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Social Networks and Music Worlds

Introduction

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As Christopher Small's (1989) felicitous term, 'musicking', suggests, making and enjoying music are social activities, patterned by convention and involving multiple relays of interaction between those involved. These activities tend to cluster along stylistic and/or geographical lines. In much early sociological work on popular music this clustering was captured by the concept of sub-culture or, more precisely, 'working class youth sub-cultures' (Clarke et.al 1993, Hebdige 1988). This work remains important and instructive but the concept of subculture, at least in the dominant formulation of it, posited by members of Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (ibid), is problematic. It focuses only upon 'popular' forms of music, having nothing to say about the 'elite' forms against which the popular is at least tacitly pitted. It focuses almost exclusively upon the activities of audiences and consumers of music, abstracting them from and neglecting musicians and such 'support personnel' as promoters, managers etc. And it is demographically skewed towards working class youth (admittedly affording a focus upon racial and gender differences in later work (McRobbie 1991, Gilroy 1992, Jones 1988)), precluding any understanding of musical enthusiasm and participation amongst older and middle class individuals (Bennett 2013, Bennett and Hodkinson 2012, Smith 2009). These limitations have prompted a number of attempts, in recent years, to devise a different model for theorising the abovementioned clusters, a model which incorporates the positives of 'subculture' without succumbing to its weaknesses (Bennett 1999, Hesmonhalgh 2005). Three alternatives in particular have achieved prominence: 'scenes' (Straw 1991, Shank 1994, Bennett and Peterson 2004), 'fields' (Bourdieu 1993, Savage 2006) and 'music worlds', a concept which builds upon Howard Becker's (1982) work on 'art worlds' (Finnegan 1989, Lopes 2002, Martin 2005, 2006a,b).

There are considerable overlaps between these conceptions and whichever one we opt for the literature on the others will remain a useful resource. There are differences between them, however, and in earlier work we argued in favour of 'music worlds' (e.g. Bottero and Crossley 2011, Crossley 2014, McAndrew and Everett 2014), a choice to which we adhere here. This book is intended to contribute to and expand the 'music worlds' research agenda. Individual contributors vary in their attachment to the concept but most work at least loosely within its parameters and all, in our view, have much to contribute to an understanding of music worlds.

As noted above, the identity and boundaries of a music world are often demarcated by reference to musical styles. We refer to the jazz world, the folk world and the punk world, for example, or to various sub-divisions within or cross-cutting these broader styles: e.g. the trad

jazz world, the folk-rock world, the sludge metal world etc. Beyond style, as we also noted above, worlds may be demarcated by geography: e.g. the Manchester music world, the French music world etc. And style and geography often intersect: e.g. the Liverpool jazz world, the Birmingham metal world etc. Indeed, even within the same broad style and city we may find distinct music worlds, separated by sub-style and geography, as Samuel Gilmore's (1987, 1988) fascinating work on art music worlds in New York demonstrates. Furthermore, as Bennett and Peterson (2004) say in their (complementary) work on 'scenes', worlds may be local, translocal (including but not exclusively national or global) and increasingly also virtual.

Beyond style and geography, worlds often vary in structure and other sociological properties. Some are enduring and institutionalised. Others are transient and informal. Some are big, others small and so on. The music worlds concept is intended to capture and facilitate analysis of this variation. It is not a prescriptive concept. It is a sensitising concept which invites open-minded empirical inquiry and comparison.

Underlying all of this variation, however, is collective action (Becker 1974, 1982). Music worlds are forms of collective action, akin to social movements. They entail interaction between a population of social actors with overlapping musical interests who conspire, in different ways and combinations, to make their preferred forms of music happen. Agency is central (music worlds involve people doing things together) but interdependence between participants and an unequal distribution of the resources typically involved in musicking generates constraints and power imbalances which they must work within and around. As such music worlds assume a structure, albeit a structure which, due to the impact of inter-agency, is inherently dynamic and subject to change: structure-in-process.

