

# Musical taste and the creation of place-dependent capital: Manchester and the indie music field

## Abstract

Drawing on qualitative interviews with indie music fans in Manchester, UK, we explore how experiences in the indie music field inform spatial and place-specific understandings of musical taste. Inspired by Bourdieu's sociology of taste, the concept of place-dependent capital incorporates the interplay of the experiential dimensions of taste, and the overall structures in which they are embedded. We develop our findings into three themes, which allow us to highlight the diversity of ways in which our participants create place-dependent capital: exploring the taste of place; dwelling in place; and creating a sense of place. We propose the usefulness of place-dependent capital as an alternative theoretical tool, which acknowledges both structural and experiential dimensions of musical taste, allowing us to demonstrate the situatedness of indie music fans' tastes.

## Keywords

Bourdieu, indie music, place, place-dependent capital, popular music, taste, Manchester

## **Authors**

Dr Alexandros Skandalis

Lecturer in Marketing, Lancaster University Management School, Lancaster University

Dr Emma Banister

Senior Lecturer in Consumer Research, Alliance Manchester Business School, The University of Manchester

Dr John Byrom

Senior Lecturer in Marketing, University of Liverpool Management School

## **Corresponding Author**

Dr Alexandros Skandalis, Lecturer in Marketing

Lancaster University Management School, Lancaster University

Lancaster, LA1 4YX, UK

Email: [a.skandalis@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:a.skandalis@lancaster.ac.uk)

Tel: +44 (0)1524 594829

*“Manchester became the centre of the universe. The best drugs. The best clothes. The best women. The best bands. The best club. Suddenly everyone wanted to be from Manchester; and if you were a Manc everyone wanted a part of you. For a big city, Manchester is just small enough”.* Anthony H Wilson, Founder of Factory Records and The Hacienda

## **Introduction**

Sociological research has extensively relied upon Bourdieu’s (1984) work on taste in considering how various modes of socio-cultural distinction are manifested, sustained and reproduced in social space. Bourdieu’s key constructs of habitus, field, and capital inform understandings of how individuals accumulate different forms of capital and how these shape their cultural preferences and tastes (Bourdieu, 1993; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Le Roux et al., 2008). Researchers have also proposed alternative conceptualisations of Bourdieu’s work, in order to develop fresh insights about the situated and lived dimensions of taste (Hennion, 2001; Nettleton, 2013; Thornton, 1996; Wacquant, 2004). Studies commonly develop more contextualised understandings that touch upon the generative role of agency in Bourdieu’s field analysis (Crossley, 2001; Entwistle and Rocamora, 2006). However, these do not always account for the interplay of the experiential dimensions of taste and the overall structures in which they are embedded. This study focuses on live musical spaces and experiences in order to move towards spatial and place-specific understandings of musical taste, which take into consideration ‘the irretrievably corporeal nature of both physical and social space, the way that shapes on the ground are associated with the organization of fields and the distribution of capital’ (Hanquinet et al., 2012: 513).

We introduce the concept of *place-dependent capital* in order to capture how individuals accumulate different forms of capital in the indie music field, via their music

experiences in a range of places. We draw upon phenomenological perspectives of space and place (Casey, 1997, 2001; Malpas, 1999; Seamon, 2014), positioning place as the primary basis of experience that shapes the creation of capital investments, drives participation in certain musical fields over others, and ultimately leads to spatial taste formation. We exemplify the diversity of ways in which our participants create place-dependent capital, by drawing on interviews with 26 Manchester-based members of the field. Our findings are organised around three core thematic categories: *exploring the taste of place*, *dwelling in place*, and *creating a sense of place*. We emphasise the role of place-dependent capital as a useful theoretical tool that considers both structural and experiential aspects of musical taste.

### **Place, Taste and the Indie Music Field**

Bourdieu (1989) argues that individuals are positioned in society based on the volume and breadth of their capital resources (e.g. economic, cultural, social, symbolic). These are normally acquired via primary socialisation; their accumulation largely depends on one's pre-existing position in the social sphere (Bourdieu, 1986). These resources are eventually stored as a system of internal dispositions, namely habitus, which enables individuals to perceive and appreciate the social world and further act upon it (Bourdieu, 1984). Bourdieu (1985) further argues that individuals compete for status in specific social fields by utilising various forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1993; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). His field analysis: 'is offered as a relational approach and centres both upon the distribution of resources [...] and upon the structuring effect of 'habitus'' (Crossley, 2009: 28).

Through involvement in a social field, individuals can acquire the necessary field-specific capital that shapes their subsequent behaviour and taste (Arsel and Thompson, 2011; Savage and Silva, 2013). Field-specific capital is not only acquired as part of one's position in social space and primary socialisation, but also through continuous involvement in

numerous social fields (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). This field logic also underpins a conceptual shift from taste as a purely class-based phenomenon towards it being a situated activity (Hennion, 2001).

Numerous studies employ variations of Bourdieu's field logic to describe how individuals gain currency and acquire legitimacy, via the accumulation of field-specific capital (e.g. Arsel and Thompson, 2011; Bennett, 1999; Benson, 2014; Friedman, 2011; Nettleton, 2013; Thornton, 1996; Wacquant, 2004). Field analysis has been particularly valuable for the development of more nuanced and empirically grounded understandings of the main micro-processes and institutions within specific social fields (Entwistle and Rocamora, 2006). Thornton (1996) develops the concept of subcultural capital, as a localised variation of cultural capital, to explain how members of rave subcultures compete for status and position in these alternative social spaces. Arsel and Thompson (2011) focus on indie consumers' efforts to disassociate themselves from the hipster myth through the accumulation and exhibition of field-specific capital. Others deal with the more embodied dimensions of capital, in order to account for the lived dimensions of taste (Friedman, 2011; Nettleton, 2013). Wacquant (2004) develops the concept of bodily capital to detail how boxers use their bodies to progress within their sport, and Nettleton (2013) introduces existential capital to highlight the phenomenological gains acquired from the embodied activity of fell running.

