

# Classification as Culture: Types and Trajectories of Music Genres

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*Questions of symbolic classification have been central to sociology since its earliest days, given the relevance of distinctions for both affiliation and conflict. Music and its genres are no exception, organizing people and songs within a system of symbolic classification. Numerous studies chronicle the history of specific genres of music, but none document recurrent processes of development and change across musics. In this article, we analyze 60 musics in the United States, delineating between 12 social, organizational, and symbolic attributes. We find four distinct genre types—Avant-garde, Scene-based, Industry-based, and Traditionalist. We also find that these genre types combine to form three distinct trajectories. Two-thirds originate in an Avant-garde genre, and the rest originate as a scene or, to our surprise, in an Industry-based genre. We conclude by discussing a number of questions raised by our findings, including the implications for understanding symbolic classification in fields other than music.*

Since its advent as a discipline, sociology has generated systems of sociocultural classification for a diverse set of phenomena, including forms of organization, religious belief, fashion, gender, sexuality, art, race, and societies at large, to name but a few. The sociological concern with systemic change is venerable yet, as DiMaggio (1987) notes, there is no theory of the dynamic change in classificatory schemes, although efforts have been made in domains such as nation building (Anderson 1983), social movements (Traugott 1995), name-giving practices (Liebersohn 2000), and French cuisine

(Ferguson 2004). Analyses of such classificatory schemes, however, often relegate the cultural meanings of these categories to a secondary feature of the system. In contrast, the use of the concept of *genre* places cultural meaning at the forefront of any analysis of category construction and has potential and significant general utility across domains.

Genre is a conceptual tool most often used to classify varieties of cultural products, particularly in the fields of visual art, popular culture, video games, film, literature, and music. It describes a manner of expression that governs artists' work, their peer groups, and the audiences for their work (Becker 1982; Bourdieu 1993). In this article, we build on the theoretical and conceptual use of genre to better understand the dynamics of symbolic classification and change in order to identify recurrent sociocultural forms of music genres. To date, no one has published a systematic analysis of the characteristic forms that music-making communities take or how they change over time.<sup>1</sup> Instead, historical surveys of popular music focus attention on charismatic performers, analyze works

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<sup>1</sup> Although encyclopedic efforts were made in an earlier generation (Lomax 1964).

within the canon, and identify cultural factors that promote the growth of music genres (e.g., Garofalo 2002; Toynbee 2000). In addition, hundreds of social scientists have studied the structure of particular popular-music communities and the social contexts that shape them. We carefully examine these studies to find uniformities in the forms of music genres and regularities in their trajectories. We also identify the developmental sequences of these genres, rather than focus on the mechanisms that cause genres to transition from one form to the next. Although we examine the case of music genres in the twentieth-century United States in particular, our method of social and cultural analysis offers a more general sociological framework—a framework potentially applicable to all manner of phenomena where individuals and groups construct cultural boundaries. We conclude with a discussion of these more general implications.

## THE GENRE IDEA

Genre organizes the production and consumption of cultural material, including organizational procedures (Ahlkvist and Faulkner 2002; Ballard, Dodson, and Bazzini 1999; Becker 1982; Bielby and Bielby 1994; Griswold 1987; Hirsch 1972; Negus 1999), and influences tastes and the larger structures of stratification in which they are embedded (Bourdieu 1993, 1995; Lizardo 2006). Recently, organizational ecologists have deployed genre to understand the competitive success and restructuring of organizations (Hsu 2006; Hsu and Hannan 2005).

There are two dominant approaches to the study of genre. In the first, humanities scholars typically focus attention on the “text” of a cultural object, which is abstracted from the context in which it is made or consumed (Apperley 2006; Devitt 2004; Fowler 1982; Frow 2006; Hyon 1996; Swales 1990; C. Williams 2006). Most musicologists employ this textual approach to identify genre as a set of pieces of music that share a distinctive musical language (van der Merwe 1989). Some sociologists employ the use of genre-as-text, but they are careful to show how genre is influenced by the context in which it is made and consumed.<sup>2</sup>

The second dominant approach defocalizes text and places the study of genre squarely in a social context. Some analysts apply the term to general marketing categories such as pop, classical, country, urban, and jazz (Negus 1999). Most studies of taste that analyze survey data to examine how groups of consumers use available genres to express their social identity or status (e.g., Mark 1998) look at very inclusive genres (e.g., rock, MOR, or classical), closer to Ennis’s (1992) “streams” or Bourdieu’s (1993) “fields.” Others use the terms subculture (Thornton 1996), scene (Bennett 1997), or neo-tribe (Maffesoli 1996) in ways cognate with the meaning of genre here.

Alternatively, others highlight the set of cultural practices (Becker 1982) that a music community defines as a genre and view its texts as the product of social interactions in a specific sociocultural context (Frith 1996). This approach is found in Peterson’s (1997) study of the creation of country music, as well as DeVaux (1997) on bebop jazz, Garland (1970) on soul, Bennett (2004) on the Canterbury sound, Cantwell (1984) on bluegrass, and Kahn-Harris (2007) on the European varieties of heavy metal rock. Following these studies, and paraphrasing Neale’s (1980:19) definition of genre in film, we define music genres as systems of orientations, expectations, and conventions that bind together an industry, performers, critics, and fans in making what they identify as a distinctive sort of music.

Given this definition, genres are numerous and boundary work is ongoing as genres emerge, evolve, and disappear (Lamont and Molnár 2002). Musicians often do not want to be confined by genre boundaries, but, as Becker (1982) notes, their freedom of expression is necessarily bounded by the expectations of other performers, audience members, critics, and the diverse others whose work is necessary to making, distributing, and consuming symbolic goods.<sup>3</sup> Walser (1993:4) provides an example of

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(1995) shows how national anthems mirror the societal contexts within which they are created. Other lines of work use genre without problematizing its content or development (Bourdieu 1984; Peterson and Kern 1996).

<sup>3</sup> “Free music” is an interesting limiting case because, as Toynbee (2000) notes, although its prac-

<sup>2</sup> Dowd (1992) shows the societal influences on the musicological structure of popular music, and Cerullo

such boundary work: “‘Heavy metal’ is a term that is constantly debated and contested, primarily among fans, but also in dialogue with musicians, commercial marketing strategists, and outside critics and censors. Debates over which bands, which songs, sounds and sights get to count as heavy metal provide occasions for contesting musical and social prestige.” These debates not only sort bands and songs into groups, but they also distinguish individuals who are aware of current distinctions from those who are outsiders or hapless pretenders.

Boundary-defining work occurs within a shifting social, political, economic, and cultural landscape, and the structural features of this landscape condition the actions of genre stakeholders. A genre’s proximal environment includes other genres that compete for many of the same resources, including fans, capital, media attention, and legitimacy. Competing genres often include both the dominant genre in a field and fledgling genres contesting for the same opportunity space. Prosperity, war, depression, ethnic rivalries, gender relations, demographic shifts, and culture wars, for example, shape the course of genre histories. In the United States, racial discrimination and prejudice have played a vital role in the emergence and subsequent development of genres (Crouch 2007; Lott 1995).

Genres also vary widely by popularity and longevity. Some music forms, like rock-n-roll, become very popular and last over a long period of time. Some, like disco, are very popular but short-lived (Brewster and Broughton 2000). Others, like polka, thrive over many decades without becoming widely popular (Shepherd, Horn, and Laing 2005), and many, such as big beat, northern soul, psychedelic country, and range rock have only a transitory existence. In addition, the efforts of many lone musical experimentalists go unheralded, and their distinctive styles do not become genres within our definition of the term.<sup>4</sup>

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tioners say that what they play is guided by the dictates of the musical sounds of the moment, and not by the expectations of other players, audiences, or critics, they nonetheless play within conventions well understood by progressive jazz musicians (Attali 1985; Lewis 1996).