Becker suggests various elements of music worlds that might be focused upon in sociological analyses, including their constitutive conventions, the distribution and mobilisation of their key resources (e.g. money, skills, equipment) and the physical spaces where music is performed, rehearsed and recorded. Other writers who take Becker's conception as their point of departure, including Ruth Finnegan (1989) in her classic study of the distinct but overlapping music worlds of Milton Keynes, and Paul Lopes (2002), who analyses *The Rise of a Jazz Art World* in the USA, have added to this list. One very central component of any music world for Becker, however, which sociological analysis must address, is the network formed by the interactions of its participants. Music worlds have a reticular structure and this demands sociological investigation. It is the networked character of music worlds that we are particularly interested in this book.

Networks and Worlds

All of the contributions to the book examine the role of networks in relation to music worlds, in most cases drawing upon formal 'social network analysis' (SNA). We offer an introduction to SNA in Chapter Two (see also Borgatti et.al. 2012, Scott 2000, Wasserman and Faust 1994), affording those unfamiliar with it the necessary background to engage fully with subsequent chapters. For present purposes we will elaborate at a more general level upon the significance of networks and network analysis for music worlds and our understanding of them. We begin by considering the various ways in which music worlds can be said to be networks.

Music Worlds and Networks

The first way centres upon a key theme in Becker's (1982) work: the division of labour involved in most forms of musicking (see also Small 1998). As collective action musicking typically requires coordination between multiple participants, running along various relays and forming a network. Different roles are performed by different people who must communicate and coordinate their respective contributions. The coordination between players in a band is an obvious example of this but musicians must also coordinate with a variety of 'support personnel', including managers, promoters and technicians, who must also coordinate with one another. And both musicians and support personnel must coordinate with audiences who also have a role to play, turning up to performances (in the right place at the right time), buying recordings (in both cases funding everybody else) and, often via the mediation of critics but not always in agreement with them, bestowing meaning and value upon what they hear. Listening and hearing, like all forms of perception, are activities. They engage with auditory stimuli, shaping and thereby contributing to the form of what is heard (Dewey 1980, Merleau-Ponty 1962). In this way they enter into the process of music making. Furthermore, it is the audience who bestow the status of music upon what they hear (or not) (Dewey 1980, Small 1998, Becker 1982); audiences are amongst the actors who contribute to the classification of musical genres (DiMaggio 1987, 2011); and they give further life and meaning to music by means of the often innovative ways in which they use and deploy it (DeNora 2000, Willis 1990).

We could explore the division of labour involved in musicking much further, extending our focus to consider instrument makers, music shops, the cleaners and administrative staff employed at venues and many more besides but the point is clear enough. Musicking is not a solitary activity. It involves its participants in a network of others with whom they must coordinate, and this network is therefore central to a proper understanding of it. It is also worth noting at this point that much of the importance which Becker attaches to 'convention' relates to the need of participants to coordinate their activities with others. Mutual adherence to conventions, from twelve tone scales and standardised tunings to outlets for ticket sales and pecking orders amongst roadies, makes coordination easier.

Beyond the division of labour involved, networks are implicated in music worlds in the form of various relations of influence, support, antagonism etc. within the 'communities' which particular musicians, support personnel and audiences form; relations which impact directly upon individual 'moral careers' within the world and the career of the world itself. The existence of 'musical communities' has long been recognised within sociology, predating the abovementioned work on youth subcultures. 'Community' is an unfortunate term, however, both because it suggests cohesion and cooperation, which we do find in music worlds but usually intermingled with competition, conflict and factions (dominant and subordinate), and because it fails to capture structural differences within and between music worlds: e.g. the different positions that participants occupy, such as being central or marginal, and variations in cohesion and centralisation both between different worlds and within the same world over time.

'Social network', as defined in SNA, avoids these problems. It does not prejudge the nature of ties between participants. It allows for competition and conflict as well as cooperation, further allowing that cohesion and cooperation may have negative as well as positive effects, and that conflict, competition and marginalisation may have positive as well as negative effects: e.g. conflict may spur musicians on both to rehearse hard and innovate, producing better music for this, and relative isolation may remove musicians from strong social

influences and demands for conformity, facilitating innovation. 'Social network' allows us to think relationally without committing ourselves to a cosy communitarian picture of the world or indeed any picture (Crossley 2011). Furthermore, it both allows that different worlds may be 'wired' in different ways, with different participants enjoying different patterns of connection within them, and allows us, by means of the tools of SNA, to capture, measure and analyse these variables (see Chapter Two).

