p. 118). It is important to clarify that while mixing and

sampling may have relied on the physical properties of vinyl records, their authenticity "is a

claim about affect and effect rather than a claim about degrees of truth or presence in a

recorded sound" (Sterne, 2003, p. 141). Vinyl records do not gain their status from their fidelity

or warmth or any other technological features, even though these features often come into

play when DJs share music. Their status in DJ communities comes from their continued

relevance as symbols of expertise. In the handful of cases where I observed WLPN DJs use other

technologies, they often felt the need to defend why they had not chosen to play records.

Joe was the only DJ to use CDs during my field work. Other studies of music fans have

noted distaste for CDs, specifically, which were presented as the technology that would replace

records for home consumers.[43] Joe acknowledged that other DJs and music fans could be

prejudiced against them and offered a few reasons why he preferred them. He often previewed

albums on car trips, where playing records would be impossible (Joe, field notes, November, 25,

2016). He DJed with CDs on slower days at Maria's, when there would be no sense in lugging

vinyl (Joe, field notes, January 6, 2016) because the audience would be so small. Vinyl records

might be portable, but they are heavy to carry, especially in the snow. He used CDs at work

during the day at Maria's, when getting up from office work every 20 minutes or so to flip a

record didn't make much sense.[44] He noted also several albums were only available on CD, so

by discriminating against the format, exclusive collectors missed out on great music (Joe, field

notes, November, 25, 2016). CDs might be a more convenient alternative, or even the only

available object in some cases, but DJs did not use them nearly as often as vinyl objects because

they do not explicitly communicate the DJs expertise, even when they might be preferable.

Joe's comments highlight that he uses CDs only in cases where he is less concerned with how

he might appear to an audience, which might make them an ideal medium for radio, where the

DJ remains invisible, but this was not the case. Even without a physical audience, the DJs at

WLPN relied on their records.

Laptops offered another way to program a show that could be seen as more convenient

than, or at least not as heavy as, a crate of records. But, Betty was the only DJ I worked with

who used a laptop to program the first half of her show, where she could play mixes of digital

---

[43] Plasketes (2001) worked with a record collector who refused to even teach his son the letters "C" and "D" in succession out of loyalty to vinyl records.

[44] I found a similar challenge with dissertation writing. I tended to rely on Spotify playlists when I felt I had too much work to be bothered with changing the music every 30 minutes. When I needed to work in short bursts, the side of a record created productive intervals.

tracks that she acquired for free before she switched to records in the second half (Betty, field

notes, February 8, 2016). There were others at WLPN who used laptops regularly and even

exclusively. One week the DJ who followed Catie-O showed up with his laptop and explained to

me – with no provocation – that he did not bring records because he came straight from work

and it was more convenient to just bring his computer (Catie-O, field notes, February 15, 2016).

Instead of carrying a crate, or several crates, of records, first to work and then to the station, he

could access a larger library of music in a few pounds that could be stowed in his bag. Yet, he

still hinted he would prefer to play from records if he could.

Joe, Betty, and the laptop DJ all offered functional reasons why they did not play vinyl

records, which further highlights that the value of records rests in their culturally constructed

category as more the more authentic medium for DJs. Records are, after all, not especially

portable or accessible and they can be expensive, especially for a quantity of quality. But, their

symbolic importance is such that the DJs still relied on them as their primary medium. They

communicate that the person in charge of the music has invested her time to become an expert

of music, as evidenced by sharing that music on the format that those in the know continue to

use. Vinyl communicates "a commitment to a particular *style* and *experience*" (p. 29) that can

co-exist with other musical mediums (Bartmanski & Woodward, 2015). Vinyl acts in a

somewhat "gate-keeping" function to distinguish among those without established,

professional roles in music (Farrugia & Swiss, 2005). Those who can demonstrate their

commitment to selecting the right objects earn more respect among audiences and peers.

Even modern technologies reference vinyl's dominance in DJ culture. In the same EDM

cultures that helped cement vinyl's authenticity, modern DJ equipment relies on digital

technology to replicate the same, physical processes of making remixes (Borshke, 2011). Betty

programmed a portion of her show with one such open source product, Virtual DJ, which she

had downloaded for free. On a crammed and cluttered interface, two images of turntables spun

on each side with tiny fader graphic between them, along with dozens of other icons and

options to shift the sound of the music. The program allows the user to change the speed, the

length, or the pitch, to loop a few seconds or affect the piece in any number of ways. Betty

excitedly showed me the list of tracks she had prepared, all of which were listed in the lower

center, cued in order or able to be rearranged with a drag and a drop. She had pre-arranged the

first portion of the set, but kept tinkering during the show itself. First came a snippet of an

interview with Jerry Garcia where he recounted a show where he had taken too much acid and

thought the audience was coming to kill him; she had edited the clip ahead of time to cut out

any curse words that could not be played on air. Next she played a track Garcia had recorded

with Ornette Coleman, shifting into more Coleman and then a track he had recorded with

Charles Mingus she had spliced with a Coleman interview (Betty, field notes, February 8, 2016).

Virtual DJ offered a way to use digital tracks in a way that mimicked playing and mixing vinyl

records, with the added advantage of not having to lug in records to share a set.

On another day, I arrived to observe Betty's show early and found the previous DJ

playing from his laptop. He explained that sometimes he crossfaded his tracks with a third track

of clicks and pops to make his show sound like he played from records, when really he was

playing a pre-assembled set of streaming music from Spotify; because it is radio, no one would

know (Betty, field notes, February 22, 2016). Even when the DJs did not use vinyl, they

referenced its features – and even its flaws - with other technologies. He also used the tactic to

trick his audience into thinking he was playing from records, an extra step that further speaks to their importance in the fields of freeform radio and independent music.

Even when DJs did not play physical records, their technologies referenced playing records. Sterne (2012) defines the aesthetic similarities as "mediality," the characteristics of or pertaining to media, as well as the ways in which media refer to each other as part of "a collectively embodied process of cross-reference. It implies no particular historical or ontological priority of communicative forms." (10) How people use technologies can be understood in a more ahistorical context: the value from technology arises from "its articulation with particular practices, ways of doing things, institutions, and even in some cases belief systems" (Sterne, 2012, 10). Programs like Virtual DJ make sense because they allude to the established ways that DJs play music, borrowing some of that authenticity to make their product familiar and appealing.

Building a record collection also means shopping, finding and choosing, all of which take specialized knowledge, built over years of practice (Shuker, 2010). In some cases, the music DJs played could only be found on vinyl; it did not exist on other formats. Talking to the DJs on how they had built their music collections and observing them at work offered several examples of the complicated, often labor-intensive, practices of building a record collection that supported their freeform radio shows. The work they did before they arrived at the station to acquire their collections spoke to their commitment to communicating to audiences as authoritative, experienced DJs.

D.   Record Collections

As soon as LPs became available, they became collectible. The technology was made

available for purchase in the 1950s, just as Americans had come into the necessary resources

(e.g. time, money, and space) to explore all sorts of new hobbies - and LP collecting was one

(Elborough, 2009, p. 43). Shuker (2014) distinguishes practices of fandom from record

collecting, noting the latter tends to include a more "secondary involvement" that goes beyond

listening to the music into continually researching, finding, and acquiring it where "the central

factor is the systematic approach to acquiring new material for the collection" (p. 168). At the

heart of the collector's motivation, there is nearly always a love of music and in some cases, the

personal collection becomes its own archive, both of the owner's musical history, but also of

the types of music they have collected (Shuker, 2014). Instead of an arsenal of cultural

weapons, record collections serve as a form of externalized memory, where the collector's love

of music exists as a tangible, searchable trajectory of their own evolving tastes.

All the DJs I worked with had existing record collections to draw from, but also regularly

shopped for records to keeping building their reserves. Joe's collection was so large he often

pulled new music from the lesser explored sections; he estimated he had around 20,000 pieces

now after selling 7,000 or so over the last ten years (Joe, field notes, November 25, 2016).[45] The

other DJs seemed to have large collections as well, which they drew on to program their shows.

Buying new records made it easy to program new music into the show as well. DJs would

---

[45] After 9 years together, my husband and I got married – and only then did we broach the topic of merging our
personal record collections. We have around 3,000 together. When we started selling the duplicate copies, it felt
more permanently binding than buying our home.

sometimes show up loaded with recent purchases (Joe, field notes, November 18, 2016; Catie-O, field notes, February 1, 2016; Lawrence, field notes, December 1, 2016) that made it easy to introduce new music to their shows.

Building a collection takes work on the part of the DJ. In addition to her time at the turntables, she must make time to seek out the records, as well as the financial resources to buy them (Farrugia & Swiss, 2005). But that marks another reason that vinyl records have retained their symbolic value as objectified cultural capital: having the record is "much more impressive and demonstrative of the effort gone into the search" (Bartmanski & Woodward, 2015, p. 44). In his study of record collectors, Shuker (2010) cited the limitations on shopping as "time and opportunity, budget, effort and access" (p. 113). All of those factors came into play as investments in accumulating a stronger body of objectified cultural capital. Shopping every day, purchasing rare records, or seeking out specialty purchasing opportunities all helped DJs accrue stronger collections of capital to draw from.