Although these studies better capture the lived dimensions of taste, they say relatively little about the interplay of such dimensions within the overall structures in which they are embedded. By taking into consideration the role of spatial processes in field dynamics, recent studies argue for more nuanced understandings of the interplay between structural and experiential aspects of taste (Benson, 2014; Benson and Jackson, 2013; Hanquinet et al., 2012; Johnston et al., 2012; Savage, 2011). Hanquinet et al. (2012) suggest that using

Bourdieu's field analysis in urban studies can provide novel insights into the spatial dimensions of cultural relations. They highlight the need for 'a dynamic field theory, one that does not reductively root cultural patterns in spatial locations [by] fixing different types of cultural consumers in distinctive areas without being able to perceive their interactions' (Hanquinet et al., 2012: 526).

To these ends, we develop the concept of place-dependent capital as a theoretical tool that captures both structural and experiential dimensions of musical taste. We follow a phenomenological approach to space and place (Casey, 1997, 2001; Malpas, 1999, 2012; Seamon, 2014) which, in broad terms, proposes that 'the very possibility of the appearance of things [...] is possible only within the all-embracing compass of place. It is, indeed, in and through place that the world presents itself' (Malpas, 1999: 15). Our aim is to highlight the ontological significance of place as something that can be understood as a dynamic and bounded openness (Malpas, 2012) that unfolds vis-a-vis our human existence *in place* (Casey, 2001). This means that identities are 'intricately and essentially place-bound' (Malpas, 1999: 177); place plays a significant role in the variety of ways in which we experience the social world. This place-grounded ontology (Seamon, 2014) presupposes a spatial and place-specific approach to the study of musical taste, and posits that individuals accumulate different forms of capital via their music experiences in a range of places, which are culturally embedded within a given social field (Arsel and Thompson, 2011; Savage and Silva, 2013). By adopting a phenomenological approach to space and place, we go beyond descriptive and social constructionist perspectives (Cresswell, 2004) and instead approach musical taste and experience *in place*. Thus, we investigate them as embodied and emplaced constructs that bring to the forefront a series of lived spatialities (Casey, 1997; 2001).

Music has been linked with various places that are considered as platforms of action upon which musical tastes are exemplified and performed (Hennion, 2001; Thornton, 1996).

We propose a spatial understanding of the indie music field, a range of alternative-oriented music genres (Hesmondhalgh, 1999) long associated with specific geographical and physical spaces (Fonarow, 2006; Kruse, 1993, 2010). Indie ‘counters and implicitly criticizes hegemonic mass culture, desiring to be an authentic alternative to it, but also serves as a taste culture perpetuating the privilege of a social elite of upscale consumers’ (Newman, 2009: 17). The paradoxical aesthetics of indie culture cut across its early association with the DIY ethos and authenticity discourses of the post-punk era, and its subsequent establishment as a popular music genre (Hibbett, 2005). For instance, Hesmondhalgh (1999: 34) notes that ‘[i]ndie is a contemporary genre which has its roots in punk’s institutional and aesthetic challenge to the popular music industry but which, in the 1990s, has become part of the ‘mainstream’ of British pop’. In the following sections, we delineate the ways through which our participants create place-dependent capital in the indie music field via their place-specific experiences. We illustrate how place becomes critical for the development of different forms of capital and how they are brought together under the concept of place-dependent capital.

## **Context and Method**

The role of specific urban locations in the making of popular music culture has been well documented (Connell and Gibson, 2003; Gillet, 2011; Nolan, 2006). This interpretivist study is based in Manchester in the North West of England, a city with a rich musical history, particularly within the indie music field and its post-punk antecedents (Robb, 2009; Savage, 1991). Manchester is an appropriate location in which to explore the interrelationships between place and indie music since it has been historically associated with various styles within this genre (Halfacree and Kitchen, 1996).

Manchester’s musical heritage spans from the 1960s onwards and has been connected with different music scenes (e.g. Madchester, Britpop), bands (e.g. The Hollies, The Fall,

Oasis and Happy Mondays), record stores (e.g. Piccadilly Records and Eastern Bloc) and clubs such as Twisted Wheel, which signalled the rise of the Northern Soul scene (Carson, 2017). Manchester is credited with the early indie music boom of the 1970s (Crossley, 2009); the Sex Pistols' 1976 performance in Manchester's Lesser Free Trade Hall inspired audience members Peter Hook and Bernard Sumner (Joy Division/New Order), Steven Morrissey (The Smiths), and Anthony Wilson to start creating their own music (Nolan, 2006; Savage, 1991). The following year, the Buzzcocks launched their first EP on their own label, 'trigger[ing] a wave of both bands and would-be indie label owners seeking to follow [their] example' (Crossley, 2015: 226). As Savage (1991: 298) notes, 'Manchester started to develop as England's second Punk city after London and, as the capital quickly became Punk-saturated, its most creative site'. However, the launch of Factory records in 1978 and the associated Hacienda nightclub, a few years later, signalled the transition into the post-punk era, further establishing Manchester as a significant place for alternative music and nightlife (Owen, 2015).