We should add that the networked character of music worlds is not restricted to their human participants nor SNA to the analysis of human networks. The many sites of activity within a music world, which Becker (2004) begins to explore in his essay on Jazz Places, for example, from rehearsal spaces, to venues, festivals, record shops, studios and so on are often linked, both through arrangements between their owners and the flow of bands, audiences and others between them. Similar styles may take root in spatio-temporally distant venues and events, for example, because of the flow of the same artists or audiences between them. To give another example, songs may be linked through practices of citation and borrowing. And the official bodies and corporate economic actors involved in a music world may be linked through shared members/directors. Each of these 'nodes' is important to a proper understanding of music worlds and so too are the interactions and networks between them.

Social Capital

Music worlds do not just happen to be networked. Connection between participants, which, to reiterate, will vary both within and between specific worlds, involving ties which, as Simmel (1906, 1955) says of ties more generally, involve an ambivalent mix of positive and negative elements, is essential to the existence of a world. It is connection, for example, which facilitates communication and thereby coordination. Audiences arrive at the same venues as the bands they wish to see, on the same evenings, because communication allows for coordination between them. Furthermore, connection generates emergent properties which both characterise music worlds in particular ways and facilitate forms of action, on various scales, which would not otherwise be possible; forms of action which make the world what it is. Whatever its flaws, and there are many (Fine 2001), the concept of 'social capital' encapsulates much of this. For our purposes this concept can be understood in two ways.

On an individual level, participants may enjoy indirect access to certain resources, necessary for their participation, by means of their connection to others who enjoy direct access, as in Nan Lin's (2002) conception of social capital. Making the acquaintance of an individual who sits on a radio playlist committee may afford one the opportunity to indirectly influence that committee, for example, whilst befriending a studio engineer may be a route to free studio time.

Beyond this, as James Coleman's (1990) more structural conception of social capital suggests, dense and closed networks in particular tend to generate incentives for cooperation, trust and mutual support amongst their members, even when those members might in other respects find themselves in conflict or competition. Members of such networks often depend strongly upon one another. This can be a cause of tension but it requires that they strive to maintain a good reputation as reliable, trustworthy, helpful etc. They cannot afford to do otherwise because the costs, in terms of sanctions from others, will deprive them of what they need to achieve their own musical ambitions. Over time these pressures may be internalised, giving rise to a sense of duty and community (Mead 1967). Furthermore, participation in collective action may give rise to a collective identity, solidarity and esprit de corps (Blumer

1969). Even where actors remain purely strategic in orientation, however, it is often in their best interests to cooperate.

This, in turn, facilitates activities conducive to the flourishing of a music world that would not otherwise be possible: e.g. sharing of equipment, rehearsal space, know-how and information; 'leg ups' for less established by more established artists; and acceptance of and support for experimentation with sounds, looks and lifestyles which might invite hostility in the 'outside world'. Indeed, Coleman (1988) suggests that dense and closed networks play a crucial role in the cultivation of 'deviant lifestyles', allowing for the emergence of deviant constructions of reality and incentive systems, and insulating their participants from harsh sanctions in the wider world which might otherwise bring them back into line. He illustrates this with examples of self-sacrifice in sport and politics (e.g. suicide bombers). There is no shortage of examples in music worlds, however. From inter-racial mixing and drug taking in early jazz worlds, through the obsessive pursuit of obscure records and freaky dancing in Northern Soul, to the peacock fashions of teds, punks and Goths and the persistence of metal heads and prog rockers in the face of widespread ridicule, music world participants are often 'different' and their networks, the networks of their music world, will often encourage and support this difference, counteracting any 'corrective' influence from wider society.