E.   Shopping in Person

The practice of shopping for rare records among boxes of less valuable ones has become known as "crate-digging." Bartmanski and Woodward (2015) describe crate-digging as "sound archaeology" (p. 38) where record shoppers search through stacks of records, hunting for albums that have gone otherwise undiscovered. Cratedigging is meaningful because it can be arduous, difficult, and even dirty work, but "it is exactly this condition that makes running into a valuable record special or even ecstatic" (p. 39-40). Again, it is the invested time, as well as the

expertise to make the right choices, that bring value to the eventual acquisitions. Experienced diggers can identify potential gems by any number of signals.

WLPN DJs explained a few strategies. Betty, who identified primarily as a visual artist, relied on interesting record covers to take the first pass (Betty, field notes, February 22, 2016), which is a common strategy for collectors and music fans alike. Record cover art often provides important information about how the music sounds; fonts, colors, images, and layout can communicate important details about the style of music.[46] Senor Eddy and Lawrence relied on 45 records, which require an even deeper commitment to knowing the details of the music: older 45s often arrive in plain, paper sleeves with only the information on label to distinguish them by sight. Sorting through them can be an even more arduous task. On our first show, when Senor Eddy noted that he collected 45s, Charly and I jokingly agreed we did not have the patience for it (Sonorama, field notes, February 2, 2016). Sifting through crates of descriptive covers was one thing; digging through boxes of nearly identical items, often by even lesser known artists, has always sounded like a quick path to madness. I directly asked Lawrence how he was able to identify what might be worth a listen and he compared it to the game Hüsker Dü or Memory: "you just have to remember" the labels, artists, locations, and years that connect to other pieces that have sounded good in the past (Lawrence, field notes, December 1, 2015). Lawrence's approach further emphasizes the overlap between the embodied cultural capital of knowing what signaled quality and his ability to mobilize that capital to build his reserves of

---

[46] There is surprisingly little information, aside from Jones and Sorger (1999) and Hess (2000), on the visual communication of record covers, which presents an interesting direction for future research.

objectified cultural capital. DJs also relied on institutional relationships and social capital to afford and access shopping opportunities.

Betty and Joe had worked at record stores, which meant employee discounts and more exposure to a wide range of records for sale. They could use their time to both earn money, but also explore more music and pay less for the records they did buy. Joe had about 10 records when he left home for college and took the record store job at as an "opportunity to get music cheap" (Joe, field notes, January 20, 2016). Betty expanded her knowledge of jazz because that was her section to organize (Betty, field notes, February 8, 2016). In my own experience, working at a record store meant shopping from the inside.[47] Record store employees spend their day surrounded by music and music fans on both sides of the counter; part of the job is learning and listening. Clerks also see how music is priced, which can be useful to find deals in other shops. In addition to the employee discount that helped them build their collections more cheaply, working at a record store helped to build their musical knowledge which would serve as embodied cultural capital at WLPN.

Record stores also offered opportunities to build social capital with the store staff, who are usually music fans and record collectors as well. Relationships with record store clerks can be a valuable form of social capital because staff and fellow shoppers can make useful recommendations (Shuker, 2010). When Betty worked at Dusty Groove, she honed her tastes in jazz with the help of a customer, Mr. Coop, a former Southside record storeowner in his eighties who sold records there. She would find albums with interesting covers and hold them

---

[47] I easily added a thousand or so records to my own collection when I worked at Reckless.

up for his opinion. He tended to favor the older stuff, but he would always tell her what he

thought. She would decide what to listen to or buy from there (Betty, field notes, February 22,

2016). Records store clerks can connect fans and sellers outside of the store as well. Lawrence

had been building out his country 45 collection from a private seller he met through Courtland,

a non-WLPN DJ who worked at Reckless Records.[48] Courtland's friend and DJ partner, Dante,

worked as a professional collector, buying and selling records nationwide in addition to playing

music. He had recently purchased the remaining stock of Music Exchange Records in Kansas

City when they closed after 26 years in business (Morris, 2016). The purchase came with several

boxes of country 45s from unknown artists, most of which had been stashed in the basement

for a few decades. Dante asked Courtland if he knew anyone who might be interested and

Courtland connected Dante and Lawrence. When Lawrence got the call, he assumed Dante

meant actual albums; he was surprised to find so many 45s of artists even he had not yet heard

of. Since that call, Lawrence meets up with Dante every few months and spends two days,

11:00 AM to 6:00 PM, going through the boxes to build up a purchase. He saves up and spends

around $700 each time, with Dante pricing as he goes. Lawrence and Dante have a few record

catalog books that list out country labels, but the collection goes well beyond what is listed in

any of them. To know what to purchase, Lawrence listened to most of what he bought, which is

what took the most time. When he told me the story, he had reached the 70s and 80s boxes of

the collection, which would be more work since getting through those records, many of which

---

[48] Courtland came up a few times during the project; I also mentioned him in the introduction. He is a well-known DJ in Chicago, as well as a friend and former co-worker of mine. Joe noted he was the first DJ to spin records at Sonotheque (Joe, field notes, January 6, 2016). Courtland's variety of roles for WLPN DJs points to an interesting detour on the role of social capital in music communities and how the relationships across institutions (e.g. radio stations, records stores, venues) support building status in the wider field of a local independent music scene.

were "just unlistenable," though he had found some gems (Lawrence, field notes, January 20,

2016). Lawrence built out his own library of rare country music over a series of purchases,

which meant he could program a show that featured rarely, if ever, heard music to share with

his audience.

Charly had a similar story of building his record collection through his former position at

Radio Arte. He had picked up around 500 records when the station closed. In addition to being

a DJ, he had been the record librarian, so he knew where the "good stuff" was (Sonorama, field

notes, February 2, 2016). He could bypass the records that might be easily found elsewhere to

hone in on the rarer items hidden in the stacks. His position at the station helped him know

where to look for the records he liked, as well as providing him early access to the sale itself. He

boosted his own collection with rare records so he could host his own show, with his own

library, when he came to WLPN.

Lawrence and Charly both leveraged relationships to expand their stores of objectified

cultural capital, which meant they had a store of records to program their shows at WLPN.

Lawrence had a reputation as a country music DJ and also a friendship with Courtland;

Lawrence had social capital that supported his connection to Dante. Charly had a previous

position at Radio Arte and the insider knowledge to know how to make the most of a one-time

shopping opportunity. Their collections of objectified cultural capital came from institutional

relationships, their social capital in other music communities, and the embodied cultural capital

to know what to buy.

All of the investments to build reserves of objectified cultural capital also required varying amounts of financial capital to complete the exchange, though DJs rarely discussed this when they discussed their acquisitions. If anything, it appeared to be the opposite: the DJs I worked with assigned more value to getting a good record cheap than paying a high price to add the item to the collection. Working at a record store offered one strategy to get music for less money with the employee discount. Second-hand stores also came up regularly.

Charly and Joe both shopped at local thrift stores, which offered an opportunity to invest time to buy inexpensive records. Joe shopped at a Unique Thrift near his house nearly every day. He noted he did not spend much time on each visit, but the frequency of his visits added up, representing a serious investment of time, even just in small increments (Joe, field notes, November 18, 2015). Charly regularly browsed at thrift stores as well, once commiserating with a fellow DJ who shopped at the same Unique Thrift that the selection had been poor as of late, mostly [Harry Belafonte](#) records (Sonorama, field notes, February 23, 2016). Thrift stores usually sell records for a dollar or less, but take more time to shop through; the record section is almost always random. Finding something means flipping through disorganized, sometimes even dirty, stacks of discarded classical and Christmas music, umpteen copies of radio hit compilations, and beat up triplicates of mass produced megahits. Straw (2000) noted the increasing importance of thrift stores as places where cultural commodities (including records) reenter distribution channels, where new distinctions are made on what continues to be valuable. He makes a similar comment that some music "continues to resist these processes of recanonization and rediscovery: the fake Tijuana Brass albums produced in Montreal, the French-language Hawaiian records, the disco symphonies celebrating the 1976

Olympics" (Straw, 2000). However, 17 years later, Straw's example of discarded music speaks

loudly to shifting notions of value.[49] Yesterday's thrift-store trash becomes today's fetishized

super score. As re-canonized treasures become valuable again, they disappear from the thrift

stores and become reclassified, not as a looming, coherent mass of old music, but as rare

examples of quirky nostalgia (Straw, 2000). But, this is not always the case.

Not every record is valuable. WLPN DJs were looking for the rarer finds, the records that

did not appear in triplicate on every shopping trip, but something they could identify as

somehow interesting or unique. The price point made experimenting potentially profitable. For

one dollar, it is easy to take a chance on something new: Joe once explained he had just picked

up a Tubes records at Unique. He's not a huge fan of the Tubes, but it was 99 cents and he

hadn't seen it before (Joe, field notes, January 20, 2016). He could take a risk at that price.