<sup>4</sup> Mildred Cummings and her “Little Miss Cornshucks” performances (Mazor 2003) and

Most genres evolve out of one or more earlier musics that develop in analogous sectors of society and share characteristics (Gendron 2002). Ennis (1992) shows that some musics, over the course of decades, spawn a number of variants. These families of music retain their coherence through shared institutions, aesthetics, and audiences. We follow Ennis and call these sets of genres “streams” through which a number of genres may flow. For example, rhythm and blues (R&B), country music, and pop spawned rock-n-roll, which received recognition as a distinct genre beginning in 1954 (Ennis 1992). In the decades since, rock-n-roll has spawned numerous new genres, including rockabilly, glitter rock, punk, heavy metal, and emo, forming a rock stream. Although some of rock’s progeny came and went in short order, we consider each a genre in so far as it was identified as such by participants and commentators.

Not all commercial music can be properly considered a genre in our sense of the term. We consider music crafted for specific types of venues or referred to as commercial categories to be *non-genred* music. Examples include Tin Pan Alley Broadway show tunes, and commercial music crafted for a specific demographic and designated by a commercial category (e.g., middle of the road [MOR], music for lovers, dance music, and easy listening music).

Much the same argument holds for pop and teen music. At its core, pop music is music found in *Billboard* magazine’s Hot 100 Singles chart. Songs intended for the pop music market usually have their distinguishing genre characteristics purposely obscured or muted in the interest of gaining wider appeal (Weisbard 2008). Artists making such music may think of their performances in terms of genre, but the organizations that assist them in reaching the chart most certainly do not. As a case in point, artist development expert Lou Pearlman played a vital role in creating the “boy band” sensation of the late 1990s (e.g., Backstreet Boys, O-Town, and ’N Sync) by putting together performers who answered casting calls. Such star-making is a fascinating and under-researched topic but beyond our focus here.

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Emmitt Miller, the yodeling minstrel (Tosches 2002), are two examples.

That said, genre music can transform into pop music, and consequently the pop charts are a mix of “pure” pop (i.e., a succession of hits that are marginally different) and songs derived from genres that are popular at the moment, such as rap or punk. Thus, pop is considered a chart, a way of doing business, or a target demographic, but not a genre (Anand and Peterson 2000; but see Weisbard 2008).

We restrict ourselves to music created in the commercial marketplace and thus eliminate the many “classical” and “art” musics. Genres that function in nonprofit or grant-based economies have different creative, organizational, financial, audience, and critical support mechanisms than do commercial musics (Caves 2000). The types and trajectories of genres among nonprofit musics therefore take on distinct forms from those that are focal here (Arian 1971).

## RESEARCH METHODS

This article builds on two prior works in which we closely examined the features of four twentieth-century U.S. musics that seemed to experience a complete developmental trajectory (Lena and Peterson 2006, 2007). We selected grunge from the rock stream, rap from the R&B stream, bebop from the jazz stream, and bluegrass from the country music stream. We then read extensively in the academic and popular press about each.

We found that over time each music took on different forms that were roughly comparable across the musics examined. We designate these as Avant-garde, Scene-based, Industry-based, and Traditionalist genre forms. Finally, we discovered that over the course of its history, each of these music communities began as an Avant-garde genre, became Scene-based, then Industry-based, and finally Traditionalist, a trajectory we abbreviate as AgSIT.

We chose the four cases in our initial analyses for their musical differences from each other and for the wealth of secondary material available on their histories. We did not choose them for their representativeness of a larger class of musics, nor for differences in their trajectories of growth. The strong similarities in the developmental patterns of the four musics led us to seek out a large set of musics that might not fit this trajectory. To bound our search we limited our study to genres established in the United

States during the twentieth century. Because genre boundaries are contested and fluid, and no one has attempted to exhaustively and continually document all the music genres in the United States, it proved impossible to find a definitive universe of musics from which to choose a representative sample. Accordingly, we began with Ennis’s (1992) list of music streams, which includes rock-n-roll, pop, Black pop, country pop, jazz, folk, and gospel. Ennis (1992) identified streams as such because each had distinctive institutional structures, aesthetics, and symbolic identities. His model is a good sociological examination of the popular music field, but it is dated. To include new kinds of U.S. music, we added musics that do not fit neatly into one of these seven streams.

Critics, fans, and music promoters regularly invent genre terms, but many of these are not widely used in the relevant music community. To form a set of genres, we consulted reference works and music-related magazines to find terms commonly in use. Because we needed enough information to make judgments about the forms and histories of genres, we limited our focus to musics for which we could find at least two reliable sources. Working independently, we coded types of music genres and then discussed them until we had agreement on the proper coding. We coded several hundred books and articles to get reliable data on 60 genres.<sup>5</sup> We do not claim that these genres comprise a representative sample of all genres in the twentieth-century United States. We do, however, argue that the sample is sufficiently large, and the genres sampled sufficiently diverse, to illuminate patterns in genre forms and trajectories.

Based on the four preliminary case studies, the current analysis is designed to answer two questions: What are the attributes that organize musics into genres, and how are these genres organized into developmental trajectories? Our design is inductive, so our goal is to generate theory, not test it.

<sup>5</sup> A list of the key sources used in classifying each genre, and the full biographical citation for each source, is available in the Online Supplement on the ASR Web site (<http://www2.asanet.org/journals/asr/2008/toc065.html>).

## GENRE FORMS AND ATTRIBUTES

Are the genre forms Avant-garde, Scene-based, Industry-based, and Traditionalist adequate to describe all the musics in our sample of 60 genres? We find that (1) all of the musics evince at least one of these genre forms, (2) with the exception of Scene-based genres, each of the genre forms is missing in some of the musics, and (3) none of the musics have genre forms other than these four.

To be sure that we examined all the relevant attributes of genres in each of the 60 sample genres, we created and iteratively refined a conceptual template to classify each of the 60 musics. Table 1 shows this template, with the four genre types represented in the columns. Each of the 12 rows represents a *dimension* common to all sample genres, and each cell represents the specific *attributes* characteristic of a genre type. So, for example, in the upper-left corner cell, “creative circle” is the representative organizational form of Avant-garde genres.

The entries in each column of Table 1 represent an ideal-typical construction of a genre type; they do not operate like entries in the periodic table of elements or the genetically-based taxonomies in biology. This is because each specific attribute is not both necessary and sufficient to code a music as a particular genre. This table of attributes should therefore be considered a conceptual tool for understanding genre. By making more detailed distinctions among attributes, it would be possible to create more than four genre types. However, the four-genre type by twelve-dimension resolution is the most parsimonious.

The first three dimensions in Table 1 identify the prototypical organizational form, scale, and locus of activity for genres. Genre ideal is the vision of the music held by those most involved in the genre, including the fundamental values they see embodied in the music. The next dimension describes the degree to which performance conventions are codified and the form of such conventions. These vary widely from being very open and experimental to rigidly codified. Technological features of music making, distribution, and enjoyment do much to constrain genre development, and changes in these features often augur the emergence of new genres. Through boundary work, genre members identify who is a member of a genre

community and who is beyond its pale by cultivating distinctive dress, adornment, drug use, and argot.<sup>6</sup> The sources of income to artists and the amount and kind of press coverage a genre receives largely reflect the organizational form, locus, and goals of the genre. These factors are of specific interest to scholars working at the intersection of political economy, urban social dynamics, and cultural production. Finally, the source of a genre name can be used to distinguish genre types and reveal processes of collective memory and discursive structures that link nomenclature to genre forms. In the remainder of this section, we consider the attributes of each of the four genre types, starting with the Avant-garde.