Historically, the key focus of Manchester's independent and alternative music, and its development more widely in Europe (Crossley, 2009), has been white, working class and male, guitar bands, linked with small independent record labels and stores (Halfacree and Kitchen, 1996). The empowerment of working-class males, including Joy Division who pioneered the DIY ethos with their limited know-how in recording studios (Nevarez, 2013), enabled them to pursue careers in the cultural industries; while also potentially excluding other groups such as women and those from black and minority ethnic backgrounds (Milestone, 2008). In this spirit, during the late 1980s, the 'Madchester' sound was spawned, which fused indie rock with 'dance sensibilities' and informed the development of a lively club culture along with the rise of a vibrant gay club music scene in the early 1990s (Cons, 2013). As the opening quote suggests, this fusion is perceived to have informed the city's



regeneration as a music and style hub which found its *place* in the industrial spaces of the city:

*The empty mills and factories lent themselves as spaces for bands to rehearse in, club nights to take place, as inspiration for the lyrics and sounds of the city's pop music. [...] Bands began to play with their northernness. The bleak, solemn, decaying industrial landscape suited the mood and atmosphere of much of the music.*  
(Milestone, 2008: 1172)

Manchester provides the focus for our study, exploring how individuals create place-dependent capital in the indie music field. A phenomenological approach enabled us to gain a holistic appreciation of structural and experiential dimensions of musical taste, breaking down the distinctions between structure and agency, micro- and macro-social modes of analysis (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). This allowed us to explore not only individuals' embodied experiences in Manchester, but also the social conditions of these experiences in the indie music field (Bourdieu, 2003).

We draw on 26 in-depth interviews with Manchester residents who self-defined as members of the field. Our own field membership helped us to both recruit initial respondents, using purposive and snowballing techniques (Patton, 2002), developing rapport while drawing on commonality of experience through conversational approaches to interviewing (Blackman, 2007). The sample included 18 men and eight women between the ages of 25 and 52; most were educated to degree level (see Table 1). The sample reflects key elements of the wider contemporary British indie music sphere, which from the perspective of performers as well as fans, is characterised primarily as being white, middle class and male (Fonarow, 2010; Maconie, 2015). The specificity of our sample was appropriate in order for us to be able to fully capture and understand the nuances of the indie music field. Most of our participants' wider narratives revealed their 'elective belonging' to Manchester (Savage et al.,

2005), that is ‘the way in which they could define the place as belonging to them through their conscious choice to move and settle in it’ (Savage, 2008: 152). Interviews lasted between one and two hours and took place in venues chosen by participants (e.g. cafés and bars), which aligned with the cultural ambience of the field, or participants’ homes; and were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim.

The main purpose of the interviews was to build a holistic and in-depth understanding of participants’ musical tastes and their development throughout the life-course. Initial grand tour questions were followed by probes, which ensured the smooth and natural flow of the interviewing process (McCracken, 1988), allowing discussion of experiences within various indie music places. Our own understandings of indie music culture assisted the conversational flow of the interviews, giving participants the freedom to construct their own understandings of the phenomena (Denzin, 2001). Data were initially analysed using an inductive approach, involving the development of themes as we moved back and forth between the data and extant literature. We followed a constant comparative strategy of coding, categorisation and abstraction (Spiggle, 1994). This resulted in the development of emergent thematic categories influenced by a field analysis logic (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992), further helping us to ground our participants’ lived experiences within the indie music field.

---

Insert Table 1 about here

---

### **Setting the (Manchester) Scene**

For our participants, the indie music field consists of a network of places that informs their musical tastes and grounds their capital investments therein (Arsel and Thompson, 2011;

Entwistle and Rocamora, 2006). This is exemplified below by Paul, responding to a question regarding what indie music means to him, beyond the music itself:

*If I'm thinking of indie, then the first thing that comes to my head is that kind of Britpop 90s thing, then connected to that would be places like Dry Bar on Oldham Street, 5th Avenue, 42nd Street, that kind of music. But if I'm thinking of it in more modern terms, I'd describe it more as an alternative culture, which isn't necessarily that alternative, but it may be on the side of mainstream rather than in the centre of it. I'd associate it with various things, like particular club nights in Manchester, like in Common, The Castle.*

Paul illustrates a spatial awareness of the indie music field, which was also evident in other participants' narratives. He foregrounds his localised music-oriented experiences in Manchester. His place-focused definition of indie music revolves around his experiences in specific places such as cafés, live music venues, clubs and neighbourhoods such as the Northern Quarter (Benson, 2014), but recognises a temporal dimension in which the places indie music is experienced change through time. Benson and Jackson (2013: 795) highlight the need to consider 'the role of place in shaping and responding to the classed subjectivities of residents', while Johnston et al. (2012) emphasise the relevance of local place-specific cultures in ethical eating practices as well as individuals' own economic and cultural resources. Rebecca draws further upon the specificity of Manchester in the artistic field (Bourdieu, 1993):

*[T]here's an element of the creativity that's drawn out by misery and poverty and grey skies... Manchester is a poetic city. It's constantly in juxtaposition of modern and traditional. Even the skyline of the city is, you know, evidence of that. It's a small city and it's easy to be a big fish in a small pond. I think it's just a city that lends itself well*

*to the arts because of its size, because of the necessity of finding interesting things to do when the weather's terrible. I don't know, community?*

By referring to its size and perceived weather conditions, Rebecca not only alludes to the idiosyncratic cultural character of the city, but also recognises the role of less tangible aspects of her spatial attachment (Savage et al., 2005) which elevate Manchester into a significant place for her artistic, and in particular, indie music, pursuits.