Other shoppers get lucky, finding bargains in the bins. Catie-O told a story of her friend who

had picked up a copy of Donovan's children's record, "H.M.S. Donovan," for a dollar, scoring a

hard-to-find record for a steal; it sells for around $51 average on Discogs.com, only ever going

as low as $25 (Catie-O, field notes, February 15, 2016; discogs.com, January 1, 2016). Thrift

stores might not be the most reliable place to shop for records, but by investing the time to

look, DJs could find music for cheap and sometimes even a terrific bargain. While those sweet

score stories are common in record collecting communities, the draw of record shopping in

---

[49] As a record collector myself, I would snap up a disco symphony celebrating the 1976 Olympics in a heartbeat
(and plan to next time I visit Canada, assuming other record collectors have not beat me to it).

second-hand shops an opportunity to draw on one's own knowledge of what might sound good.[50]

Records stores tend to be more expensive than thrift stores because the store has usually taken the time to organize and choose records that people will want to buy. Record stores also serve as archives, holding vast collections for listeners to browse and select from (Bartmanski & Woodward, 2015, p. 43), though stores often vary by speciality. For record collectors, part of the practice also means learning where to shop, specifically where the records they want will be less desirable and likely less expensive. Joe and Lawrence had the knowledge of where to find the records they were looking for more cheaply. In the eighties, Joe noted that most fans would be buying punk singles at north side shops, but he went to Yard-Bird's on 62rd street; Southside shoppers had less interest in Sex Pistols' 45s, so punk records were cheaper there. He also frequented Goldblatt's, where he could buy records 3 for $1, which is how he acquired all the early Animals records (Joe, field notes, January 20, 2016). Lawrence found a shop in Lawrence, Kansas that sold post-punk records for 25 cents each, so he'd spend $10 a load up on a stack of new albums he'd never heard; at that price, he could take the risk. When Love Garden opened in the same town, "these guys knew what they were doing." Love Garden was (and still is) very well curated (Lawrence, field notes, January 20, 2016). The records cost more, but searching took less time because the owners and staff

[50] I still remember my husband's shock when I refused to pay $2 for Ol' Dirty Bastard's double album "N*gga Please," which we did not own; it can be difficult to find and worth around 10 times as much as she was asking. I haggled with the bookstore owner to uphold the price on the sign that read "All records in this pile $1" and she caved. It was quite a score.

curated the selections with more care than a thrift store or a store that did not take the time to pre-vet their selection.

Lawrence discussed finding the right shops at length because most places do not even stock lesser heard country music he looks for. He joked that when he asked where the country section was, most record stores would direct him to a small stash of "three boxes behind the bathroom door" but nowhere else – and never 45s (Lawrence, field notes, January 20, 2016). On a recent trip back to Love Garden, where he remains friends with the owners, they offered to let him go into the usually off-limits basement to sort through the country 45s; since most people don't buy them, there was no sense in taking the space to put them out for sale. More recently, he had been frequenting Vintage Vinyl, a store in St. Louis that had a whole second floor of country 45s. He visited every few months when he passed through, getting through a little more of the alphabet every time, finally finishing on the fourth trip (Lawrence, field notes, January 5, 2016). Because he specialized in a genre that few people know, or care, about, he needed to invest time to find the music itself and also the places he could shop for it.

DJs spent time and money to build their collections, but knowing where to shop often meant spending less of the latter to accumulate their music. Working in a store presented an especially useful strategy since building the necessary knowledge was part of the job – and the employee discount further helped with the cost. Thrift stores offered a time-intensive way to find records for less money as well, and sometimes even resulted in a surprise value if the shopped could identify something that had been underpriced. Finally, knowing which record stores to shop presented another form of knowledge that supported building a valuable collection; DJs could spend less for knowing more.

F. **Shopping Online**

DJs also used internet marketplaces to purchase music, but noted that online records could be more expensive and that online shopping had negatively impacted some of the in-person shopping practices they relied on. In talking about online shopping, Charly related a story about finding Henry Stephen's Limon Limonero records on Discogs.com he had been looking for (Sonorama, February 9, 2016). The Discogs.com community includes a comprehensive, user-created and moderated listing of several million recordings, as well as a robust, online international marketplace; it resembles a music based mash-up of Wikipedia and eBay, all for records, CDs, tapes, and even digital files. The record only cost $10, but the shipping from the Spanish seller added $20 – 30 (Sonorama, February 9, 2016). It still did not matter to Charly, who bought the record anyway since he had found it. Betty noted that shipping costs often meant a record was too expensive to buy online (Betty, field notes, February 8, 2016). Both Sonorama and Joe complained that internet marketplaces have raised the prices of records overall since now more people and stores can find out what records sell for elsewhere (Sonorama, February 2, 2016; Joe, January 26, 2016). [51] It used to be easier to find music that had been underpriced, but the Internet introduced the opportunity for global arbitrage to many corners record market.

Despite the growing amount of music and music information on the internet, not everything has been made available online. Lawrence noted he used Discogs.com for rock

---

[51] At Reckless, we priced nearly everything based on sales history at the stores, which was sometimes lower than what a seller might get online. We had a regular who we knew shopped for these deals to sell on eBay, which was not strictly prohibited of course, but not something we aimed to encourage.

records, but that information on country music was often inaccurate or simply not there; he

hoped to use his collection to start posting more on record shopping sites to increase the

amount of available information (Lawrence, field notes, January 20, 2016). Anderton (2016)

writes on other rare music collectors participating in the same way, bringing up the important

point that not all music has been included in the ever longer tail of media available online.

Lawrence's collection, and his show, made new music available to listeners online; it would not

be possible without his collection of objectified cultural capital, built from the hours spent

shopping and listening. But, only for listening: Lawrence retained the ownership of the object

he had worked hard to secure and, as such, assumed the authority to share it (or not) with a

wider audience.

The comments from the DJs I worked with echoed other discussions of how record

collecting has changed as access to information and products have become more widely

available. Buying records online is easier and allows for quick and easy access to information on

the records, as well as making more music available to a wider pool of potential buyers

(Bartmanski & Woodward, 2015, p. 130). Online shopping offers the convenience of related

suggestions (e.g. Amazon's ever-present "Customers who also bought this item also bought"

that is available for every item[52]) while crate-digging offers a less structured opportunity for

discovery, "where the excitement comes from picking up the unexpected, forgotten about or

unusual vinyl edition" (Bartmanski & Woodward, 2015, p. 43). Buying records online was

reserved for specific items that DJ knew they wanted, while shopping in person meant finding

---

[52] Amazon's algorithm had a direct influence on my early tastes in independent music, turning me on to Eleventh Dream Day and 764-HERO based on my interest in Built to Spill.

the new and unexpected, which could also help DJs develop taste by introducing them to new

artists, genres, or albums, building an ever-expanding loop of finding and then searching for

new things (Shuker, 2010). Even with the opportunity to buy anything, DJs most often relied on

the established practices of shopping in person and taking their changes on what the crates

might hold.

Information on the internet, specifically songs and albums, impacted in person

strategies as well. DJs found opportunities to listen to the music before purchase, which has

become easier as more music has become available to listen to online and through streaming

services, though pre-internet fans also found ways to listen to new music for free. When he was

younger and had less disposable income to spend on records, Lawrence would listen to his

friends' records to figure out where to spend his limited funds; he had a personal rule that he

needed like at least three tracks on the album to warrant a purchase. When he made more

money, he would take more chances on records and pick up things that simply looked

interesting, without knowing what they sounded like. For the purchases from Dante, he had the

opportunity to listen to the 45s and make a decision on what they sounded like (Lawrence, field

notes, January 20, 2016). Some record stores offer a listening option by making turntables

available in the store, but a few DJs noted they use Internet-based technologies to listen. When

I asked Joe about a record he used during an early show, he told me he had seen it at Dusty

Groove for a week or so, so he listened to it online at home and returned to pick it up the next

day (Joe, field notes, December 9, 2015). The Sonorana team and I chatted about the how they

used the Internet to shop for records and Charly joked "I always have headphones" (Sonorama,

February 2, 2016). Internet-based technologies helped music fans further decouple access from

ownership. Instead of relying on friends, or needing to score a college DJ job for library

privileges, some DJs listened ahead of purchase to help them make more informed decisions

based on the sound of the music.

DJs also used the internet as another place to find and research music, as well as finding

free music to play on air. Because Betty played half of her show from a laptop, she spent time

preparing by searching for music online. Similar to Joe's comment that people could only by

certain rare albums on CD, Betty noted how many artists could not afford to make a physical

product; pressing a record can be too expensive for smaller bands (Betty, field notes, February

8, 2016). She invested her time at home to search for music online. She used YouTube,

following their recommendations on the side to find similar artists she might like based on her

browsing data. Her computer, a portable tank of a laptop, was old and slow, which she saw as a

good thing because it often forced her to spend a few extra seconds with a track. She used

Soundcloud, weeklybeats.com, and Instagram to find music (Betty, field notes, February 22,

2016). Soundcloud is a music sharing platform where DJs and artists can post mixes and original

music; they host around 175 million members, all of whom can circulate music (Walker, 2015).