This may be progressive. Dense networks are conducive to stylistic innovation. However, it may be a matter of conserving traditions in a context of widespread change. Socio-linguistic research by Milroy (1987) and Bott's (1957) classic sociological study of family forms, for example, both suggest that traditional cultural forms tend to survive best in the context of dense and closed networks, resisting a pressure to change which may be proving irresistible in other contexts. In a musical context this may mean preserving musical forms when they (inevitably) fall from grace within the mainstream, holding them in abeyance until they (equally inevitably) become fashionable again. Describing what happened to Northern Soul, which had emerged in the context of a dense network of enthusiasts and venues, when the popularity it enjoyed in the early 1970s began to wane, for example, Nicola Smith observes:

> Once again ignored by the mass media and by the public majority, the scene was kept alive by word of mouth and the continued passion for the music by a relatively small number of existing fans. (Smith 2012, 161)

She adds that, 'Today the scene has overcome a decline in popularity' (ibid.) and begun to thrive again. Smith does not use the word 'network' here but reference to 'word of mouth' is clearly suggestive of a network keeping its members 'in the loop' and primed for participation.

Diffusion, Taste Formation and Social Space

Networks are also important mechanisms in the generation of the shared tastes which define a music world. There is a growing body of literature suggesting both that tastes are formed within networks, as an effect of mutual influence, and that, as a consequence, tastes diffuse through networks (Becker 1996, DiMaggio 2011, Erickson 1996, Lewis et.al 2008, Lizardo 2006, Mark 1998, 2003). This may be a matter of actors passing on the taste for pre-existing musical forms or, in the case of more innovative worlds, of actors collectively generating both new forms and the taste for them (albeit usually on the basis of pre-existing shared tastes). Alternatively, it may the taste for particular formats of musical

production/consumption that is transmitted: e.g. live versus recorded music, MP3s versus vinyl, big concerts versus small clubs etc.

Exactly how tastes are acquired in social interaction remains under-researched. Many mechanisms may be involved and they may combine differently in different instances. For illustrative purposes we suggest seven mechanisms:

1. *Exposure*: a taste may pass from one actor to another through the simple fact of the first actor introducing the second to a style of music they have not previously encountered: e.g. playing a record which has instant appeal.

2. *Co-Participation*: actors may 'go through the motions' of musical appreciation, because their friends are, finding in the process that they actually like the music. A liking for dance music may be acquired in the process of dancing in a club with friends, for example, and a liking for folk singing may be acquired by accompanying an insider to a folk club and taking part.

3. *Aesthetic Instruction*: liking a form of music may require or at least be enhanced through background knowledge and know-how which is transmitted in a more explicit way than in co-participation. Audiences may need to know what to listen for or how to listen and respond. Like a football fan they need to understand 'the game' and acquire a stake in it in order to feel moved by it. This could be a matter of the 'internal meaning' of the music (e.g. the way in which different pieces play with musical conventions and expectations) or the external meaning attached to music within a particular world: e.g. learning to associate particular musical styles with social or political values/identities which one already holds.

4. *Choice Heuristics*: actors may find themselves overwhelmed with equally enticing possibilities for musical enjoyment, resolving the difficulty of choosing between them by emulating the choices of others, especially where those others appear to derive pleasure from their choice.

5. *Secondary Benefits*: beyond the ease involved in following the example of friends, pursuing one musical path over another may be anticipated to create greater opportunities for sociability, status or another extrinsic reward.

6. *Association*: music may bring pleasure because it has become associated with positive relationships and/or other pleasurable experiences shared with others.

7. *Suggestion*: early sociologists such as Tarde (1903) and Cooley (1964) both identify 'suggestion' as one amongst a number of mechanisms of imitation/contagion. The concept is poorly explained and a little mysterious but we include it here as a possibility which, like our other mechanisms, stands in need of further elucidation and empirical investigation.

Though analytically distinct, none of these mechanisms are mutually exclusive and most are likely to work in conjunction with several of the others. The decision to emulate another will result in exposure, co-participation and perhaps aesthetic instruction, for example, which may result in the development of a genuine taste for whatever type of music is involved. Furthermore, over time this may be found to bring secondary benefits, such as linking the

individual to a group in which they have friends and enjoy status, and may become associated with positive experiences enjoyed with this group.