Steve's age and long-term residency in the city meant he could reflect on his lived experiences of live music growing up. These experiences were framed by the expectation, and experience, of violence: *'I couldn't count the number of times when there was problems at, or after, or during gigs, it was pretty much all the time, quite rare if there wasn't one [a fight].'* Steve paints a picture of a time where live music performances could be experienced as a somewhat exclusionary gendered pursuit (Bannister, 2006). However, his comparison with football matches tempers this view: *'at least there were girls at the concerts too so it couldn't be as bad as it was at the football, because football was just for young men in those days.'* In noting the presence of (some) women at live music events, he infers their moderating influence. Steve's early experiences inform a classed and gendered understanding of the Manchester music scene that is unfamiliar to many of our participants yet documented in the literature (Downes, 2012). However, our findings also paint inconsistencies in gender power relations, underpinning the paradoxical aesthetics of the indie music field (Hesmondhalgh, 1999), upon which we further elaborate below.

We now describe how our participants create place-dependent capital in the indie music field.

### **'Atmosphere': Exploring the Taste of Place**

Rather than only citing primary socialisation influences as key factors shaping their musical tastes (Bourdieu, 1984), our participants specifically refer to the role of place in such processes. Andy discusses his initial relationship with music:

*My family aren't particularly musical or into music, I wasn't given any records to listen to, my dad wasn't into Jimi Hendrix or Led Zeppelin or anything like that.... It really just came about when I was growing up, and then when I went to college in York, which is a slightly bigger city to where I lived, I think that's when I started going to gigs... That was the start of it really, and then I got into the music, so it was a big part of my everyday life.*

Andy communicates the limited role of generalised cultural capital for his initial steps into the indie music field. Citing classic rock artists allows him to demonstrate his current musical credentials while acknowledging the lack of any solid familial influences on his taste. He notes that place-specific experiences were central to the initial development of his passion for indie music. Bob introduces the importance of social class, mobility and economic capital in the initial development of his musical taste:

*I was a late starter because... in 1984 I will have been 16 or 17... I knew people who'd gone to gigs since they were 12 and gigs outside of Stoke-on-Trent where I lived... I wasn't from a very well to do family so the money I saved up, the most important thing for me was getting something that lasted, so that would be a record or even a badge or a patch, rather than going and seeing a band.*

Economic capital constraints prevented Bob from attending live music performances as a teenager. Instead he saved money, investing in more objectified forms of capital. Bob's experiences are consistent with previous research that illustrates how material forms of

consumption act as referential points for musical taste (Hennion, 2001); Bob's economic constraints led him to prioritise material rather than experiential dimensions of taste.

Sean discusses his introduction to Manchester's indie music environment as a student, portraying the development of more embodied forms of field-specific social and cultural capital (Friedman, 2011):

*Taste making comes from... your cultural influences, and so on, the people... who you respect enough really to use as a formative point for your tastes. So those people will have varied throughout time... as I was coming to university [in Manchester], I was mixing with people who were working in various corners of music. So you had mates who were the eyes and ears of music in every corner, so you would, you know, naturally use their interests and tastes, and so on, as a starting point for things of your own.*

As with Andy, Sean's formation of musical taste is not only the result of generalised capital dispositions (Bourdieu, 1984). Rather, it reflects mobility and elective belonging to Manchester (Savage et al., 2005), which results in on-going place-specific experiences within the indie music field, that trigger a set of actions. These create new habits and subsequently change the habitual root (Benson, 2014; Crossley, 2001).

According to Frith (1996: 124), '[m]usic constructs our sense of identity through the direct experiences it offers of the body, time and sociability, experiences which enable us to place ourselves in imaginative cultural narratives'. Our analysis illustrates the importance of the experiential dimensions of taste via our informants' engagement in affective atmospheres (Anderson, 2009) *in place*, that is through 'a kind of indeterminate affective excess through which intensive space-times are created and come to envelop specific bodies; sites, objects, people, and so on' (Anderson, 2014: 160). This leads to an understanding of musical taste as

a situated and dynamic activity (Hennion, 2001), which is also shaped later in individuals' lives. Rebecca builds further upon this, sharing her opinion about Manchester and music, in contrast to her New York upbringing:

*When I heard The Smiths... I thought I found my place... that was not in suburban New York. So this took me to another place... [T]hat's why I think I like all these atmospheric things. It set a picture for me of something else. Even though I've lived in Manchester now for probably close to 20 years, every single day I might drive by Morrissey's childhood home and every single day I think, oh my God, this is amazing, or sat in a cemetery. You know, like when I think about the song about, you know, Cemetery Gates, or just things like that that I may have heard about in songs, I still get a kick out of it after all this time.*

By citing the sonic importance of place (e.g. 'Cemetery Gates'), Rebecca assigns existential qualities to her capital investments in the indie music field (Nettleton, 2013). For her, such capital investments arise via the phenomenological gains acquired from her place-specific experiences (e.g. 'still get a kick out of it'). These gains depend upon a set of spatio-temporal considerations, such as her proximity to Morrissey's childhood home, and the cemetery that features in the song 'Cemetery Gates', and so are ultimately grounded *in place* (Casey, 1997). Rebecca attempts to position her existential capital investments within a broader structural framework through the concept of place (Skandalis et al., 2018) by reflecting upon her place-specific experiences 'as occurring beyond, around, and alongside the formation of subjectivity' (Anderson, 2009: 77). As Casey (2001: 686) notes, 'a given habitus is always enacted in a particular place and incorporates the features inherent in previous such places, all of which are linked by a habitual bond'.