She had googled "something like 'where are the women in house music?'" to find French

Connection, a band that only said, with amazement, only had "like 60 followers."[53] She did not

say it with the stereotypical pretention on an indie music fan, but with genuine amazement that

more people had not heard French Connection (Betty, February 8, 2016). She had also found

music on Instagram, a social media network I was only familiar with for sharing photos and

---

[53] I attempted to use the same search technique to cite French Connection here, but I could not find the group that Betty had described. I did, however, find a French rock band with the same name that I had never heard and really enjoyed, pointing to one way that finding music remains somewhat random.

videos. She had a connection there who had offered up clean versions of [J. Dilla](#) tracks for any

radio DJs during Dillamonth, a month-long celebration commemorating his life after his

untimely death at the age of 32 (Betty, field notes, February 22, 2016). Betty still uses vinyl

objects to curate her show, but her experience with digital music searching speaks to how

practices have evolved as DJs, and even casual music listeners, have more access to music

online.

But, the same opportunities to research and even acquire music online have, by some

accounts, only strengthened the authenticity of vinyl records and solidified their status as

objectified cultural capital. Musical knowledge that used to distinguish more sophisticated

tastes can now be found by typing a few words in a search bar. Owning vinyl has come emerged

as a symbol of deeper musical knowledge even in younger audiences (Hogarty, 2017, p. 129).

Anyone can become a quick expert on a musical genre with the help of the top hits and even

listen to a few tracks to get a sense of the sonic landscape. But, as the DJs of WLPN exemplify,

true expertise and its curatorial privileges rely on invested labor to go beyond knowing about

the music into obtaining the symbols that communicate those commitments.

G.   Playing (and Playing With) Records

Because I was in the studio during their shows, I had the opportunity to observe DJs play

their records, which presented a clear example of how tied objectified and embodied cultural

capital are. For those with experience, their physical activity at the turntables was guided by

muscle memory, honed by years of practice. Bourdieu (1984) describes the rituals around

consumption as "form," and offers the example of food: a working-class meal from McDonald's,

for instance, often includes less ceremony than a high-class meal at Alinea, which might also have stricter manners governing the same process of eating. (p. 196) The priority on form emerges as a luxury for those who can afford it. At WLPN, the forms the DJS used when they played spoke to their long histories in music and the luxury to indulge in playing records.

Joe had the most experience as a DJ and it showed in his mannerisms. First, he would rapidly flip through his record pile, select one, scan the track listing on the back, and then put it back and trying another - all within a few seconds. He could cue tracks without listening by looking at the grooves in the record, finding the right start spot and then holding the platter in place with his finger, not the start/stop button, until the right moment to release it to play the next track (Joe, field notes, November 18, 2015). Lawrence had a similarly fluid set of motions, but he worked at an even faster, more frenetic pace because he mostly DJed from 45s, where the songs max out at around two and a half minutes. Lawrence would pull, and often clean, the 45 before placing on the platter to play. Then, he would listen for a few seconds over headphones, flip it, and then listen for a few more seconds. Sometimes he would find the track he wanted and stop there, but other times he would discard the original selection and keep searching, cleaning, listening, flipping and listening as the seconds ticked down on the track before. During one very short song, I watched him try three 45s before settling on one and his hands shook just slightly as he accelerated to prevent any dead air, but he remained in control otherwise. He was always moving to make sure he stayed ahead of the next track - and, when he wasn't choosing, cueing, cleaning, or writing down the tracks, he was dancing, singing, or tapping out the rhythm of the music on the nearest surface; his whole body played along (Lawrence, field notes, December 1, 2015). Logan joked just that watching Lawrence DJ made

him tired (Logan, field notes, December 1, 2015), which was easy to understand: he attended to

every detail of the music such that he never stood or sat still. Sonorama had the benefit of two

experienced DJs, so they could trade off at the turntables. They could work the machines

equally smoothly alone and as a team. Without any verbal cues from Charly, Eddy knew when

to step in and set up the next track, segueing into a new set of music before Charly took over

again, also without any words. They spent their down time watching the other DJ, reading the

label on his record or looking over the cover. The transitions between them sounded so

smooth, I would not have known it was two DJs without seeing them. Additionally, they both

had the same, fluid motions as Joe and Lawrence. When Eddy took over, he arranged his

headphones over one ear to monitor the sound in the studio and the track coming up, also

using his fingers to spin the record forward and backward to find the right start point, starting

to nod his head with the music when he found it (Sonorama, field notes, February 2, 2016).

After years of DJing in clubs and at radio stations, they had literal, embodied cultural capital

that guided their motions when they played records.

Not everyone had the same fluid motions. Betty had less experience DJing and used her

show at WLPN, along with her live DJ gigs, to practice playing records and accumulate her

embodied cultural capital. Because she only owned one turntable, she could not practice mixing

tracks at home; she worked on her skills when she came to the station or DJed live. When she

started DJing, she would listen to a track and then sing the end of the song in her head as she

cued up the one. She developed the skills to transition the sounds, but there's a physical

component of finding the right points to start, stop, or fade, as well as the motions of

transitioning. At our first show together, she told me she had started DJing because she could

not afford to learn an instrument, referencing another physical, music-making process (Betty, February 8, 2016). The opportunity to DJ at WLPN helped her build the embodied cultural capital to play on the turntables, even if she did not have access to the equipment; the station provided a source of objectified cultural capital by proxy.

The turntables also offered DJs immediate control over the sound of the music, which they used to shape the sound of their shows. Manipulating the sound is a privilege of the vinyl object, but also spoke to the embodied cultural capital of knowing how to do it effectively. Sometimes DJs manipulated the sound specifically to remind the audience of the presence of the record (though, as the earlier example of the laptop DJ showed, this can be faked). Charly sometimes ended the first set of music by killing, or stopping, the track from the power button on the record player instead of lifting the needle, which audibly dragged the track to silence instead of making a clean break. In another set, he played the last track on a side and let the needle run into the last few grooves next to the label, creating a loop of scratchy static that he played for a few seconds before taking the mike again (Sonorama, field notes, February 23, 2016). Other DJs played with speed, energizing a rock track up to dance tempo or slowing down a poppier hit to a slow, almost contemplative, pace. Betty liked to play Bad Company at 45 and Joe Berry at 33 (Betty, field notes, February 8, 2016). Catie played the Youngbloods' "Get Together" at 33 from the 45[54], slowing the opening tempo to a trickle that sounded so familiar, but not quite right; it was only when the uncharacteristically dopey opening lyrics started did I realize the classic rock standby, hearing it in a new light. Shifting the tempo presented another

---

[54] Another example had recently made the rounds on my social media feeds: Dolly Parton's "Jolene" played at 33 from a 45. It makes for a haunting rendition that sounds as if it has a male lead vocal pleading "Jolene, please don't take my man."

way that DJs used their objects to make the familiar sound different and unexpected, an important criteria for freeform radio. An old favorite most people can sing along with became something new for the audience.

H.   Conclusion

Even with more convenient alternatives to play music, "the persistent commitment to vinyl, even if it is still a relatively niche phenomenon, shows that seeking these particular pleasures may be as important as searching for very convenient and profitable solutions" (Bartmanski & Woodward, 2015, p. 29). Lawrence expressed the same sentiment more simply when he described shopping as "super fun" because of the joy of finding, even when the search was expensive and exhausting (Lawrence, field notes, January 20, 2016). He, and the others, did not engage in the work to gain a significant advantage over their colleagues or to send a message to the broader music industry. They did it because their objects, including the ways they acquired them, brought them joy.

The popular and academic presses have discussed the renewed interest in vinyl in several places, some of which have been cited here (see the preface of Winters' (2016) *Vinyl Records and Analog Culture in the Digital Age* for a quick history). The interest seems to come from the complete bewilderment that listeners would eschew the efficient, automatic access afforded by more technologies in favor of trekking to a record shop and lugging home a stack of heavy discs. But, technology plays a key role for all music listeners because it constitutes the environments of musical experience, the practices of making and hearing music, and the discourses by which we share and understand our experiences with music, "defining, in the

140

process, what music is and can be" (Théberge, 2001, p. 3). As more audiences take their cues

from DJs, investing the effort in learning, finding, and listening, is it possible they are also

finding happiness in their investments? It is not the same as using records for capital, but it

does speak to a concept of fetish that "mobilizes cultural effervescence, dedication and

personal commitment" (Bartmanski & Woodward, p. 133). And, whether or not new record

shoppers attempt to wield vinyl objects as DJs, they likely still reap the benefits of having a

musical object that represents their own commitment to their tastes.

IX: CONCLUSION

In the ever-expanding musical universe, most listeners have more music than ever to choose from, but most do not; freeform radio DJs, however, offer an example of an exception to the general trend. WLPN DJs programmed shows with the specific intention of sharing lesser heard music with audiences. How did they do it? They worked at it. Each DJ had invested time to continue expanding their own musical tastes and build their music collections, as well as learning how to share this music with audiences. Most listeners might not have the time to seek out new music to listen to and, as music has become increasingly more available, navigating the musical landscape has likely only become more complex. It is, on the one hand, exciting to be able to call up almost any artist, song, or album via a quick internet search, but it can also feel overwhelming to know where to begin. This dissertation has offered more evidence on the work of building musical tastes by examining a group that invests their time to do so.