These processes of taste formation and diffusion may be overlaid by the structuring effect of wider social divisions. It is widely observed, for example, that actors are disproportionately likely to form ties with alters of a similar social standing to themselves (e.g. actors in a similar income bracket, with a similar level of education, of a similar age and ethnic background etc.), a process which Lazarsfeld and Merton (1964) call 'status homophily' (see also Blau 1974, 1977, McPherson 2004, McPerson et.al 2001). Mark (1998, 2003) has used this observation to explain the further, much discussed observation, associated with Bourdieu (1984) in particular, that particular musical tastes tend to cluster in particular positions in 'social space'. There is no necessary or inherent connection between particular social positions and the liking for particular types of music, Mark insists (see also McPherson 2004). However, musical preferences tend to become located in specific demographic niches because, firstly, they pass from person to person through sociable contact, and secondly, relations of sociable contact tend to be status homophilic.

This argument marks a significant advance on the currently dominant Bourdieusian framework because Bourdieu is very unclear as to why particular tastes become lodged in particular regions of social space, sometimes seeming to suggest, problematically and despite insistence to the contrary, that there is a necessary 'fit' between tastes and social positions. Those low in economic capital, for example, are condemned to certain tastes on account of their proximity to 'necessity'. Furthermore, where Bourdieu tends to focus exclusively upon economic and cultural/educational inequalities in his analysis of these matters, Mark's perspective is open to the importance of divisions based upon a wide range of statuses, including age and race, both of which appear to be amongst the strongest predictors of taste and certainly stronger than economic and cultural 'capital' (Bennett et.al 2009).

Music and Network Formation

The direction of traffic between ties and tastes is not all one way, however. Shared tastes are often a basis upon which actors are brought into contact and, having made contact, may help to build enduring bonds between them. Scott Feld's (1981, 1982) concept of network foci addresses the first element in this process. Actors often share interests and tastes with others in their networks, he argues, not only because of mutual influence between them but also because their shared tastes and interests drew them together in the first place, to common events and time-spaces.

The jazz enthusiasts in a particular town are likely to know one another, for example, because they will attend the same clubs and events, and perhaps also hang out at the same specialist record shops. Furthermore, when they do meet the likelihood of them forming a meaningful bond is increased by the fact that they have a shared interest (jazz) to talk about and a shared identity (jazz enthusiast), both of which are foregrounded by the fact that they meet at, for example, a jazz club. In conversation each will reward the other's preference for jazz, affirming her identity as a jazz lover, exchanging information and rendering the interaction positive in a manner which incentivises further contact.

The Structure of the Book

As noted earlier, our understanding of networks derives from the tradition of formal social network analysis (SNA) and most of the contributors to this book draw upon the concepts, techniques and measures of this tradition. In the next chapter we offer an introduction to SNA for the uninitiated (see also Scott 2000, Wasserman and Faust 1994, Borgatti et.al. 2012) . This is intended to provide readers with sufficient background knowledge to engage fully and critically with the analyses and arguments which follow in subsequent chapters.

In Chapter Three Nick Crossley compares the network structures of the post-punk worlds of Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield as of 1980. The aim of the chapter is to identify both similarities across the networks, which indicate stable and perhaps necessary features of such worlds, and also differences whose various causes and effects can be explored. At a methodological level, the chapter reflects upon the possibilities for and advantages of taking a comparative approach to network and world analysis.

Moving on from post punk, in Chapter Four Siobhan McAndrew and Martin Everett explore gender inequality within the classical music world, combining social network analysis with both qualitative analysis and a more straightforward statistical approach. Specifically they consider whether women occupy a distinctive position in the network formed by a variety of types of cooperation between composers and they consider whether women, responding to the particular obstacles and constraints they experience as women, adopt a distinctive strategy in the pursuit of musical success.