### AVANT-GARDE GENRES

Avant-garde genres are quite small, having no more than a dozen participants who meet informally and irregularly. Borrowing a term from fine arts, we call such creative groups “circles.” Circles are leaderless, fractious, and typically unravel in a matter of months from lack of recognition or because a subset of the participants gains wider recognition. These genres form around members’ shared dislike of some aspect of the music of the day and the quest for music that is different. Members play together informally in an effort to create a genre ideal for the group. This ideal, and specifically the musical ideas that are central to it, may emerge from members taking lessons, carefully listening to records, and playing with different kinds of musicians. Alternatively, avant-gardists may assert that prevailing genres are predictable and emotionless and, flaunting the fact that they cannot play instruments in conventional ways, make what others consider loud and harsh sounds. This was the experience of both the thrash metal and punk Avant-garde genres (Kahn-Harris 2007; McNeil and McCain 1996). In crafting music that is “new,” avant-gardists may combine elements of genres that are usu-

<sup>6</sup> There is not always a direct correspondence between different “styles” and musical difference; some argue that riot grrrl, straight edge, anarcho-punk, and White power music are differentiated by political and philosophical, not musical, distinctiveness (Schilt 2004; P. Williams 2006).

**Table 1.** Genre Forms and Attributes

Attributes	Genre Forms		
	Avant-Garde	Scene-Based	Industry-Based
Organizational Form	Creative circle	Local scene	Established field
Organizational Scale	Local, some Internet	Local, Internet linked	National, worldwide
Organization Locus	Homes, coffee shops, bars, empty spaces	Local, translocal and virtual scenes	Industrial firms
Genre Ideal or Member Goals	Create new music	Create community	Produce revenue, intellectual property
Codification of Performance Conventions	Low: highly experimental	Medium: much attention to codifying style	High: shaped by industry categories
Technology	Experimentation	Codifying technical innovations	Production tools that standardize sound
Boundary Work	Against established music	Against rival music	Market driven
Dress, Adornment, Drugs	Eccentric	Emblematic of genre	Mass marketed "style"
Argot	Sporadic	Signals membership	Used to sell products
Sources of Income for Artists	Self-contributed, partners, unknowing employers	Scene activities, self-contributed	Sales, licensing, merchandise, endorsements
Press Coverage	Virtually none	Community press	National press
Source of Genre Name	Site or group specific	Scene members, genre-based media	Mass media or industry
			Traditionalist
			Clubs, associations
			Local to international
			Festivals, tours, academic settings
			Preserve heritage and pass it on
			Hyper: great concern about deviation
			Idealized orthodoxy
			Against deviants within
			Stereotypic and muted
			Stylized
			Self contributed, heritage grants, festivals
			Genre-based advocacy and critique
			Academics, critics

ally treated as distinct. Bauck (1997:232), for example, describes how Avant-garde grunge melded different genres together: "Grunge contained the energy, volume and distortion of hardcore punk, but was generally played at a far slower tempo. While borrowing the melodic lines and hooks of heavy metal, grunge left behind the macho posturing and gratuitous guitar solos."

The desire to produce a new music drives groups to engage in experimental practices, including playing standard instruments in unconventional ways, creating new musical instruments, and modifying objects that have not previously been used in the production of music. For example, in their early shows, Iggy and the Stooges, an Avant-garde punk band, "played" a food blender filled with water and a microphone, danced on a washboard wearing golf shoes, and drummed 50-gallon oil drums with hammers (McNeil and McCain 1996:41). The experimental ethos is often expressed through the idiosyncratic grooming, dress, demeanor, and argot of circle members, but these are not (yet) consolidated into a distinctive genre style.

Avant-garde genre members do not receive remuneration for their participation in genre-related activities. They earn money for performing conventional types of music and from nonperformance employment. In addition, family, friends, and partners often contribute a range of resources. Avant-gardists commonly live with little recognition and many privations. These harsh conditions may retrospectively be romanticized as bohemian, but they contribute to the demise of many Avant-garde genres. The music and the people making it receive virtually no press coverage, which makes it exceedingly difficult for scholars to find accounts of Avant-garde musics that did not evolve into more institutionalized forms. The new music receives numerous appellations, but the eventual name is generally applied retrospectively by promoters, critics, and historians.

### **SCENE-BASED GENRES**

For more than a decade, scholars analyzing music communities across the globe have used the concept of "scene" to refer to a community of spatially-situated artists, fans, record companies, and supporting small business people (see, e.g., Shank [1994] on rock and country in

Austin, Texas; Cohen [1991] on the Liverpool scene; Becker [2004] on jazz in Kansas City; Grazian [2004] on blues in Chicago; and Urquia [2004] on salsa in London). These local scenes may be in communication with similar scenes in distant locales whose members enjoy the same kind of music and lifestyle. Such communities cohere through the exchange of information and music, which is made simpler with the advent of quick, small-parcel shipping companies and digital technologies such as the Internet (see Laing [1985] on punk, Kruse [2003] on alternative rock, Schilt [2004] on riot grrrl, and Kahn-Harris [2007] on death metal). Some scenes are essentially, if not entirely, virtual; fans, musicians, and critics find each other on the Internet through listservs and chat rooms (Bennett 2004; Kibby 2000; Lee and Peterson 2004). A Scene-based music genre may take any or all of these forms (Bennett and Peterson 2004), but here we focus primarily on the local form.

Scenes, musical and otherwise, commonly emerge in neighborhoods where rents are low, police supervision is lax, and residents tolerate diversity of all kinds (Florida 2002; Lloyd 2006). Such neighborhoods nurture a scene, and the lifestyle growing around it, by fostering constant interaction among scenesters (Gaines 1994; Thornton 1996; Urquia 2004; Walker 2006). Business entrepreneurs, often drawn from the ranks of scene-participants, become music promoters, club owners, and band managers. Some founded independent record companies, Scene-based fanzines, and Internet sites. Local newspapers, radio stations, and criminal elements often arrive in the area to support the scene and to derive profits from it. Scene musicians and ancillary creative people often cannot support themselves entirely from the music. They typically take low-skill service jobs in the community and depend on money and other support from partners, family, and friends. As scenes develop, these neighborhoods draw both more casual scenesters and merchandisers of the genre lifestyle, hastening the end of intensely local genres (Shank 1994).

Innovative technology often plays an important role in Scene-based genres. For example, the development of inexpensive, powerful, portable, and relatively compact sound amplifiers in the late 1930s was important in the development of bluegrass (Rosenberg 1985),

urban blues (Grazian 2003), honky-tonk country music (Peterson 1997), and bebop (DeVeaux 1997). Technological innovations can also change the balance among elements of the music. In the early days of rap, DJs were the center of interest, but when Grandmaster Flash modified the turntable mixer, he solved the technical challenges of producing steady rhythm, and the next set of innovative practitioners turned their attention toward lyrical content and techniques of oral delivery. This effectively refocused crowd attention on the rapper, and DJs ceased to be the focus of innovation or attention (Chang 2005; Fricke and Ahearn 2002; Lena 2003, 2004).