As a freeform station, WLPN could give its DJs more autonomy to make broadcasting decisions, but needed to balance that freedom with the station's imperative to attract an audience and keep them tuned in. To accomplish this, they curated their curators, choosing DJs who had experience and expertise introducing audiences to new music and building coherent sets that drew listeners in. WLPN explicitly explained their expectations at station meetings, putting some limits on what their DJs could play, but offering an opportunity to reach a new audience of Chicagoans and freeform fans around the world in return. WLPN and its DJs collaborated on the shared goal of playing a wider variety of music for their audiences.

Bourdieu's theories of fields and the forms of cultural capital provided a convenient taxonomy to understand these types of investments. The history of freeform radio in the wider histories of freeform, formatted, college, and community radio provided the structure to understand how the DJs in the freeform field came to assign symbolic value differently than their more commercially oriented peers. My participant observation had given me direct access to observe how DJs made choices during their shows, helping me understand the role of the freeform DJ as a curator: DJs chose music with care for their audiences, in partnership with their sponsoring institution, WLPN. WLPN chose and trained its DJs to provide a broad set of parameters that guided the DJs choice towards the station audience, which was important for WLPN to build and maintain its institutional status. Individual DJs then used the embodied and objectified cultural capitals to plan, program, and play music for audiences that they themselves also needed to define. Unlike formatted radio DJs, who relied on data, WLPN DJs relied on their accumulated labor of listening to and playing music for others; Bourdieu helped give shape to that specific, but amorphous, body of resources.

But, throughout my analysis and write-up, I was left with a nagging question: where was the power? DJs had power to choose music, but they did not seem to use it for anything else but that activity. Some DJs used the show to promote their own music, like when Lawrence noted an upcoming gig (Lawrence, field notes, January 5, 2016) or Sonorama reminded their audiences of a record coming out on their label (Charly, field notes, February 23, 2016). But, I did not observe any instances where DJs attempted to wield that power *against* anyone or anything; there were no confessions of bringing down the music industry or reshaping Chicago radio through their struggles. I did not observe many struggles. Sometimes DJs noted finding

records could be tiring (Lawrence, field notes, January 5, 2016). Balancing DJing with another job could be stressful (Betty, field notes, February 8, 2016). Catie-O, I learned, travelled mostly by bicycle to DJ gigs, which seemed like it could definitely be a struggle in the Chicago winter, but she did not describe it that way (Catie-O, field notes, February 15, 2016). Certainly, if WLPN paid DJs handsomely to program their shows, perhaps they would be more comfortable and struggle less, though their status as volunteers gave them the freedom to approach freeform without a paying customer in mind, which seemed to make it a more attractive opportunity that DJing live in some ways. Neither the DJs nor WLPN were ignorant of the importance of staying financially and culturally viable, but that awareness did not dominate their productions.

I also did not witness any struggles for power between DJs or other institutions, which Bourdieu's theories most definitely included as a key facet of field theory. DJs openly shared their perspectives with me. They were not, for example, territorial about where they bought records, how they found rare items, or their strategies of selection. When I observed them interacting with each other, they were friendly, offering pleasantries of what their shows might include or their recent shopping experiences – or sometimes even just the weather. Everyone seemed to have a positive relationship with Logan, Leah, and Ed, the station management. It is possible that the struggles exist elsewhere. I did not, for example, work with any volunteers who wanted, but did not yet have, their own programs. Aspiring WLPN DJs might see things differently, but the relationships I observed were built on mutual respect and support. The DJs appreciated each other as colleagues, not competitors.

Using Bourdieu's theories to understand organizations and individuals involved in media and cultural productions still has value, specifically for the cultural industries perspectives. The

cultural industries perspective primarily focuses on the industries that produce and circulate

social meaning as their primary intention (Hesmondhalgh, 2009). A t-shirt company, for

example, might qualify if the shirt says "Iron Maiden" or "Dolly Parton," but less so if it says

nothing at all. Locating any activity within the cultural industries requires attention to the

specific work and its context, though at the most general level, the cultural industries are those

organizations concerned primarily with production and circulation of symbolic objects,

"commodities whose core value is derived from their function as carriers of *meaning* in the

form of images, symbols, signs, and sounds" (Banks, 2007, p. 2). Bourdieu's emphasis on

symbolic value and forms of cultural capital offer a useful perspective to understand the fields

of cultural production, especially those fields that attempt to maintain more a distance from

the fields of economic power.

Because of their explicit focus on industry, the cultural industries have predictably

wrestled with the tension between creativity and commerce. Most of the attention goes to

companies that explicitly seek a financial profit, but state and non-profit organizations can be

included (Hesmondhalgh, 2009, p. 12). Bourdieu's focus on the relationships between financial

and cultural forms of capital could shed light on two major questions that the cultural industries

perspective has yet to fully address.

One of them is a question I brought up in the introduction: why do people consume

such a small amount of music when there are so many options available? I specifically focused

on the labor of the DJs help to explain how individual DJs built diverse tastes and the ways they

introduced newcontent to audiences. At WLPN, the DJs worked to build shows that did draw

more broadly from sets that spanned not just genres, but technologies and bodies of expertise.

They had invested their time through their labor. The weirdness took work. Most people

consume a small slice of available music because those are the tunes that are easy to get. To

understand how we, as scholars, might encourage musical diversity will require a deeper

understanding of the challenges, but also how it *can* be done. Bourdieu's forms of cultural

capital help to explain how groups of musical participants build value into the labor of finding,

choosing, and sharing music that goes beyond the readily available. To understand *how* people

might make more diverse choices, cultural industries scholars could focus on those groups that

actually *do* that.

The second question draws even more directly on the tension between creativity and

commerce: when and how should people be paid for their individualized labor? Creative

positions in the cultural industries tend to pay less because the demand for positions outpaces

the supply. Banks (2007) studied the "creative cultural worker" (p. 7) to better understand how

the division between creativity and commerce played out for professionals at small to mid-sized

organizations. In his study, workers needed to find the balance between making art and making

money. Instead of locating the tension on one side or the others, Banks' work highlights the

intersection points where the workers choose how to balance the longer term rewards of a

creative risk and against the immediate payoff of a paycheck, finding the ways in which both

can be done. To better understand the individual rationales, Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2010)

investigated why younger employees in creative industries agreed to work for low or no pay

and found three possible explanations. First, the idea of creative work as "labour of love"

(Friedman, 1990) where the calling outweighs any risk of failure. Second, the ignorance of the

high risk of failure. And "a third explanation is that artistic work brings nonmonetary,

146

psychological rewards, associated with autonomy, community, the possibility of self-actualization, and potentially high degrees of recognition, even celebrity" (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2010, p. 9). The current research acknowledges the non-monetary rewards, but the focus on industrial production trivializes the workers' motivations in relation to their (perceived) primary function: making a living. To fully understand labor in the cultural industries perspective, the research must better incorporate the non-financial rewards as part of the package. It is possible that some people have resolved the tension of creativity and commerce by contributing to spaces where the latter matters less, such as the fields of restricted production, at least at the individual level. In my research, DJs found other, non-monetary ways to be compensated.

Smaller fields of cultural participation exist in specialized pockets that may belie any grander conclusions of how all of them operate. Toynbee (2003) explains how creative communities act as "proto-markets," where artists and audiences participate in financial and non-financial exchanges. To examine only one, or understand such exchanges as mutually exclusive, would be a limited and inaccurate view (Banks, 2007, p. 114). Music fans willing to put the time in can build a playlist online and share it on any number of platforms – or, as Betty demonstrated, play it on the radio. In fields of cultural production with better distributed creative opportunities, "it seems reasonable to hypothesize that autonomous production and its apparent democratization and dispersal may be providing *some* opportunities for new kinds of cultural work identities to emerge that offer a challenge - not only to existing cultural or artistic orthodoxies but also to market-led forms of cultural work" (Banks, 2007, p. 108). To understand the evolving arrangements in the field of cultural production, research agendas

should include perspectives of people who invest their time in labor to accumulate cultural

capital without seeking a strictly or even primarily financial profit. As cultural labor evolves, the

priority of cultural profits will continue to shift. To understand the non-financial exchanges,

which often dominate in the smaller, less lucrative scenes, the researcher must look locally to

see understand what is valuable for a specific group. Because the groups follow their own

specialized logic, a generalized conclusion might still be impossible, but the first step is a closer

examination of what types of resources are being exchanged in the smaller communities that

do consume music from a wide variety of genres, sources, and artists that are rarely

represented on pop charts. Again, Bourdieu's work could provide an elegant framework for

these explorations.

But, his focus on power creates too many blind spots. To use another example,

Hesmondhalgh (2009) notes the so-called independent music scenes have offered no "real

resistance" (p. 292) to the mainstream music industry, which continues to deliver cultural

products that aim to be financially profitable. What if, however, that was not the point of those

"resistances"? What if they were not resisting, but producing culture with different values in

the interests of communicating with audiences differently? Unpaid scenes, like volunteer-run

freeform radio stations, do present an "alternative" understanding: how to make and distribute

commodities with cultural meanings without trying to sell as many of them as possible for the

highest price. How does, for example, a market-led strategy explain hours hunched over record

bins, or buying music otherwise available for free online? How does a market-led strategy

explain the choice build a terrestrial station when podcasting and music sharing sites offer far

less expensive and labored ways to distribute music? It doesn't. Because those questions miss

the point.