### **'There is a Light that Never Goes Out': Dwelling in Place**

Indie culture has always been largely defined by discourses of authenticity, which mainly emerge through the construction of situated local practices (Kruse, 1993). However, the dematerialisation of music practices, through the rise of digital music consumption, highlights the need for alternative material substitutes (Magaudda, 2011); local music scenes and the places in which indie music is experienced remain important (Kruse, 2010). Steve further discusses Manchester's musical heritage and cultural significance by providing a place-specific interpretation:

*You've got to respect people like The Smiths and those sorts of people... very much this anti-message... they only could have been from Manchester with that type of message. Some tracks, 'Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now' and this type of stuff, that's classic Manchester humour, they are actually being humorous, I think people think that they're being serious, they're not, that's humour.*

Steve reveals place-oriented specificities that emerge from the band's music and their unique appeal, in part informed by their working class origins meshed with an English 'gent' style (Stringer, 1992). Local music experiences, and the musical spaces they occupy, acquire a significant role in the creation of subcultural capital for the social groups that 'dwell' in these places (Thornton, 1996). Such forms of capital are often believed to have limited currency outside the sphere of these groups, but our findings communicate a slightly different view. In particular, Nick debates the centrality of the alternative and independent musical heritage of Manchester (Crossley, 2009) to the development of his field-specific capital investments:

*[I] left and moved to Bristol which is a great city, and even though I loved it, I've moved back to Manchester because I missed the music scene too much. Bristol has got tons of music, might even have more music, but not the genre that I'm interested*



*in... In Manchester you get all the obscure indie gigs, indie, experimental, alternative-type gigs, and they're in art galleries, or on day festivals, or in a church, somewhere really weird... The place matters, and if it's a weird band from America on a small label, they'll play London and if they play anywhere else, they'd play Manchester... because there's all the indie hipster kids here, we love that music, we'll go and it'll be a sell-out. I love this place.*

In line with the subcultural ethos of the indie music field, Nick explains the spatial attractiveness of various venues in Manchester and leverages Manchester as a significant place for his investments in the field, utilising it as a form of field-specific cultural capital. Nick transcends the subcultural context of his experiences building upon the role of Manchester and the accumulation of place-dependent capital and membership in the indie music field. Andy builds further upon this:

*Certainly when living in Manchester, you got a feeling of very different spaces that art is being performed... so all the spaces, like warehouses. They have a history of what it used to be, specifically for Manchester, so many empty spaces that have been dedicated to producing material goods... it's not all Lady Gaga in the MEN [Manchester Arena], it's little things in churches or in different spaces in Manchester. It's one of the reasons why I stayed here.*

Andy highlights how the place itself informs his field-specific capital investments, which revolve around live music options and 'different spaces' aligned with the DIY aesthetics of the indie music field. Our participants utilise place as a form of field-specific capital (Friedman, 2011). They also reveal the necessary generalised capital dispositions that enable them to access Manchester's live music offerings (Bourdieu, 1986). Benson (2014: 4) has shown that 'the characteristics of a neighbourhood may elicit claims to distinction'.

However, some participants also hint at the potential for wholly different experiences of Manchester, including exclusion for those who lack the required economic and/or cultural capital to experience the city's music scene in such a welcoming way (McKenzie, 2015). We suggest that the localised aspects of Manchester lead to the accumulation of field-specific capital, which transcends the boundaries of the local music scene(s) and functions as a status marker within the indie music field.

These forms of capital also dispose our participants with symbolic currency. Tatiana describes how this can be realised within the indie music field:

*[L]ast week I went to an experimental music night which was put up in a church in Whalley Range, which is quite close to where we live... I have seen the church as I'm cycling past it on my way to university, but I found out about that because there's a group of people who often put up experimental music nights, and I got invited by another friend.*

By dwelling in place, Tatiana draws on her field-specific social capital and converts this into symbolic capital, via her participation in specific places that are not known or accessible to people outside the field. Dwelling in place not only leads to the further accumulation of field-specific capital, but also shapes participation in the indie music field through the introduction of novel experiential dimensions to tastes. Dwelling in place emerges through a phenomenological sense of place as a dynamic and bounded openness (Malpas, 2012), which allows for a specific social field to constantly re-invent itself (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992), and opens up new dimensions to the musical tastes of its inhabitants.

### **‘24 Hour Party People’: Creating a Sense of Place**

Live music experiences lead to the re-negotiation of the musical identities of those who are there and are inextricably linked with place (Connell and Gibson, 2003). Place has long played a significant role in better understanding the relationship between situated music practices and identity construction (Bennett and Peterson, 2004; Kruse, 1993). In phenomenological terms, one of the main ways to understand this relationship is to draw on the concept of the lived body as the means through which individuals contribute to the constitution of music places and, in turn, develop a music-oriented sense of place (Casey, 2001). Rowan employs embodied aspects of his field-specific capital to portray his relationship with indie music places:

*I suppose I don't listen to, and don't like, pop music that's in the charts, so I have quite a wide variety of things I listen to, but generally they tend to be more obscure or more different, not very mainstream. So for instance the gigs I go to, they tend to be quite small, so it won't be any big, but rather small or medium sized venues.*

Rowan illustrates the ever-lasting association of indie culture with small, underground venues that stems from the historical background of the indie music field in the post-punk era (Hesmondhalgh, 1999). By stating his preference for smaller, 'more obscure' venues, Rowan exhibits the linkages between place and embodied forms of field-specific capital (Friedman, 2011). Bob further outlines how the growing popularity of an indie band left him feeling conflicted:

*There's a band called Hinds... I went to see them at The Castle, where there was 80 people and sort of loved it and felt it was a happening... this was in 2014, and then in February 2016, they played Gorilla, where there was 550 people and I didn't get a ticket because I felt that if I'm honest, I liked it a bit more when, like, they used to reply to me on social media after I'd posted a picture or made a comment. Then all of*