Conventions of performance and presentation are rapidly codified in Scene-based genres. These conventions grow out of efforts to find the best way to express new musical ideas, but they often put performers in direct conflict with practitioners of other genres competing for the same resources. These frictions between rival scenes can be quite contentious and visible, as when bebop scene members fought with swing musicians (Lopes 2002), or when, urged on by a radio DJ, rock fans met in a Chicago stadium to break dance records and chant "disco sucks." Ornette Coleman even had his specially-made instrument smashed by fellow musicians who felt upstaged by his complex and aggressive way of playing hard bop (Rosenthal 1992).

Social conventions, including styles of clothes and adornment, body-type, argot, and "attitude," are codified in Scene-based genres. In the early 1940s, when Bill Monroe was trying to establish bluegrass music as distinct from the hillbilly music of the day, he dressed his band in tailored outfits that emulated the dress of Kentucky gentlemen horse-breeders (Rosenberg 1985). Other examples of adornment in Scene-based genres include psychedelic rock fans' beads and tie-dye clothes, punks' Mohawk haircuts, goths' "corpse paint" makeup, and beboppers' berets. These adornments help distinguish members from nonmembers, particularly from devotees of competing genres. They can also symbolize whole constellations of beliefs and practices known to scene members. For example, straight-edge punk rockers draw a conspicuous "X" on the back of their hands to declare they have forsworn alcohol, drugs, tobacco, and promiscuous sex (Haenfler 2006). The harsh negative reactions of "squares" and

authorities confirm scenesters' sense of their importance and solidify scene solidarity (Thornton 1996).

Scene-based genres have a loose organizational form characterized by nested rings of varying commitment to the genre ideal. Clusters of those most responsible for the distinctive characteristics of the music are at the center. Next, there is a ring of committed activists whose identity, and sometimes means of employment, is tied to the scene. Outside of this is a ring of fans who participate in the scene more or less regularly. The outer ring is made up of "tourists" who enjoy activities within the scene without identifying with it. Such distinct rings are characteristic of mature scenes like the Chicago blues in the 1990s (Grazian 2004); newer scenes exhibit similar rings of commitment, but their structure is much more fluid (Cohen 1991).

As with other aspects of Scene-based genres, disagreements over the name of an emerging genre abound. Nonetheless, a consensually agreed name usually emerges by the end of the Scene-based phase, because the community press, critics, merchandisers, and scene members themselves want to consolidate the identity of the music and its associated lifestyle. The chosen name is sometimes an onomatopoeic representation of a genre's sound, such as bebop and doowop. More often a name has to do with sexuality (e.g., jazz, rap, funk, rock-n-roll, and straight edge), but our sample genres have a wide variety of name sources.

### **INDUSTRY-BASED GENRES**

Industry-based music genres are so named because their primary organizational form is the industrial corporation. Some are multinational in scope, but others are independent companies organized to compete directly with the multinationals. Frith (1996:77) describes such genres as being located within the "market-based popular music field."<sup>7</sup> Along with industrial firms, the prime actors in this field include singers and musicians who contract for their services, genre-targeted audiences, and a wide array of ancillary service providers, from song

<sup>7</sup> See Peterson and Berger (1975), Lopes (1992), Negus (1999), and Dowd (2004).

publishers to radio stations and diverse retail outlets.

For a genre to thrive for long in this large apparatus, its fans must number in the hundreds of thousands, and market logic demands ever larger numbers. Corporate interest in a particular genre lasts as long as its sales potential is increasing (Negus 1999). The otherwise highly competitive multinational entertainment conglomerates collectively fight the unauthorized use and distribution of their copyrighted music, doing whatever they can to frustrate the development of new genres (Peterson 1990). At the same time, industrial firms that are more closely linked to their markets, such as Motown, Rough Trade, and Sugar Hill Records, can be instrumental in the development of genres (Toynbee 2000).

Simplified genre conventions are codified in the interests of making, measuring, and marketing Industry-based genres. Firms train new artists to work within highly-codified performance conventions, and record producers regularly coach songwriters and artists to make simple music, clearly within genre bounds, that will appeal to a mass audience. Such stereotyping strategies also facilitate sales because company personnel will know how to categorize and market the “product” (Longhurst 2007; Negus 1999), and potential consumers can be identified through analysis of marketing demographics data (Negus 1999). Over the past century, technological innovations have standardized and simplified the production of music to satisfy the needs of mass production. Trade magazines’ weekly charts of song sales and Industry-based annual music awards help guide industry decisions about the relative success of individual songs and whole genres (Anand and Peterson 2000; Anand and Watson 2004; Watson and Anand 2006). In the process, genre names become more clearly fixed, but, at the same time, different Scene-based genres that were thought to be antithetical may be melded into one category (Peterson 1997).

National media bring a budding Industry-based genre to the attention of a mass audience with stories about its seemingly discordant music and the large number of genre fans with unconventional lifestyles (Gillett 1974; Laing 1985). This coverage, however, is usually ill-informed about the music and often frames a genre in three contradictory ways. Journalists

may portray a genre lifestyle as innocent fun and feature its colorful surface aspects, they may spin the lifestyle as a danger to its fans (Thornton 1996), or they may claim its “lawless, anti-social, and hedonistic” fans pose a danger to society (Binder 1993). In 1969, at the time of the Woodstock and Altamont festivals, psychedelic rock faced all three readings (Santelli 1980). This negative attention typically draws even more fans to a genre (Cocks 1985; Laing 1985; Thornton 1996).

The media may also ignite a “moral panic” in which genre spokespeople, police, political authorities, religious leaders, parent groups, teachers, and moral pundits provide a willing press with lurid quotes. Press coverage often highlights racist, classist, or sexist tropes. For example, in 1943 to 1944 bebop jazz was blamed for the widespread White-on-Black race riots at military bases and in Northern industrial cities (Lopes 2002). Forty years later, rap music was similarly blamed when riots erupted in Los Angeles following the Rodney King trial (Chang 2005). Tensions over race, class, and gender also emerge *within* Industry-based genre communities. For example, when large numbers of more educated, liberal Northerners flocked to the bluegrass community in the 1960s, they were characterized as “drug-taking freeloiving pinkos,” to which they responded by characterizing working-class, Southern bluegrass fans as violent racists.

Like the music, elements of dress, adornment, and lifestyle are exaggerated and mass-marketed to new fans of Industry-based genres. The “grunge aesthetic,” for example, inspired fashion designer Marc Jacobs to incorporate flannel shirts, wool ski caps, and Doc Marten boots into Perry Ellis’s 1992 spring collection (Moore 2005). Likewise, advertisers often capitalized upon the popularity of a genre to promote their products. In the early 1990s, for example, the moniker “alternative,” commonly used to refer to grunge rock, was used to sell consumer products like Budweiser (the “alternative beer”) and to describe the MTV program “Alternative Nation.” A generation earlier, the popularity of political protest prompted a major company to pronounce, “Columbia Records brings you the revolution” (Santelli 1980).

New fans attracted to an Industry-based genre by intensive merchandising often raise the ire of more committed genre participants. New

recruits argue over what constitutes authenticity in music, musicians, and signs of group affiliation (Grazian 2004; Peterson 1997), while committed, longer-term fans and performers engage in a discourse about lost authenticity (Cantwell 1984; Eyerman and Jamison 1998; Lopes 2002). This tension is sometimes divisive enough to propel some genre members into forming new genres, either Avant-garde or Traditionalist.