Some have taken up the charge already. Keat (2000), for example, goes beyond

MacIntyre's (1981) view that institutions primarily pursue external rewards, to offer that some

institutions may only seek funding to satisfy their needs and stop short of a profit. In

institutions that do not prioritize profit, individuals may be motivated by their pursuit of

internal improvement and contributing to a community of like-minded colleagues, united the

group under a shared love of the practice. Critical approaches can be quick to point out that

love can quickly lead to self-exploitation, but does that perspective necessarily exclude the

other outcomes? At WLPN, the DJs worked hard for no pay, but did so willingly and happily. To

understand their labor as unconscious exploitation seems reductive and condescending. And,

there are still conflicts of labor, even in the more egalitarian institutions. Cultural production

requires non-creative labor to come to life (Ryan, 1992). In addition to choosing and playing

music, someone at WLPN needed to manage the board, report on what had been played, make

a schedule, enforce a schedule, sweep the floors, clean the toilets, and participate in a whole

host of supporting activities to ensure that the broadcasts went out. As a volunteer, I helped

with many of the tasks DJs did not want to do, while they put in the labor to prepare for their

shows by searching, shopping, finding, organizing, and playing their music. The station

management, who was paid for their participation, tended to take on the rest without a

volunteer in place. But, DJs also helped to host fundraisers (Joe Bryl, field notes, November 18,

2015; Lawrence Peters, field notes, January 20, 2016) and brought in extra 45 adapters (Joe

Bryl, field notes, November 18, 2015). How smaller organizations manage the full range of their

production tasks could be another fruitful research direction to contribute to the cultural

industries perspective on the increasingly complicated division of cultural labor. Again,

Bourdieu's work can help here, but what else might explain why DJs and other unpaid cultural

participants willingly work so hard?

What if, instead of presenting individuals as ever-competitive strivers for power, we

centered our perspective on how individuals seek Polanyi's (1958) conviviality in groups of all

sizes? How their motivations spoke to the collective benefits of communicating, sharing, and

collaborating? What if, instead of jockeying for position, individuals aimed at fellowship?

Polanyi's view, like Bourdieu's, left room for the external authority of institutions, but his

perspective stresses the role of these organizations in facilitating a productive social life. His

view on the economic system as "co-operation" reminds us that exchanges of all kinds can also

be altruistic, with both parties walking away better off in any number of ways.

Bourdieu's games[55] of social life make no such allowances for the *point* of all the power.

Why are people laboring to be the most powerful in their field? What does this power get

them? And, why do we, as researchers, focus so exclusively on power as the ultimate

achievement? The cultural industries perspectives tended to exclude the marginal, but highly

pervasive, volunteer-driven institutions of media production. Most people do not participate in

music as professionals, but limiting their labor to fandom sells their work short. Bourdieu's

forms of cultural capital offer a way to understanding unpaid labor as an investment that can

---

[55] It is unfortunate Bourdieu repeatedly uses the game as a metaphor because it reinforces an unfortunately limited perspective that conflates games with competition. Games can be competitive, but they can also be collaborative or even cooperative (Voida, Carpendale, & Greenberg, 2010; Zagal, Rick, & Hsi, 20016) It could be a translation error, as he mostly uses it in the sense of sport. Even Bourdieu's beloved football has an established traditional of "friendlies," where the win has little to no bearing on the standing of the team or player.

pay in symbolic, but no less important profits. What it does not offer is a compelling reason *why* individuals make those investments.

Social psychology offers another, alternative perspective that seems to get closer. Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) work locates happiness as "optimal experiences," sometimes strung together into "flow" where "the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it" (p. 4). Pleasure (a new idea here!) partially comes from practice: reaching the flow state requires enough know how for a smooth, focused dedication to continue. This practice is labor. Listening to music, for example, could be considered a form of labor since "As one develops analytic listening skills, the opportunities to enjoy music increase geometrically" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 111). The more the individual listens, the more joy the music brings her. What if she enjoyed that music so much, she kept learning? What if she became such an expert, she received the opportunities to share that joy with others? Does it *sound* like she is doing it for the power? What if she is doing it because it makes her happ*y*?

I am not arguing that the cultural industries perspectives – or any perspectives on cultural production – should abandon discussions of capital and power in musical participation. I am arguing, however, that an expanded focus that accounts for instances of cooperation in cultural production will produce a more robust understanding of why cultural life matters. If time is the ultimate, universal budget constraint, is it more important to explain how people use culture for power, or for happiness? What sounds like the more interesting agenda?

Investigating cultural institutions and individual participants towards an agenda focused

on how cultural participation brings happiness presents a few challenges, of course. Firstly,

financial capital and cultural power do not, and should not, disappear. It is important to remain

critical of where and how financial imperatives continue to play a role in decision-making for

individuals and groups. It could be easy to overdo it, but money still matters; the goal would be

a research agenda that takes the financial imperatives as one of, but not the only, factor to

consider. Bourdieu's work is useful as a theoretical model because it is set-up to incorporate

the financial and the cultural, but his fixation on power limits his usefulness. The researcher

should be mindful of how financial and cultural capitals can produce power, but also pleasure

and happiness, which are no less important in a full understanding of social life. Secondly,

research will be time-consuming because cultural logics are specific to their communities or

fields. Researchers will need to spend time in the groups, with the groups, to understand how

smaller fields assign value in their own ways, differently that others might. The resources –

specifically time in the field - may present as prohibitive for some scholars. Additionally,

because individual fields are small and specific, the research may appear to be too esoteric to

be very useful. For example, what does a small group of unpaid DJs at one station in a

Southside Chicago neighborhood possibly explain about how the multi-billion dollar music

industry interacts with audiences around the United States? The research and its conclusions

are not scalable, but this group is not intended to be a representative sample of any larger

phenomena.

Becker's (2008) description of "art worlds" offers another model that is much less

focused on competition and stressed the collaborations at work in cultural production. The

152

open criteria includes "groups of who cooperate [author emphasis] to produce things that they, at least, call art" (Becker, 2008, p. 35). Art worlds must secure the political and economic power to collaborate on production (Becker, 2008, p. 39), in a nod to the powerful structures that shape all of cultural production. McCloskey (2016) cites an email conversation between Becker and a French sociologist where Becker directly addressed the difference: "The metaphor of "world"—which does not seem to be at all true of the metaphor of "field"—contains people, all sorts of people, who are in the middle of doing something which requires them to pay attention to each other, to take account consciously of the existence of others and to shape what they do in the light of what others do" (Becker, 2005, in McCloskey, 2016, p. 561). Individuals, in this view, can incorporate the perspectives of others without trying to dominate them; Becker describes the spheres of cultural production as ongoing collaborative activities, which provides a more accurate model for those groups that have chosen to focus on the joy of making and sharing cultural products without attempting to compete with each other for that privilege.

The conclusions here have implications for academic careers as well. Research that covers the larger phenomena that appear to be broadly applicable often commands the most attention. Academic success has become increasingly measured by metrics of scale, such as impact factors, book sales, and (perhaps most importantly) funding. Hesmondhalgh and Baker's (2010) work on entry level employees in the cultural industries could be easily applied to graduate students, who frequently work for low pay in the hopes of an uncertain future in the ivory tower. Some may join the academy because they feel called to do it, while others may not understand the increasingly less frequent opportunities to join the ranks of the tenure-track. But for others (this author included), there is also the opportunity to participate in self-

improvement alongside benefits of community, autonomy, and self-actualization. The opportunity for wider attention or influence is sometimes attractive, but cannot be the only motivation for scholars to take on important, if esoteric. I am not arguing that social sciences research should become *less* approachable – quite the opposite, in fact. This is a call for social sciences research to look deeper at the more important and even more complex productions of happiness and joy in social life. By narrowing our focus to that which can be well funded, we lose the opportunity, for example, to escape the same structures that confine cultural participation to the narrow slice of music that cracks a Top 40 chart.

From my personal perspective, there are plenty of fruitful ways to grow into an agenda that allows for more open exploration of how and why people spend their time engaged in cultural participation towards happiness. After 15 or so years watching and learning from independent music fans, I can verify that some people openly judge others tastes because that brings them pleasure. Others have other ways. In moving beyond studies of younger music fans, a perspective centered on the love of music and the happiness it brings could make a powerful contribution to how music listeners change as they mature. As a music fan myself, it seems much more interesting to discuss the ways that music brings people together, joyfully and willingly, even when it is work.

Reference List

About CHIRP radio. (2017). Retrieved from http://chirpradio.org/about

About us. (2017). Retrieved from http://www.lumpenradio.com/about.html

Adler, P. A., & Adler, P. (1994). Observation techniques. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.),

    Handbook of qualitative research (377-392). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Adorno, T. (1945). A Social Critique of Radio Music. *The Kenyon Review, 7*(2), 208-217.

    Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/4332589

Agar, M. H. (1996). *The professional stranger: An informal introduction to ethnography (Vol. 2)*.

    San Diego: Academic Press.

Ahlkvist, J. (2001). Programming philosophies and the rationalization of music radio. *Media*

    Culture & Society, 23, 339-358. doi:10.1177/016344301023003004

Altman, R. (1999). Film/genre. London: British Film Institute.