In Chapter Five Paul Widdop examines how networks impact upon consumption. It is widely acknowledged that a shift has occurred in the cultural consumption patterns of the middle and upper classes. Where once tastes and preferences were based around rigid rules of exclusion, they are now based on an openness to a variety of cultures across both the high and popular genres (the 'omnivore thesis'). Social and educational gradients in omnivorousness have been found across Europe, Australia, and North and South America: having broader tastes is associated with higher social status, social class and education, gender, youth, and geographical location. What is less understood is how an individual's position within social networks, and their social capital, affect their cultural tastes. It seems plausible that musical omnivores benefit from having a broader and more diverse social network, within which they display their cultural knowledge for social approval and to access the social resources embedded in their social networks (social capital). Using large-scale social survey data on cultural participation, Widdop tests whether this relationship between taste and network diversity and density exists. He explores whether there are well-defined omnivorous patterns in music consumption in England, whether they are socially stratified, and the effect of social capital and social network position on musical taste.

As noted above, music making involves cooperation and coordination between multiple parties. And yet it displays very fluid forms of organisation. This combination has stimulated a vast literature focused upon situations where people are not formally bound to each other. In Chapter Six Karim Hammou shows how SNA facilitates analysis of such situations. Drawing upon the concepts of both world and scene he explores patterns of collaboration in francophone rap music.

In Chapter Seven Susan O'Shea takes up the issue of homophily, focusing specifically upon the salience of sexual identities in the formation of networks involved in three separate LadyFest festivals. She uses longitudinal network data on the musicians and activists associated with the festivals. In addition, she discusses the historical development of LadyFest as a movement, the movement's core values, and its musical influences. Her work

also draws from ethnographic, feminist and action-research methodologies, illustrating by example how such methodologies can be integrated with SNA in the context of a mixed method approach.

Chapter Eight, by Tim Edensor, Paul Hepburn and Nigel Richards, reflects upon Manchester's vibrant open-mic world. It explores how the social networks of open-mic participants inform the production of creativity and conviviality, and the expression of alternative values. Formal social network analysis methods are used to render visible and understandable the connections between performers and other attendees. Edensor and Hepburn examine how such connections alternatively constrain or facilitate routes to employment, collaborative music-making, leisure, and social opportunities. This chapter sees SNA methods used alongside an observational study into the ethics and etiquette of open-mic culture, particularly the ways in which participants welcome newcomers, give moral support and musical advice, and encourage a wide range of musical expression without exercising judgement about style and ability. Edensor and Hepburn also consider the significance of physical geography for Manchester's open-mic network, mapping the pubs that host its events, from central Manchester to suburban sites and beyond.

In Chapter Nine, Roberta Comunian, Alessandra Faggian and Sarah Jewell explore the connections and dynamics linking higher education and music careers. An emerging literature on the role of higher education in the creative economy reveals that while higher education institutions develop human capital for careers after graduation, creative graduates also face great difficulties in entering the professional networks and employment opportunities of the creative sector. Popular writers and journalists have recently begun to note the increasingly elite backgrounds of those working in the arts and media, and among performing pop musicians. Drawing on statistical data on graduates and their employment after graduation, this chapter examines the factors associated with achieving a music career, and success within that career. It explores how the networks formed via selective education and training give musicians advantages in their post-university life. The statistical analysis is given additional nuance through a focused set of interviews with music graduates, those working in the music industry hailing from subjects other than music, and practitioner-teachers in higher education.

In Chapter Ten Fay Hield and Nick Crossley explore Sheffield's folk signing world. The network of participants in this world, they show, is very dense and the demographic profile of participants is quite specific, at least with respect to age and educational level. Combining network analysis with insights from Hield's earlier ethnographic on this world, however, they are able to explore an interesting age-based partition which is integrally linked to recent innovations and developments in this local music world.

The final chapter, written by Siobhan McAndrew, Paul Widdop and Rachel Stevenson, explores the duality of musicians and groups in the British jazz world. Using John Chilton's Who's Who of British Jazz as their source and exploiting the detail it affords on individual career histories and musical backgrounds, they compile a network involving some 900 musicians and representing the most central figures in British jazz from its genesis to 2003. Jazz is a fascinating case study for network analysis because band line ups are often very fluid, with musicians playing in many bands within the same period and moving through many more over time. With information on the ties between individual performers and their ties to bands, McAndrew, Widdop and Stevenson identify distinct communities within the network, describing stylistic, temporal and spatial clusters, and reflecting upon their

significance.

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