### *TRADITIONALIST GENRES*

Traditionalist genre participants' goal is to preserve a genre's musical heritage and inculcate the rising generation of devotees in the performance techniques, history, and rituals of the genre. Fans and organizations dedicated to perpetuating a genre put a great amount of effort into constructing its history and highlighting exemplary performers who they deem fit into the genre's emerging canon of exemplars (Lee 2007; Regev 1994; Rosenberg 1985).

Periodic gatherings of genre artists and fans at festivals, celebratory concerts, and reunions are characteristic of Traditionalist genres. These rituals give devotees the chance to gather and momentarily live in the spirit of the genre and reaffirm its continuity (Rosenberg 1985). New and old performers will often play together, enacting a ritual of renewal through the veneration of the old timers and the "discovery" of new talent. Performers and promoters commonly rely on employment outside the genre, so these gatherings provide the most significant proportion of their earnings from performing genre music. They may also earn additional money from selling records, musical instruments, and genre-related ephemera. Many fans sing, play an instrument, or act as promoters of genre events, so the division of labor is less distinct between fan, artist, and industry than in Industry-based or fully-developed Scene-based genres.

Artists, promoters, and fans join clubs and associations devoted to the perpetuation of the genre that hold performance contests and create annual "best of . . ." awards. Adherents of Traditionalist genres communicate at a distance through newsletters, journals, trade magazines, and Internet discussion sites, through which they fabricate and promulgate a history for a genre (Bennett 2004). The genre-oriented press

publishes schedules of events, recounts recent genre events, prints articles on performance techniques, profiles both venerated and rising artists and groups, and reviews new and remastered historical records released by the numerous small record companies devoted to the genre. There are usually scholarly publications and academic classes, but much instruction in musical technique and genre lore is received via one-on-one interaction with established performers and other aficionados.

Committed Traditionalists expend a great deal of energy fighting with each other about the models they construct to represent a genre's music and the canon of its iconic performers. Traditionalists argue over which instruments and vocal stylings are appropriate, and they may even battle over the place and time that a genre originated. For example, Traditionalist U.S. punks claim that punk developed in New York and Detroit during the late 1960s and early 1970s, while British Traditionalists locate punk's founding in 1970s London (Longhurst 2007). Retrospectively, adherents of Traditionalist genres decry what they identify as the adulterating consequences of commercial exploitation of genre music, and they censure artists who are seen as catering to corporate interests or values. This censure can be seen in the denigration of "crossover" rap artists of the 1980s like Vanilla Ice or Digital Underground, who are derided for having "made Rap palatable to white, suburban youth across the country" (Light 2004:140).

Performers' race, class, educational attainment, and regional origins are often used as markers of authenticity. To play bluegrass, for example, it is said a musician must be White, working class, rural, and preferably from the Appalachian mountains (Rosenberg 1985); you must be young, White, and an underachiever to perform punk music in an exemplary fashion (Laing 1985); and to really play salsa, a musician must be Latin American (Urquía 2004). Even journalistic and academic accounts of Traditionalist genres engage in such demographic profiling (Kelley 2004). Other outsiders often conflate stories of a genre's exotic origin with its present Traditionalist form, and these stereotypes influence tourists who want to know something about the genre. Grazian (2003:13) reports that well-meaning tourists come to Chicago expecting to find blues played by "un-

educated American black men afflicted with blindness or some other disability, playing in ramshackle joints that are dimly lit, unbearably smoky, and smelling as funky as their music sounds.”

## GENRE TRAJECTORIES

### *AGSIT GENRE TRAJECTORIES*

Based on our four case studies, we expected all genre trajectories to grow from Avant-garde circles, but just 40 of the 60 genres we sampled began this way, and only 16 experienced the full AgSIT trajectory. Bebop, a form of jazz that emerged in the early 1940s, exemplifies a genre that experienced the full trajectory. Like other Avant-garde genres, Bebop coalesced around a small group of experimentalists, including Charlie Parker and “Dizzy” Gillespie. They attracted the attention of other young jazz players, most notably Bud Powell, Thelonious Monk, and Charlie Christian, who were dissatisfied with the big-band swing of the time (DeVeaux 1997). Their collective stylistic innovations, dedication to creating Black art music, and charismatic leadership created a consensus around the Bop genre ideal (Lopes 2002). Genre music conventions coalesced as Bebop came to be played by small combos of musicians on acoustic instruments, usually led by a saxophone and trumpet, and characterized by a series of fast extended solos improvised on a song’s harmonic structure rather than on its melody.

As the Avant-garde Beboppers began to experiment in small clubs, a Scene-based genre developed. Bop-dedicated clubs such as Birdland opened and several specialty record companies, like Blue Bird, were established. The always contentious jazz press hotly debated the music, politics, and behavioral “excesses” of the music’s practitioners and devotees. A set of sartorial, linguistic, and behavioral markers developed, allowing Bopsters to identify each other and enact the circle’s criticism of the status-quo music scene. Evoking the image of French bohemian artists, Dizzy Gillespie and other Boppers wore black berets, but the prime symbol of Bop group allegiance was the use of an elaborate vocabulary to describe themselves, swing players, ignorant fans, demanding managers, varieties of drugs, and the authorities. This rapidly evolving argot made it possible to deride outsiders in their presence, and the lan-

guage made its way into a number of the genre’s songs.

In the late 1940s, Bebop made the transition into an Industry-based genre as the major record companies bought the recording contracts of the leading Bop artists and began to promote the music to the general public. The national press regularly reported on the music, as well as Bop artists’ and fans’ antics. Many stories described the zoot suit fashions, argot, racial mixing, juvenile delinquency, and drug taking (Lopes 2002). Much of the national media attention initially derided Bop, but by the mid-1950s the media was increasingly positive, leading to a rapid swelling in the ranks of casual listeners who wanted to vicariously live the dangerous life of the “hepcat.” Numerous marketers obliged with the mass production of distinctive emblems of scene status. The record companies, to draw more casual fans, began backing the star Bop performers with string sections, a move that signaled the Industry-based genre was reaching its end.

Genres that experience the explosive growth and aesthetic dilution characteristic of an Industry-based genre tend to suffer a crisis as their many casual fans find a new focus of attention. In this instance, the growth of both R&B and Rock music drew fans away from Bebop. Not surprisingly, the general media reduced its coverage of Bebop, and the major record companies reduced their marketing and financial support of genre artists, sometimes terminating their contracts altogether. Even the media supportive of Bebop increasingly saw it as music to review rather than as a newsworthy lifestyle.

In response, some musicians explore new ways to revitalize a genre ideal, and new Avant-garde genres emerge from these efforts. For example, Bebop artists helped to spawn Hard bop, Cool jazz, Free jazz, psychedelic jazz, and third stream genres. At the same time, hardcore Bebop fans, who were dismayed by the adulterations made in the Industry-based genre and by the hordes of touristic fans, took wry pleasure from Bebop’s downfall and set about trying to recreate Bebop as it had been in the glory days when it was Scene-based. In time, these musicians, scholars, and fans created a set of institutions to preserve the memory and practice of the music through education in the schools, festivals, album reissues, and other features of Traditionalist genres. Increasingly,

Bebop was interpreted as a modern art form worthy of scholarly attention and preservation in the major conservatories of classical music (Lopes 2002; Peterson 1972). The February 28, 1964 issue of *Time* magazine, for example, featured Thelonious Monk on its cover and described his eccentricities not as signs of madness but of creative genius.