Anderton, C. (2016). Sonic artefacts: "Record collecting" in the digital age. *IASPM@ Journal*,

    6(1). Retrieved from

    http://iaspmjournal.net/index.php/IASPM_Journal/article/view/767

Atkinson, P., & Hammersley, M. (1994). Ethnography and participant observation. In N. K.

    Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (248-261). Thousand

    Oaks, CA: Sage.

Azerrad, M. (2001). *Our band could be your life: Scenes from the American indie underground, 1981-1991*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown.

Balzar, D. (2014). *Curationism: How curating took over the art world and everything else.* Toronto: Coach House Books.

Banks, M. (2007). *The politics of cultural work*. New York, NY: Palgrave-Macmillan.

Barnard, S. (1989). *On the radio: Music radio in Britain*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Barnard, S. (2000). *Studying radio.* London: Arnold.

Barnouw, E. (1966). *A tower in Babel: to 1933*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Barnouw, E. (1968). *The golden web: 1933-1953.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Bartmanski, D., & Woodward, I. (. (2015). *Vinyl: The analogue record in the digital age.* London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Becker, H. S. (1958). Problems of inference and proof in participant observation. *American sociological review*, 23(6), 652-660.

Becker, H. (2004). Jazz places. In A. Bennett and R.A. Peterson (Eds.) *Music scenes: Local, translocal, and virtual* (17-27). Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.

Becker, H. (2008). *Art worlds (updated & expanded edition).* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Becker, H. S., & Geer, B. (1957). Participant observation and interviewing: A comparison. *Human Organization, 16*(3), 28-32.

Benson, R. (1999). Field theory in comparative context: A new paradigm for media studies. *Theory and Society*, 28(3), 463-498.

Benson, R. (2003). Commercialism and critique: California's alternative weeklies. In N. Couldry and J. Curran (Eds.), *Contesting media power: Alternative media in a networked world*. (111-127) Washington DC: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Benson, R. (2006). News media as a "journalistic field": What Bourdieu adds to new institutionalism, and vice versa. *Political Communication,* 23(2), 187-202.

Benson, R., & Neveu, E. (Eds.). (2005). *Bourdieu and the journalistic field.* Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Bernard, H. (1994). *Research methods in anthropology: Qualitative and quantitative approaches (second edition)*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Bloomberg, L., & Volpe, M. (2008). *Completing qualitative research: A roadmap from beginning to end*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Borschke, M. (2011). Disco edits and their discontents: The persistence of the analog in a digital era. *New Media & Society, 13*(6), 929-944.

Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (241-258). Westport, CT: Richardson Publishers.

Bourdieu, P. (1993). *The field of cultural production: Essays on art and literature*. New York:

Columbia University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1996). *The rules of art: Genesis and structure of the literary field*. Palo Alto, CA:

Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1998). *Practical reason: On the theory of action*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University

Press.

Bourdieu, P. (2005). The political field, the social science field, and the journalistic field. In R.

Benson & E. Neveu (Eds.), *Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field* (29-47). Cambridge, UK:

Polity Press.

Buchli, V. (2004). *Material culture: Critical concepts in the social sciences (vol. 2)*. London:

Routledge.

Burnett, R. (1992). Dressed for success: Sweden from Abba to Roxette. *Popular Music, 11*(02),

141-150.

Catie Olsen/Planet Catieo. (2015) Retrieved from

http://www.lumpenradio.com/planetcatieo.html

Chapman, R. (1992). *Selling the sixties: The pirates and pop music radio*. London: Routledge.

Coffey, A. (1999). *The ethnographic self: Fieldwork and the representation of identity*. Thousand

Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research

process*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. New York, NY: Harper
& Row.

Day, T. (2000). *A century of recorded music: Listening to musical history*. New Haven, CT: Yale
University Press.

deMunck, Victor C., & Sobo, Elisa J. (Eds.). (1998). *Using methods in the field: a practical
introduction and casebook.* Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

DeWalt, K. M., DeWalt, B. R., & Wayland, C. B. (1998). Participant observation. In H.R. Bernard
and C.C. Gravlee (Eds.). *Handbook of methods in cultural anthropology* (185-214).
Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield.

DeWalt, K. M., & DeWalt, B. R. (2002). *Participant observation: a guide for fieldworkers*. Walnut
Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Dowd, T. J. (2004). Production perspectives in the sociology of music. *Poetics, 32*(3), 235-246.

Elborough, T. (2009). *The vinyl countdown: The album from vinyl to iPod and back again.*
Berkeley, CA: Soft Skull Press.

Farrugia, R., & Swiss, T. (2005). Tracking the DJs: vinyl records, work, and the debate over new
technologies. *Journal of Popular Music Studies, 17*(1), 30-44.

Ferguson, J. (2012, September 4). *Joe Bryl joins Maria's Packaged Goods.* Retrieved from
https://www.timeout.com/chicago/clubs/joe-bryl-joins-marias-packaged-goods

Fetterman, D. M. (Ed.). (2010). *Ethnography: Step-by-step (Vol. 17).* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
Publishing.

Fisher, M. (2007) *Something in the air: Radio, rock, and the revolution that shaped a generation*. New York, NY: Random House.

Freeform (radio format). (2017, January 16). In Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Retrieved 18:25, January 28, 2017, from https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Freeform_(radio_format)&oldid=760345036

Friedman, J. (1990) Being in the world: Globalization and localization. In Featherstone, M. (Ed.). *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization, and Modernity: A Theory Culture and Society Special Issue.* London: Sage Publications.

Frith, S. (1998). *Performing rites: On the value of popular music*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Gold, R. L. (1958). Roles in sociological field observations. *Social Forces, 36*(3), 217-223.

Hebdige, D. (1979). *Subculture: The meaning of style*. London: Methuen.

Hendy, D. (2013). *Radio in the global age*. New York, NY: Wiley.

Hennion, A., & Meadel, C. (1986). Programming music: radio as mediator. *Media, Culture & Society, 8*(3), 281-303.

Hesmondhalgh, D. (1998). The British dance music industry: a case study of independent cultural production. *British Journal of Sociology, 49*(2), 234-251.

Hesmondhalgh, D. (2006). Bourdieu, the media and cultural production. *Media, Culture & Society, 28*(2), 211-231.

Hesmondhalgh, D. (2007). *The cultural industries (2nd ed.).* London: Sage.

Hesmondalgh, D. (2008). Cultural and creative industries. In T. Bennett and J. Frow (Eds.). *The SAGE handbook of cultural analysis* (552-569). London, UK: Sage Publications Ltd.

Hesmondhalgh, D., & Baker, S. (2010). 'A very complicated version of freedom': Conditions and experiences of creative labour in three cultural industries. *Poetics, 38*(1), 4-20.

Hess, H. (2000). The "zinc-fence thing": When will Reggae album covers be allowed out of the ghetto? *Black Music Research Journal, 20*(2), 181-194.

History and Awards. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://nfcb.org/

The History of News Radio 590 KLBJ (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.newsradioklbj.com/

Hogarty, J. (2017). *Popular music and retro culture in the digital era*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Johnson, R. (1993) Editor's introduction: Pierre Bourdieu on art, literature and culture. In P. Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (1-25). New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Jones, S., & Sorger, M. (1999). Covering music: A brief history and analysis of cover design. *Journal of Popular Music Studies, 11-12*(1), 68-102.

Junker, B. H. (1960). *Field work: An introduction to the social sciences*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Kanuha, V. K. (2000). "Being" native versus "going native": Conducting social work research as an insider. *Social Work*, *45*(5), 439-447.

Keat, R. (2000). Cultural goods and the limits of the market. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

Keith, M. C. (1997). *Voices in the purple haze: Underground radio and the sixties*. Westport, CT:

Praeger.

Kruse, H. (2003). *Site and sound: Understanding independent music scenes.* New York, NY: Peter

Lang.

Lawrence Peters / Country My Way. (2015). Retrieved from

http://www.lumpenradio.com/countrymyway.html

Lawrence Peters Outfit. (2012). Retrieved from http://www.lawrencepetersoutfit.com/about

Lawrence Peters, Mutant Hit Parade. (2016, January 6). Retrieved from

http://lumpenradio.com/mutanthitparade.html

LeCompte, M. D., & Schensul, J. J. (2010). *Designing and conducting ethnographic research (Vol.*

1). Plymouth, UK: AltaMira.

Lewin, K. (1947). Group decision and social change. In T. Newcomb (Ed.). *Readings in Social*

Psychology, (330-343). New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company.

Local Community Radio Act. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.prometheusradio.org/

Lopes, P. D. (1992). Innovation and diversity in the popular music industry, 1969 to 1990.

American Sociological Review, 57(1), 56-71.

Maguire, J. S., & Matthews, J. (2010). Cultural intermediaries and the media. *Sociology*

Compass, 4(7), 405-416.

Maguire, J. S., & Matthews, J. (2012). Are we all cultural intermediaries now? An introduction to cultural intermediaries in context. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, *15*(5), 551-562.

MacIntyre, A. (1981). *After virtue: A study in moral theory.* London, Duckworth.

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2006). *Designing qualitative research*. Thousands Oaks: Sage Publications.