*a sudden, they'll still reply to you on Facebook but you'll be amongst 1,300 odd other people.*

Bob's preference for a more embodied gig experience is also apparent in other participants' experiences in specific venues, potentially transforming them into lived places of unique indie character and ambience (Seamon, 2014). Charlie discusses one such experience:

*I saw Yann Tiersen in the Manchester Cathedral in town, which was absolutely amazing, a beautiful gig... It was all lit up absolutely amazingly, and when he was doing his violin solos, all the lights were going mental around the cathedral, it was absolutely brilliant, and I think if it was somewhere like the Apollo, it wouldn't have been half as good.*

Individuals delve deeper into the indie music field via their emotional enthrallments with the cultural ambience of indie spaces (Arsel and Thompson, 2011). For Charlie, Manchester Cathedral turns into a lived place that possesses a cultural ambience of kaleidoscopic character. By distinguishing between the cathedral and the Apollo, which hosts more mainstream music concerts, he balances the embodiment of his field-specific capital with the emplacement of his music experience in the cathedral. He aligns the cathedral with the aesthetics of indie culture, transforming it into 'an important place of interpersonal and communal exchange and attachment' (Seamon, 2014: 42) that nurtures his capital investments in the field. Andy suggests why such places acquire a field-specific significance for him:

*I often prefer them in interesting, weird spaces perhaps, I like them to be in a warehouse or a non-specific gig venue... I've seen people in The Ritz, or Academy, which are great, but seeing a band not in a dark box is even better. It's just a bit more*

*of a stimulation, it's experimental, it's obviously easier for a band to play in a space that was set up to be a gig space, you know what the sound and gear is gonna be, easy for bands to come in and set up. It might be difficult for a band to set up in such a place, but somebody who watches it might find it very intriguing, it changes the way they usually perform.*

Andy elaborates upon the key differences between standard music venues in Manchester like The Ritz and Academy as opposed to generic music venues. His description of such venues as 'dark box[es]' can be paralleled with the neutral and homogeneous character of modern sites, which are often the result of globalisation practices in advanced capitalist societies (Augé, 1995; Savage et al., 2005). Andy clearly expresses his desire for an experiential return to lived space; a place with meaning which differentiates itself from the emptiness of modern sites, realised through the overall ethos of indie music culture, especially its DIY and anti-commercial dimensions (Hibbett, 2005).

While much of the above discussion refers to participants' positive embodied experiences of intimacy, Helen recounts much darker gendered occurrences:

*If you talk to women, every woman will have some example of getting groped at a gig. It seems to just be a thing - well if you're a girl and you're in this male environment it's alright for a guy to grab you.*

This potential for live indie music experiences to privilege some attendees at the expense of others was further apparent elsewhere in our data, illustrating how gender, stature and disability can inform exclusionary embodied practices in live indie music spaces (Bannister, 2006; Cohen, 2001; Ewens, 2017). This reflects women's attempts to 'disrupt the spatial and sonic norms of the indie gig to incite feminist community and provoke change in their subcultural situations' (Downes, 2012: 205). Our analysis further highlights the role of spatiality in the emergence of gender-related practices which turns place into the immediate

environment of embodied capital investments in the indie music field; a platform of action which is altogether physical and historical, social and cultural (Casey, 2001). Most of our participants create a music-oriented sense of place, which is inherently field-specific, nurtures their capital investments, and further shapes their indie music tastes.

## **Conclusions**

Through the employment of phenomenological approaches to space and place (Casey, 1997; Malpas, 1999; Seamon, 2014), our paper develops *place-dependent capital*, a theoretical tool that captures the diversity of ways in which individuals accumulate different forms of capital in the indie music field, via their experiences in a range of places. This process, which incorporates exploring the taste of place, dwelling in place, and creating a sense of place, exemplifies the situatedness of our participants' indie music tastes (Hennion, 2001). Our data illustrate that musical taste is also shaped later in our participants' lives via their place-specific music-oriented experiences (Benson 2014; Hanquinet et al., 2012; Savage, 2011). We contribute to contextualised understandings of taste (Arsel and Thompson, 2011; Friedman, 2011; Thornton, 1996) by showing how indie music fans utilise place to ground and expand their field-specific capital investments. As Entwistle and Rocamora (2006: 749) note, '[f]ields are not merely abstract spaces of positions but can be seen as embodied spaces of practice. This attention to fields as enacted through material settings puts field theory *in situ* allowing us to reconcile field theory and fieldwork'.

We highlight the role of place-dependent capital as a useful theoretical tool that takes into account both structural and experiential aspects of musical taste, by positioning place as the starting point of analysis. Place therefore becomes an experiential 'snapshot' of the indie music field, within which participants accumulate various forms of field-specific capital and compete for status (Arsel and Thompson, 2011; Entwistle and Rocamora, 2006; Friedman,

2011). We also add to the role of spatial processes in field dynamics, by elaborating further upon the interrelationships between various places and specific social fields (Benson, 2014; Benson and Jackson, 2013; Hanquinet et al., 2012; Savage, 2011). We highlight the spatial relations between our participants' indie music experiences and their capital investments within the indie music field. In other words, place-dependent capital transcends the contextual value of localised variations of capital that is to be found in music subcultures and/or music scenes and acts as a more widely recognised form of symbolic currency within the field.