Fifteen other genres followed the same AgSIT trajectory as Bebop: Bluegrass, Chicago jazz, Folk revival music, Gospel, Folk rock, Heavy metal, Honky-tonk country, Old-school rap,

Punk rock, Rockabilly, Salsa, Urban blues, Western swing, Hillbilly, and Rock-n-roll (see Table 2). Of these, Bebop most closely resembles Heavy metal, Old-school rap, Punk rock, and Rockabilly in the spectacular and contentious Industry-based phase of their trajectories.

As Table 2 shows, nine musics in disparate streams, including Alternative country, Disco, Gangsta rap, Jump blues, Psychedelic rock, and Thrash metal, experienced Avant-garde, Scene-based, and Industry-based genres but have not

**Table 2.** AgSIT Genre Trajectories

	Avant-Garde	Scene-Based	Industry-Based	Traditionalist
BeBop Jazz	x	x	x	x
Bluegrass	x	x	x	x
Chicago Jazz	x	x	x	x
Folk Revival	x	x	x	x
Folk Rock	x	x	x	x
Gospel	x	x	x	x
Heavy Metal	x	x	x	x
Hillbilly	x	x	x	x
Honky Tonk	x	x	x	x
Old-School Rap	x	x	x	x
Punk Rock	x	x	x	x
Rockabilly	x	x	x	x
Rock-n-Roll	x	x	x	x
Salsa	x	x	x	x
Urban Blues	x	x	x	x
Western Swing	x	x	x	x
Alternative Country	x	x	x	
Disco	x	x	x	
East Coast Gangsta Rap	x	x	x	
Grunge Rock	x	x	x	
Jazz Fusion	x	x	x	
Jump Blues	x	x	x	
Psychedelic Rock	x	x	x	
Thrash Metal	x	x	x	
West Coast Gangsta Rap	x	x	x	
Delta Blues	x	x		x
DooWop	x	x		x
New Orleans Jazz	x	x		x
Black Metal	x	x		
Country Boogie	x	x		
Death Metal	x	x		
Free Jazz	x	x		
Garage	x	x		
Grindcore	x	x		
Hard Bop	x	x		
House	x	x		
Jungle	x	x		
South Texas Polka	x	x		
Techno	x	x		
Laurel Canyon	x			

formed a Traditionalist genre. Since there is often a gap of five or more years between the collapse of an Industry-based genre and the coalescence of a Traditionalist genre, it is possible that they may experience a “revival” in years to come. In several cases, the creative energies that might have gone into tradition-building went instead toward building new genres. Most conspicuously, Alternative country, Disco, Gangsta rap, and Psychedelic rock spawned, respectively, Americana; newer forms of dance music like Techno, House, and Jungle; top-40 rap; and glam rock (Brewster and Broughton 2000; Chang 2005; Curtis 1987; Lee and Peterson 2004; Lena 2006).

Three musics in our sample, Delta blues, Doowop, and New Orleans jazz, developed a Traditionalist genre without ever being an Industry-based genre. This may be due to particular features of the racialized system for music distribution in the first half of the twentieth century, which limited the accessibility of Black music. Beginning in the third quarter of the twentieth century, both Delta blues and New Orleans jazz experienced revivals as Traditionalist genres. The history of Doowop is a bit different. Doowop started in the 1950s when young African American vocal groups began to use their voices to simulate the Black pop music of the day. As the style became more popular, their vocal renditions were augmented by R&B bands, and Doowop merged into the Black pop-music stream (Pruter 1996).

We found 11 genre trajectories that were live-ly Scene-based genres but never became Industry-based genres nor formed a Traditionalist genre. Most of these communities purposively maintained their genre ideal, appealing to a narrow group. Death metal is an extreme example; its often violent, sexist, racist, and homophobic lyrics, as well as devotees’ antisocial behavior, foreclosed any distribution by major music companies (Kahn-Harris 2007). Less extreme examples include Free jazz, Black metal, Garage, Grindcore, and South Texas polka. Country boogie and Hard bop were both absorbed into other genres, so they did not enjoy a separate Traditionalist period. At the end of the 1990s, three dance musics, House, Jungle, and Techno, enjoyed continuing vital development and produced numerous permutations through Scene-based media (McLeod 2001).

Finally, while most Avant-garde genres either wither or develop new scenes, from time to time an Avant-garde circle explodes, spawning several new genres. Such Avant-garde genres are usually labeled by the place they came together, such as the loose collection of singer-songwriter-musicians who gathered in the bucolic canyons above Los Angeles in the late 1960s and we identify as the “Laurel Canyon” circle.<sup>8</sup> Like all Avant-garde genres, the artists associated with Laurel Canyon were quite eclectic, but they were united in their dislike of the music of the day, including pop, glam, and psychedelic rock. The Laurel Canyon circle did not develop a cohesive Scene-based genre, but its efforts were central to the flowering of several quite distinct genres, including the singer-songwriter style of James Taylor and Joni Mitchell, Folk rock led by the Byrds, cosmic country exemplified by the Flying Burrito Brothers, the country rock of the Eagles, and the psychedelic pop of The Mamas and The Papas (Hoskyns 2006; Walker 2006).

### SIT GENRE TRAJECTORIES

Among our 60 genre trajectories, 11 began as Scene-based genres and moved to an Industry-based or Traditionalist form (see Table 3). The first five genres in Table 3 grew out of pre-existing domestic Scene-based genres, and six imports from abroad took on distinctive identities in the United States.

Swing is the only one of these 11 musics to go through the entire SIT trajectory in the twentieth century. It developed in the late 1920s when sweet dance bands incorporated elements of “hot jazz” into their music. Composers and arrangers orchestrated hot jazz improvisation over written dance-band parts, satisfying both dancers and jazz fans. In the hands of Duke Ellington, Glen Miller, Count Basie, and Benny Goodman, Swing became the dominant form of industrial pop music by the late 1930s. Its Industry-based form withered in the late 1940s, but a vigorous swing Traditionalist genre

<sup>8</sup> This circle had no agreed name in the day. To identify it, like Walker (2006) we follow the common practice in Avant-garde genres and name the circle after the place where it was centered.

**Table 3.** SIT Genre Trajectories

	Scene-Based	Industry-Based	Traditionalist
Swing	x	x	x
Contemporary Christian	x	x	
Conscious Rap	x	x	
Contemporary Gospel	x	x	
Humor Rap	x	x	
Reggae	x	x	
Soca	x	x	
Tango	x	x	
Chicago Polka	x		x
Cleveland Polka	x		x
Milwaukee Polka	x		x

emerged a decade later (Magee 2005; Shipton 2001).

Contemporary Christian music grew out of young gospel musicians' efforts to incorporate elements of rock into their religiously-themed music (Darden 2004). Likewise, Conscious rap, Contemporary gospel, and Humor rap emerged from efforts to combine scenes (see Krims [2000] and Rose [1994] on Rap; see Darden [2004], Heilbut [1997], and Thompson [2000] on Contemporary gospel). Reggae, Soca, and Tango, Caribbean and Latin music forms that came to the United States and developed distinctive attributes here, had no Traditionalist phase. Instead, each became part of the foundation for later forms of Latin, Rock, and Rap music (Dudley 2004; Roberts 1979; Shepherd et al. 2005). Finally, three forms of polka music coming from central Europe took on distinctive forms in Midwestern industrial cities, fostered by Scene-based institutions (Shepherd et al. 2005). None of the polka musics developed into Industry-based genres, but all sustained an extended Traditionalist genre.