McCloskey, D. N. (2016). *Bourgeois equality: How ideas, not capital or institutions, enriched the world.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Measuring Worth. (n.d.) Retrieved from www.measuringworth.com/

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education. Revised and expanded from "Case study research in education"*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Mittel, J. (2004). *Genre and television: From cop shows to cartoons in American television*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Morris, F. (2016). Music Exchange shuts its doors. Retrieved from: http://kcur.org/post/music-exchange-shuts-its-doors#stream/0

Muggleton, D. (2000). *Inside subculture: The postmodern meaning of style.* Oxford, UK: Berg Publishers.

Neer, R. (2001). *FM: The rise and fall of rock radio.* New York: Random House.

Negus, K. (2002). The work of cultural intermediaries and the enduring distance between

    production and consumption. *Cultural Studies, 16*(4), 501-515.

Nixon, S., & Gay, P. D. (2002). Who needs cultural intermediaries? *Cultural Studies, 16*(4), 495-

    500.

Nowotny, S. (2013). The curator crosses the river: A fabulation. In J. Martinon (Ed.), *The*

    Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating (59-64). London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Obrist, H. (2014). *Ways of curating*. London: Allen Lane.

O'Connor, A. (2008) *Punk record labels and the struggle for autonomy: The emergence of DIY.*

    Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books.

O'Malley, K. (2006). Definition of freeform. Retrieved from http://wfmu.org/freeform.html

O'Neill, P. (2012). *The culture of curating and the curating of culture(s).* Cambridge, MA: MIT

    Press.

Park, D. (2014). *Pierre Bourdieu: A critical introduction to media and communication theory.*

    New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Percival, J. M. (2011). Music radio and the record industry: Songs, sounds, and power. *Popular*

    Music and Society, 34(4), 455-473.

Peterson, R. A. (1992). Understanding audience segmentation: From elite and mass to omnivore

    and univore. *Poetics*, *21*(4), 243-258.

Peterson, R. A., & Berger, D. G. (1996). Measuring industry concentration, diversity, and

    innovation in popular music. *American Sociological Review, 61*(1), 175-178.

Plasketes, G. (2001). The kids are alright: Lineage and legacy in 1990s popular music. *Studies in*

    Popular Culture, 24(1), 1–16.

Polanyi, M. (2009). *The tacit dimension.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. (Original work

    published in 1966)

Polanyi, M. (1958). *Personal knowledge, towards a post critical epistemology*. Chicago, IL:

    University of Chicago.

Mark Allen: Playlist from June 16, 2005. (n.d.) Retrieved from http://wfmu.org/playlists/

Prior, N. (2008). Putting a glitch in the field: Bourdieu, actor network theory and contemporary

    music. *Cultural Sociology*, *2*(3), 301-319.

Prior, N. (2011). Critique and renewal in the sociology of music: Bourdieu and beyond. *Cultural*

    Sociology, 5(1), 121-138.

Ratner, C. (2002). Subjectivity and objectivity in qualitative methodology. *Forum: Qualitative*

    Social Research 3(3). Retrieved from http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/3-

    02/3-02ratner-e.htm

Rodman, R. (2016). Radio formats in the United States: A hyperfragmentation of the

    imagination. In C. Baade and J. Deaville (Eds.), *Music and the Broadcast Experience:*

    Performance, Production, and Audiences (235-257). New York, NY: Oxford.

Rothenbuhler, E. W. (1985). Programming decision making in popular music

radio. *Communication Research, 12*(2), 209-232.

Rothenbuler, E.W. and McCourt, T. (1987). Commercial radio and popular music: Processes of

selection and factors of influence. Popular Music and Communication, 78-95.

Ryan, B. (1992) *Making capital from culture: The corporate form of capitalist cultural

production*. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter.

Sales History: Donovan - H.M.S. Donovan (Dawn (7)) 2xLP, Album, RP. (n.d.) Retrieved from

https://www.discogs.com/sell/history/2015359

Savage, M. (2006). The musical field. *Cultural Trends, 15*(2-3), 159-174.

Schensul, S.L., Schensul, J.J., & LeCompte, M.D. (1999). Essential ethnographic methods:

observations, interviews, and questionnaires (Book 2 in Ethnographer's Toolkit).

Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Sen, A. (2009). Foreward. In M. Polanyi *The tacit dimension* (vii-xvi). Chicago, IL: The University

of Chicago Press.

Shoemaker, P. J., & Vos, T. (2009). *Gatekeeping theory*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Shuker, R. (2010). *Wax trash and vinyl treasures: Record collecting as social practice.* New York:

Routledge.

Shuker, R. (2014). Record collecting and fandom. In M. Duffett (Ed.), *Popular Music Fandom:

Identities, Roles and Practices* (165-185). New York: Routledge.

Simpson, K. (2011). *Early '70s radio: The American format revolution*. New York, NY: Continuum.

Sonorama. (2015). Retrieved from http://lumpenradio.com/sonorama.html

Sonorama DANCE PARTY. (2016). Retrieved from

> http://www.hideoutchicago.com/event/1359811-sonorama-dance-party-chicago/

Spradley, J. P. (1980). *Participant observation*. Dumfries, NC: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Sterne, J. (2003). The audible past: Cultural origins of sound reproduction. Durham, NC: Duke

> University Press.

Sterne, J. (2012). *MP3: The meaning of a format.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Sterling, C. H., & Keith, M. C. (2008). *Sounds of change: A history of FM broadcasting in America*.

> Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Straw, W. (2000). Exhausted commodities: The material culture of music. Canadian Journal of

> Communication, 25(1). DOI: https://doi.org/10.22230/cjc.2000v25n1a1148

Straw, W. (2011). Sizing up record collections: Gender and connoisseurship in rock music

> culture. In M. C. Kearney (Ed.). *The Gender and Media Reader* (632-640). London, UK:

> Routledge.

Straw, W. (2012). Music and material culture. In M. Clayton, T. Herbert, and R. Middleton (Eds.),

> *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction*, *2nd Edition* (227-236). New York, NY:

> Routledge.

Strong, M. C. (1999). *The great alternative & indie discography*. Edinburgh, UK: Canongate.

Taylor, T. D. (2007). The commodification of music at the dawn of the era of "mechanical music". *Ethnomusicology, 51*(2), 281-305.

Théberge, P. (2001). 'Plugged in': Technology and popular music. In S. Frith, W. Straw, & J. Street (Eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock* (1-25). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CCOL9780521553698.003

Thornton, S. (1996). *Club cultures: Music, media, and subcultural capital*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Toynbee, J. (2003). Music, culture, and creativity. In M. Clayton, T. Herbert, and R. Middleton (Eds.), *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction*, *2nd Edition* (161-171). New York, NY: Routledge.

United States Government. Federal Communications Commission. (1965). 31st annual report: For the fiscal year 1965. Washington DC: United States Government Printing Office.

Voida, A., Carpendale, S., & Greenberg, S. (2010, February). The individual and the group in console gaming. In Proceedings of the 2010 ACM conference on Computer supported cooperative work (pp. 371-380). ACM.

Walker, R. (2015). Can Soundcloud be the Facebook of music?. Retrieved from: https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2015-07-10/can-soundcloud-be-the-facebook-of-music-

Whyte, W.F. (1979). On making the most of participant observation. *The American Sociologist, 14*, 56-66.

White, D. M. (1950). The "gate-keeper": A case study in the selection of news. *Journalism*

      Quarterly, 27, 383-390.

Winters, P. E. (2016). *Vinyl records and analog culture in the digital age: Pressing matters*.

      Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Wolcott, H. F. (2008). *Ethnography: A way of seeing.* Lanham, MD: Altamira.

Zagal, J. P., Rick, J., & Hsi, I. (2006). Collaborative games: Lessons learned from board games.

      Simulation & Gaming, *37*(1), 24-40.

Žerovc, B., Staniszewski, M. A., Grau, R., Limon, D., & Petek, P. (2015). When attitudes become

      the norm: The contemporary curator and institutional art. Ljubljana: Igor Zabel

      Association for Culture and Theory.

VITA

NAME: Emily W. Easton

EDUCATION: B.A., Sociology, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL 2001

                 M.A., Social Sciences, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL 2001

                 Ph.D., Communication, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL 2017

TEACHING: Cultural Studies Program, Columbia College Chicago; Senior Capstone
                 Thesis, 2011 – 12

                 Cultural Studies Program, Columbia College Chicago; Introduction to
                 Cultural Studies, 2007 – 2009

                 New Millennium Studies/First-Year Seminar; First-Year Seminar, 2007

                 Liberal Arts, Columbia College Chicago; French I, 2005 - 2007

EXPERIENCE: University of Illinois at Chicago: Department of Communication, 2011-
                 2014

                 University of Illinois at Chicago: Department of History & the Gender and
                 Women's Studies Program, 2011-2013

                 University of Chicago: Physical Sciences Division, 2014 - present

PUBLICATIONS: Gray, R., Vitak, J., Easton, E. W., & Ellison, N. B. (2013). Examining social
                 adjustment to college in the age of social media: Factors influencing
                 successful transitions and persistence. *Computers & Education*, *67*, 193-
                 207.

                 Papacharissi, Z., & Easton, E. (2012). In the habitus of the new: Agency,
                 structure, and the social media habitus. *New Media Dynamics*.