Given the field-specific limitations of our sample, future research might aim to explore the significance of place-dependent capital in other social fields. This could involve uncovering its analytic power to bridge structural and experiential dimensions of taste by exploring, for example, the connection between various places and the football field (Millward, 2012); performing arts fields such as theatre or comedy and the acquisition of place-dependent capital through spatial performances of taste (Friedman, 2011); urban places and the interrelationships between place-dependent forms of capital and social class (Benson, 2014; Benson and Jackson, 2013); or the classical music field and the role of place in exemplifying and sustaining taste distinctions *in situ* (Benzecry and Collins, 2014). In short, place-dependent capital offers the potential to develop further theoretical insights into the interplay between structure and experience, helping uncover the specificities of spatial performances of taste.

## References

- Anderson B (2009) Affective atmospheres. *Emotion, Space and Society* 2(2): 77-81.
- Anderson B (2014) *Encountering Affect: Capacities, Apparatuses, Conditions*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing.

- Arsel Z and Thompson C (2011) Demythologizing consumption practices: How consumers protect their field-dependent identity investments from devaluing marketplace myths. *Journal of Consumer Research* 37(5): 791-806.
- Augé M (1995) *Non-places: An Introduction to the Anthropology of Supermodernity*. London - New York: Verso Books.
- Bannister M (2006) 'Loaded': Indie guitar rock, canonism, white masculinities. *Popular Music* 25(1): 77-95.
- Bennett A (1999) Subcultures or neo-tribes? Rethinking the relationship between youth, style and musical taste. *Sociology* 33(3): 599-617.
- Bennett A and Peterson R (2004) *Music Scenes: Local, Translocal and Virtual*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.
- Benson M (2014) Trajectories of middle-class belonging: The dynamics of place attachment and classed identities. *Urban Studies* 51(14): 3097–3112.
- Benson M and Jackson E (2013) Place-making and place maintenance: Performativity, place and belonging among the middle classes. *Sociology* 47(4): 793-809.
- Benzecry C and Collins R (2014) The high of cultural experience: Toward a microsociology of cultural consumption. *Sociological Theory* 32(4): 307-326.
- Blackman S (2007) Hidden ethnography: Crossing emotional borders in qualitative accounts of young people's lives. *Sociology* 41(4): 699-716.
- Bourdieu P (1984) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bourdieu P (1985) The social space and the genesis of groups. *Theory and Society* 14(6): 723-744.
- Bourdieu P (1986) The forms of capital. In Richardson J (ed), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. New York: Greenwood, 241-258.



- Bourdieu P (1989) Social space and symbolic power. *Sociological Theory* 7(1): 14-25.
- Bourdieu P (1993) *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu P (2003) Participant objectivation. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 9(2): 281-294.
- Bourdieu P and Wacquant L (1992) *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Carson V (2017) *Manchester's iconic Twisted Wheel keeps Northern Soul alive*. *Humanity Hallows*. Available at: <https://aah-magazine.co.uk/2017/manchesters-iconic-twisted-wheel-keeps-northern-soul-alive/>.
- Casey E (1997) Smooth spaces and rough-edged places: The hidden history of place. *The Review of Metaphysics* 51(2): 267-96.
- Casey E (2001) Between geography and philosophy: What does it mean to be in the place-world? *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 91(4): 683-693.
- Cohen S (2001) Popular music, gender and sexuality. In Frith S, Straw W and Street J (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 226-242.
- Connell J and Gibson C (2003) *Sound Tracks: Popular Music Identity and Place*. London: Routledge.
- Cons P (2013) 'Gaychester': Remembering Manchester's Early 1990s Gay scene. *The Guardian*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/the-northerner/2013/feb/07/manchester-gay-scene-paul-cons>.
- Cresswell T (2004) *Place: An Introduction*. London: John Wiley.
- Crossley N (2001) The phenomenological habitus and its construction. *Theory and Society* 30(1): 81-120.

- Crossley N (2009) The man whose web expanded: Network dynamics in Manchester's post/punk music scene 1976–1980. *Poetics* 37(1): 24-49.
- Crossley N (2015) *Networks of Sound, Style and Subversion: The Punk and Post-Punk Worlds of Manchester, London, Liverpool and Sheffield, 1975-80*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Denzin N (2001) The reflexive interview and a performative social science. *Qualitative Research* 1(1): 23-46.
- Downes J (2012) The expansion of punk rock: Riot Grrrl challenges to gender power relations in British indie music subcultures. *Women's Studies* 41(2): 204-237.
- Entwistle J and Rocamora A (2006) The field of fashion materialized: A study of London Fashion Week. *Sociology* 40(4): 735-751.
- Ewens H (2017) *Dance of Death: Are the Days of the Moshpit Numbered?* *The Guardian*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2017/may/05/dance-of-death-are-the-days-of-the-moshpit-numbered>.
- Fonarow W (2006) *Empire of Dirt: The Aesthetics and Rituals of British Indie Music*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.
- Fonarow W (2010) *Ask the Indie Professor: Are Gender Stereotypes still Present in Indie Music?* *The Guardian*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/music/musicblog/2010/sep/01/gender-stereotypes-indie-music>.
- Friedman S (2011) The cultural currency of a 'good' sense of humour: British comedy and new forms of distinction. *British Journal of Sociology* 62(2): 347-370.
- Frith S (1996) Music and identity. In Hall S and Du Gay P (eds) *Questions of Cultural Identity*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 108-128.
- Gillett C (2011) *The Sound of the City: The Rise of Rock & Roll*. Souvenir Press: London.