### IST GENRE TRAJECTORIES

Nine of our 60 genre trajectories, as depicted in Table 4, began as Industry-based genres and then developed scenes; six then experienced Traditionalist phases. We did not anticipate this sort of trajectory but identified a number of cases that share this "anomaly." On close inspection, we found that most of these genres conspicuously share a source in the pooled efforts of a few creative musicians paired with arrangers, producers, and industry marketers working in the field of Industry-based music.

Soul is a good example of this pattern. African American religious singers had long borrowed from Black secular music and rhythms to give their sacred songs intensity and popular appeal. Following World War II, singers raised in the church reversed the process, bringing elements of energized Gospel music into their secular songs. These efforts ranged widely, from the rocking songs of Little Richard and the shouts of James Brown to the ballads of numerous R&B quartets. This work coalesced as a coherent genre in the hands of Ray Charles and Ahmet Ertegun, the Atlantic Records owner and producer. In 1954, Charles had a huge hit when he transformed the well-known Gospel anthem "My Jesus Means the World to Me" into the secular "I Got a Woman (way over town that's good to me)." Over the next 10 years, many artists followed his lead, including Solomon Burke, Otis Redding, Aretha Franklin, Sam Cook, Jackie Wilson, and Wilson Pickett (Garland 1970; Gillett 1974; Guralnick 1999). In the 1960s, Motown Records became very successful by crafting a line of "softer," "safer," soul songs. Cool jazz, Funk, New jack swing, and Nu metal likewise emerged from the efforts of successful artists working with industrial record company producers or arrangers.

Southern gospel developed quite differently. While the genre is highly inflected with Black influences, the designation "Southern" is used to clearly distinguish its predominantly White, close-harmony style from related trends in Black Gospel. Southern gospel was an unintended byproduct of marketing efforts begun in 1910 by the Vaughn Music Publishing Company to sell their new line of religious songbooks featuring four-part harmonies. The company hired

**Table 4.** IST Genre Trajectories

	Industry-Based	Scene-Based	Traditionalist
Cool Jazz	x	x	x
Funk	x	x	x
Movie Cowboy	x	x	x
New Jack Swing	x	x	x
Soul	x	x	x
Southern Gospel	x	x	x
Nashville Sound	x	x	
Nu Metal	x	x	
Outlaw Country	x	x	

a male quartet to perform works from the songbooks in churches across the South and the Midwest. Four-part quartets had not been popular previously, but they were the most cost efficient way to promote songbooks. Touring quartets rapidly became popular, and enterprising singers formed publishing companies and sent out singing quartets of their own. This created a great demand for new songs well suited to four-part harmonies. By 1940, performances were also held in town halls, theaters, schools, and under tents where theatricality was important to success. Several quartets recorded for RCA in the 1920s, but it wasn't until the 1960s that groups again obtained contracts with major labels. By the 1980s the old circuit no longer drew young fans, but the form has experienced a revival as a Traditionalist genre since the 1990s (Goff 2002; Murray 2005).

The Nashville sound was also an unintended byproduct of music industry actors. It was the work of major music corporation producers who were also accomplished musicians, most notably Owen Bradley, Herbert Long, and Chet Atkins. Beginning in the late 1950s, they created an assembly-line system of production in an effort to produce standard, high-quality country music at a low cost. Professional songwriters provided songs that were assigned to particular artists, and a set of professional "session" musicians created arrangements in the studio. What began as a system of production soon developed distinct musical qualities that collectively became known as the Nashville sound (Hemphill 1970). The genre flourished in the 1960s, was supplanted in the 1970s, and to date it has not had a Traditionalist form (Jensen 1998). Like the Nashville sound, Cowboy music was the byproduct of a system of creating recorded music; it was produced in the

Hollywood movie lots devoted to making "B" Western films (Peterson 1997).

Outlaw country coalesced in the mid-1970s as a reaction to the growing banality of the Nashville sound, but it represented a long tradition of "hard country music," running from Jimmie Rodgers and Hank Williams to George Jones and Johnny Cash (Malone 2002). Led by Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson, artists began to flaunt their drug use, write their own songs, choose their own record producers, and record with their own road bands away from the large corporately-owned studios. This "outlaw" movement became a genre in 1976 when RCA repackaged previously-released material by Jennings, Nelson, Jessi Colter, and Tompall Glaser as "Wanted: The Outlaws," which became the first country music album to sell a million copies. Many artists followed in the wake of this success, but the music has not had a Traditionalist phase. Instead, the outlaw spirit and way of making records has animated loosely-organized Avant-garde movements, such as Texas country, Southern rock, Alternative country, and hellbilly (Ching 2001, Malone 2002).

Our sample genres suggest that not all industrial environments are equally congenial to the development of new musics. While the major companies (measured in a way appropriate to the time) accounted for most popular music production in the twentieth-century United States, six of the nine musics in our sample—Cool jazz, Funk, New jack swing, Soul, Southern gospel, and Nu metal—were developed in unaffiliated, independent record companies that were in competition with the major labels.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This article examines the attributes, forms, and trajectories of commercial music genres in the twentieth-century United States. Based on exploratory case studies of Bebop jazz, Bluegrass, Grunge rock, and Rap, we found that each music community can be characterized by clusters of 12 attributes: organizational form, scale, and locus of music production; codification of performance conventions; the role of technology, press coverage, and boundary work; the identity work of participants, including their goals, dress, and argot; sources of income for artists; and finally the varying sources of genre names. We found that combinations of these attributes cluster into four genre forms that we call Avant-garde, Scene-based, Industry-based, and Traditionalist.

To gauge the generality of these genre attributes, forms, and trajectories, we examined 60 kinds of music found in the United States. We discovered that these four genre forms were sufficient to account for variations in the sampled musics. We also found that the developmental features of these musics fit one of three distinct genre trajectories. Two-thirds of the sampled musics started in Avant-garde circles. Most of these then generated support from local people and institutions, attracted the attention of mass marketers, and, after a period of international visibility, a number became the domain of those seeking to preserve the traditional genre ideal.<sup>9</sup> A smaller number of musics emerged within scenes, usually becoming Industry-based genres and then Traditionalist genres. Perhaps the greatest surprise was that nine musics emerged within the music industry, as artists, producers, or marketers seized the opportunity to innovate, and several of these developed Scene-based and Traditionalist forms. It is notable that while many musical trajectories

are broken or truncated, all the sampled musics went through a Scene-based phase.

## *THE THEORETICAL UTILITY OF GENRE AND SOCIAL-CULTURAL CLASSIFICATION*

The forms and trajectories we discovered in music of the twentieth-century United States seem similar to those of other social formations. We described how new music genres coalesce from musicians' dissatisfactions and their ability to attract an active music scene. Much the same process seems to take place in the "invisible colleges" of scientists and scholars in the humanities. These groups form around faculty's and students' dissatisfaction with the dominant practices in a given discipline, and some of these factions become well enough established that they are able to gather sufficient resources to produce and convey knowledge (Crane 1972; Frickel and Gross 2005). The growth of academic disciplines thus resembles musics in the first three phases of the AgSIT trajectory. Much the same process is found in the development of churches that grow from sects or cults. Whether derived from an existing denomination as a sect, or born from fresh inspiration as a cult, these groups can experience similar developmental paths as AgSIT genres, until they too wither or become established churches (Stark and Bainbridge 1985; Wallis 1975).

The musics we studied changed in patterned ways that may mirror processes in other domains. The music and lifestyle of many genres moved from being novel and experimental to being seen as unexceptional, fixed, or old-fashioned. This particular patterned change strikes us as similar to Weber's idea of the routinization of charisma (Weber 1947), and this similarity may point us toward more general principles that could explain the dynamics of diverse collectivities.

Numerous sociological studies examine the social processes of genre dynamics in various forms of cultural expression, focusing on the valorization of a cultural form as art (Baumann 2007; Bourdieu 1990; DiMaggio 1982, 1992; Regev 1994; White and White 1965). If art musics are considered in the way we have done here, a genre phase based on institutional valorization and governmental-philanthropic support would probably be found, and this art-based phase might simply substitute for the

<sup>9</sup> Caution should be taken when asserting that AgSIT is the predominant genre trajectory. This trajectory roughly mirrors the story of genre development recounted in many popular works and retrospective critical evaluations. There is a danger that this is as much a reconstructed myth as an accurate accounting of events. We try to avoid this potential bias as much as possible by relying on sources written close to the times that the events being described took place.

Traditionalist phase experienced by some commercial genres. In the case of Bebop, the valorization processes emerged near the end of its Industry-based genre (Lopes 2002). Is it possible that there are characteristics of the Traditionalist phase that have, to date, prevented the valorization of blues and rock as art despite the concerted efforts of numerous groups (Lee 2007; Regev 1994)?

In the course of our work it became abundantly clear that genres do not all have the same influence in altering either music or the field of commercial music. One might distinguish between genres that are only marginally different and those that are *germinal*, that is, they represent a significant departure from existing musics. Such germinal genres tend to spawn a number of genres that are only marginally different from them. For example, the germinal genres of Bebop, Rock-n-roll, and Old-school rap begat, respectively, Hard bop and Cool jazz, psychedelic and glam rock, and Gangsta, booty rap, and numerous other variants. If this distinction proves useful, it would be important to ask why germinal genres emerge when and where they do.

A great deal of popular writing about music genres focuses on descriptions of the interaction among participants, but this is an under-researched area and, except for a few illustrations, we have given it scant attention here. There are numerous possible research questions: What are the discursive and musical structures that concatenate into genre ideals and produce symbols of inclusion and exclusion? How do performance conventions emerge, and what is the process of elective affinity and resistance by which lifestyles emerge? Is there an optimum level of competition between musicians, old and new genre fans, industry actors, and between genres for creating genres and their development? Why do some Avant-garde circles attract scenes while others wither? Why do some genre participants seek innovation while others try to maintain traditions? And are the dynamics of identity formation different for Avant-garde, Scene-based, Industry-based, and Traditionalist genre participants?

### *GENRE IN INTERACTIONAL AND MACRO CONTEXT*

Rival genres are among the most important elements in a genre's environment, and as we noted above, contentious battles between rivals often shape Scene-based musics. The historical record offers many examples of such conflict, including the street fights between "mods" and "rockers" in the early days of rock-n-roll in the United Kingdom. We know very little, though, of the role these frictions play in the development of genres. It could be that competition over resources produces similarities between musics.

Much writing on genre emergence focuses on the ingenuity and creativity of particular artists. It is clear from the detailed descriptions of Avant-garde genres, however, that key artists and cultural entrepreneurs are often familiar with the development of earlier musics, and these stories may condition their actions as they set out to form a new music. Similarly, there may be pressures for a genre to acquire particular institutional features that are isomorphic with those of others in the organizational field. Hesmondhalgh (1998), for example, shows that the organizational and institutional dynamics of the music industry frustrated the attempts of post-punk bands to operate on a democratic basis.

The dynamics of field opportunity structures seem to dictate that when a dominant genre is aging, only one of the contending new genres will be able to take its place. Is this process inevitable, and what happens to the other contestants? Do they get absorbed by the winning genre? Do they simply wither? Or do they consolidate their strengths as Scene-based or Traditionalist genres and survive on the margins of commercial music?

Much of this article focuses on field-level factors in genre dynamics. Nonetheless, we bracketed several important factors to make the data manageable. Most importantly, we did not take into consideration the intimate relationship between creative communities in the United States and those in Europe and other parts of the world. A full understanding of genres in the United States must take into account these diverse influences and collaborations. In addition, genres such as bebop, punk, rap, and post-disco dance music have taken root in countries around the world and are being reimported to

the United States in transformed versions. Likewise, Avant-garde and Scene-based genres modeled on exported U.S. genres emerge in many countries, but few systematic studies explore the processes involved or the ways in which the genres are transformed (Condry 2006).

Research shows that discrimination against marginalized elements of our society has had a complex influence on genre formation and trajectories (Cantwell 1984; Crouch 2007; Lott 1995). Indeed, many of the musics in our sample emerged from the experiences of marginalized elements of society, most prominently African Americans, youth, immigrants, women, and individuals from slums and other impoverished areas, such as the South. By way of contrast, the lifeways and complaints of the wealthy have not inspired the development of any of the commercial genres in our sample. Why is this the case, and what is its specific impact on genre attributes and trajectories?

We were surprised by the counterintuitive discovery that several twentieth-century musics emerged as Industry-based genres (IST), which suggests the importance of further analyzing the role of corporations in genre formation and development. Multinational corporations often inhibit musical innovation; to sustain profits, firms constrain artists to produce only marginally different aesthetic content (Dowd 2004; Lopes 1992; Peterson and Berger 1975; Weisbard 2008). How does the increasing role of multinational corporations in the early stages of musical innovation effect the incubation of musics in Scene-based genres (Negus 1999)? Looking for profits, the industrial sector may "prematurely" harvest Scene-based genres. What are the consequences for the aesthetic content and trajectory of such music? It is entirely possible that, in the twenty-first century, corporate control of the music industry may stifle the development of autonomous genres of the sort that flourished in the twentieth century. On the other hand, the myriad technological changes stimulated by digitalization, together with the radical restructuring of corporate organizations, may provide opportunities for the development of new germinal genres. One such possibility is the emergence of new genres based entirely on the electronic manipulation of sound (Puckette 2007).

We have said little about the macro social conditions that give rise to specific innovations or periods of innovation. The great majority of musics in our sample were created in the second half of the twentieth century. It might well be an artifact of our limited resources for historical research, or the tendency of histories to blur distinctions among more distant events and phenomena, but it is plausible that there has been an accelerated rate of genre formation. Features of U.S. culture, political economy, communication, and technology may have promoted and sustained unique levels of innovation in the second half of the century. For example, the United States emerged from World War II with its industrial infrastructure intact, and most of the key inventions in radio, television, and record making were made in the postwar period. In the 1950s, teenagers' newfound wealth fueled the explosive growth in the market for commercial music. Growing worldwide comprehension of the English language made U.S. commercial music popular, and growing worldwide popularity of the three-minute song format, and the confines of an eight-note scale, influenced the freer sonorities and meter of folk musics around the world. More recently, the newfound ease of music creation, distribution, and consumption, made possible by digitalization and the new media, may fuel the development of diverse genres around the world.

We have focused on identifying developmental sequences of music genres; the causal mechanisms that aid genres as they transition from one genre form to the next were not our concern here. However, having identified the prevalent genre types and trajectories, future research might seek the necessary and sufficient conditions for the production of these genre forms and their sequencing.

Our study shows that defining music genre sociologically as a creative group process rather than as a discourse about taxonomy or a market category facilitates understanding the processes of classification and systematic change. It also provokes a range of questions about the social structure of genres, the dynamics of their trajectories, and the ways these shape music. It may also shed light on processes of classification and change in other creative domains in sociology, the arts, management, and the sciences. More broadly, this inductive schema illustrates both the relevance of sociol-

ogy to the study of culture and the centrality of the study of culture to the problems of contemporary sociology.

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