- Halfacree K and Kitchen R (1996) 'Madchester rave on': Placing the fragments of popular music. *Area* 28(1): 47-55.
- Hanquinet L, Savage M and Callier L (2012) Elaborating Bourdieu's field analysis in urban studies: Cultural dynamics in Brussels. *Urban Geography* 33(4): 508-529.
- Hennion A (2001) Music lovers: Taste as performance. *Theory, Culture & Society* 18(5): 1-22.
- Hesmondhalgh D (1999) Indie: The institutional politics and aesthetics of a popular music genre. *Cultural Studies* 13(1): 34-61.
- Hibbett R (2005) What is indie rock? *Popular Music and Society* 28(1): 55-77.
- Johnston J, Rodney A and Szabo M (2012) Place, ethics, and everyday eating: A tale of two neighbourhoods. *Sociology* 46(6): 1091-1108.
- Kruse H (1993) Subcultural identity in alternative music culture. *Popular Music* 12(1): 33-41.
- Kruse H (2010) Local identity and independent music scenes, online and off. *Popular Music and Society* 33(5): 625-639.
- Le Roux B, Rouanet H, Savage M and Warde A (2008) Class and cultural division in the UK. *Sociology* 42(6): 1049-1071.
- McCracken G (1988) *The Long Interview*. London: Sage.
- McKenzie L (2015) *Getting By: Estates, Class and Culture in Austerity Britain*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Maconie S (2015) *The Privileged are Taking Over the Arts – Without the Grit, Pop Culture is Doomed*. *New Statesman*. Available at: <https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/2015/01/privileged-are-taking-over-arts-without-grit-pop-culture-doomed>.
- Magaudda P (2011) When materiality 'bites back': Digital music consumption practices in

- the age of dematerialization. *Journal of Consumer Culture* 11(1): 15-36.
- Malpas J (1999) *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Malpas J (2012) Putting space in place: Philosophical topography and relational geography. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 30(2): 226-242.
- Milestone K (2008) Urban myths: Popular culture, the city and identity. *Sociology Compass* 2(4): 1165-1178.
- Millward P (2012) Reclaiming the Kop? Analysing Liverpool supporters' 21st century mobilizations. *Sociology* 46(4): 633–648.
- Nettleton S (2013) Cementing relations within a sporting field: Fell running in the English Lake District and the acquisition of existential capital. *Cultural Sociology* 7(2): 196-210.
- Nevarez L (2013) How Joy Division came to sound like Manchester: Myth and ways of listening in the neoliberal city. *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 25(1): 56-76.
- Newman M (2009) Indie culture: In pursuit of the authentic autonomous alternative. *Cinema Journal* 48(3): 16-34.
- Nolan D (2006) *I Swear I was There: The Gig that Changed the World*. Church Stretton: Independent Music Press.
- Owen F (2015) *Booze, Blood and Noise: The Violent Roots of Manchester Punk*. Available at: <https://medium.com/cuepoint/booze-blood-and-noise-the-violent-roots-of-manchester-punk-af8092bcaac3>.
- Patton M (2002) *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*. London: Sage.
- Robb J (2009) *The North Will Rise Again: Manchester Music City 1976-1996*. London: Aurum Press.
- Savage J (1991) *England's Dreaming: The Sex Pistols and Punk Rock*. London: Faber and

Faber.

Savage M (2008) Histories, belongings, communities. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 11(2): 151-162,

Savage M (2011) The lost urban sociology of Pierre Bourdieu. In Bridge G and Watson S (eds), *The New Blackwell Companion to the City*. London: John Wiley and Sons, 511-520.

Savage M, Bagnall G and Longhurst B (2005) *Globalisation and Belonging*. London: Sage.

Savage M and Silva E (2013) Field analysis in cultural sociology. *Cultural Sociology* 7(2): 111-126.

Seamon D (2014) Lived emplacement and the locality of being: A return to humanistic geography? In Aitken S and Valentine G (eds), *Approaches to Human Geography: Philosophies, Theories, People and Practices*. London: Sage, 35-48.

Skandalis A, Banister E and Byrom J (2018) The spatial aspects of musical taste: Conceptualizing consumers' place-dependent identity investments. *Marketing Theory* 18(2): 249–265.

Spiggle S (1994) Analysis and interpretation of qualitative data in consumer research. *Journal of Consumer Research* 21(3): 491-503.

Stringer J (1992) The Smiths: Repressed (but remarkably dressed). *Popular Music* 11(1): 15-26.

Thornton S (1996) *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Wacquant L (2004) *Body & Soul*. New York: Oxford University Press.

**Table 1:** Profile of participants

Pseudonym	Age	Occupation	Education	Years of live music involvement in Manchester			
				Under 5	5-10	11-20	>20
Alex	36	Administrator	Bachelors level			x	
Andy	25	PhD student	PhD level	x			
Bill	30	Events manager	Bachelors level		x		
Charlie	27	Graphic designer	College level	x			
Eddie	31	Policy analyst	PhD level	x			
Gerald	31	PhD student	PhD level		x		
George	28	Music teacher	Bachelors level		x		
Mary	29	Librarian	Bachelors level			x	
Nick	28	Barman	High School level		x		
Paul	30	Administrator	Bachelors level			x	
Rowan	29	Consultant	Bachelors level	x			

Sarah	25	Arts administrator	Bachelors level	x			
Serena	29	Website designer	Bachelors level	x			
Tatiana	27	Researcher	PhD level		x		
Victor	29	Designer	Bachelors level		x		
Morag	39	Administrator	Bachelors level			x	
Alan	44	Arts administrator	Bachelors level				x
Patrick	35	Academic	PhD level			x	
Kate	46	Academic	Bachelors level			x	
Bob	48	Librarian	Bachelors level				x
Helen	43	Marketing manager	PhD level			x	
Steve	51	Academic	PhD level				x
Rebecca	43	Catering assistant	Bachelors level				x
Sean	28	Editor	Bachelors level			x	
Wayne	51	Illustrator	College level				x
Nathan	43	Statistician	Bachelors level			x	