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ACCOUNTING FOR TASTE IN IRISH TRADITIONAL MUSIC

by

ERYN MCCOY-WAGNON

(Under the Direction of Eric Silva)

ABSTRACT

Although it is self-evident that people care about music, we don't know how they make sense of their taste in it. In this study, I will explore how individuals explain their taste in music. I will specifically be focusing on the genre of Irish traditional music (ITM). One way to explore how people account for their taste in this genre is through a qualitative content analysis of online comments. I hope to demonstrate the vocabulary of motives for music preference, by focusing on how individuals account for their taste in Irish traditional music online. Also, this study will help show the role that culture plays in musical tastes by discovering whether their vocabulary includes references to Irish identity. I suspect that Irish American identity will come up as a common account for listening to this genre. The findings contribute to the theory of symbolic ethnicity (Gans 1959) by demonstrating the role it plays in the process of identity construction. My research questions are: How do people account for listening to Irish traditional music? Is there a connection between symbolic ethnicity and taste in music? I will explore these questions by examining internet comments through a qualitative content analysis.

INDEX WORDS: Irish traditional music, Vocabulary of motives, Symbolic ethnicity, Cultural identity, Accounts, Qualitative content analysis, Online comments, Herbert Gans, C.Wright Mills

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Electronic Version Approved:

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DEDICATION

First and foremost, to God be the glory. Also, this thesis is dedicated to those who have supported me through my academic journey: my husband, mom, and sisters.

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I would like to acknowledge the hard work my thesis committee members, Dr. Smith and Dr. Keeley, put into this project. Most importantly, I would like to thank Dr. Silva for his timely thought and effort he gave me to make this project happen. Thanks to him, I have become more well-versed in social theory than I ever thought I would be. They all pushed me to be a better writer, thinker, and all around academic.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In general, we know that people care about music. According to Nielson (2015), 93% of Americans listen to music on average of 25 hours per week. We have laced music into even the most mundane parts of our everyday lives making it an integral part of our culture (Nielson 2015). We listen to it in the car, at work, while doing chores, etc. Although it is self-evident that people care about music, we don't know how they make sense of their taste in it. In this study, I will explore how individuals explain their taste in a specific genre of music. I will specifically be focusing on the genre of Irish traditional music (ITM). A good place to discover how people account for their taste in this genre is through online comments. I will demonstrate the vocabulary of motives for music preference by focusing on how individuals account for their taste in Irish traditional music online. Also, this study will help show the role that culture plays in musical tastes by discovering whether their vocabulary includes references to Irish identity. I suspect that Irish identity will come up as a common account for listening to this genre. As Sommer Smith (2001:21) suggests, "Traditional music embodies the experiences of a group of people, and often encapsulates both their history and their present social conditions." The findings contribute to the theory of symbolic ethnicity (Gans 1959) by demonstrating the role it plays in the process of identity construction. My research questions, then, are: How do people account for listening to Irish traditional music? Is there a connection between symbolic ethnicity and taste in music? I will explore these questions by examining internet comments through a qualitative content analysis.

In what follows, I discuss the relevant literature on theoretical frame, background information on Irish traditional music, symbolic ethnicity, and the gaps I hope to fill in the

literature. Next, I will discuss the methodology and data analysis plan. Then, I will discuss my

findings, implications, and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 2

ACCOUNTING FOR TASTE IN IRISH TRADITIONAL MUSIC

LITERATURE REVIEW

I will begin this literature review by giving background information on how Irish traditional music has progressed through the decades and how it made its way into the United States. Previous literature on ITM is mostly centered on the musician and the history of the genre. There is little scholarship on listenership or accounting for taste in the genre. Next, I will provide background literature on the theoretical paradigm of the "vocabularies of motive" created by C. Wright Mills (1940) and describe how it will frame this study. To follow up, I will review previous literature on symbolic ethnicity (Gans 1959) as I believe there is potential for a connection between music and symbolic ethnic identity based on this concept.

Irish Traditional Music

It is important to be aware of the history of Irish traditional music because it is informative on how the genre developed historically and made its way into the United States and other countries, becoming a transnational genre. The genre expanded, died out, and was revitalized and spread to other countries through migration. The details of this historical process are discussed further in this section.

In the 1920s, Ireland gained its independence becoming the Irish Free State. Later in the 1940's Ireland became a republic, ending all membership to the British Commonwealth. With independence came problems such as poverty, emigration, violence in the north, and conflicting cultural messages which created an identity crisis. There was tension between the traditional, nationalistic sense of Irish identity and the modern, cosmopolitan sense of Irish identity, more

akin to a continental European identity. Many young Irish people at the time rejected traditional music, seeing it as rural and archaic (Fleming 2004). Also, the Public Dance Halls Act of 1935, mandated by the government and Catholic Church, banned the tradition of "house dance" involving music, dance, and stories in the home. The Catholic Church deemed these activities as lewd behavior which also changed perceptions of traditional music from positive to negative. Traditional music was not relevant anymore and was a dying genre of music. In 1951, nationalists and musicians created a group called Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann which helped revitalize Irish music.

Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann (CCE) was established in 1951 in Ireland to countermand a decline of interest in ITM. The organization set out to create a more positive arena for participation in Irish traditional music through educational opportunities and competitions. CCE is the largest organization sponsoring ITM. There are more than 300 branches in over 13 countries around the world, including the United States. This organization could potentially be a reason why some Americans listen to Irish music.

The website for CCE lists their "Aims and Objectives" as following (Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann 2015):

- To promote Irish traditional music in all its forms
- To restore the playing of the harp and uilleann pipes in the national life of Ireland
- To promote Irish traditional dancing
- To foster and promote the Irish language at all times
- To create a closer bond among all lovers of Irish music
- To cooperate with all bodies working for the restoration of Irish culture

- To establish branches throughout the country and abroad to achieve the foregoing aims and objectives.

During early immigration to the United States, Irish people would sing familiar songs to reinforce their ethnic identity and the culture of Ireland. Irish music mainly served a purpose of helping people feel connected (Moloney 2002). However, ethnic music has served many other purposes throughout history. For example, Jewish jazz artists infused ethnic music into their work to make a proud stance during a time of anti-Semitism and assimilation (Hersch 2015). Although Irish music started largely as an oral tradition of storytelling, passed down through the generations, print music changed how ITM was consumed in Ireland and abroad. Printed music allowed for uniformity in Irish traditional music while still allowing for variation and regional styling (Davis 2006). Irish music and entertainment was popularized in the United States through Vaudeville. As ITM matured and progressed in the United States, it evolved and inspired American styles of music such as bluegrass and country (Moloney 2002). The United States capitalized on the popularity of Irish music and played a major role in its production and consumption through material goods, concerts, festivals, and pubs that exuded the "authenticity of Irishness" (Negra 2006:12).

There are a few instruments and environments associated with Irish traditional music. Traditional melodies can be heard from a variety of wind and string instruments like the uillean pipes, flute, fiddle, or mandolin while a beat is kept with a single goatskin drum known as the bodrhan. Today there are many spaces and places to listen to Irish music from competitions, to ceili's, and pubs. Each context has a different sense of community and it is important to understand where people listen to music and why. Stokes (1994) mentioned that music plays a

key role in understanding our "sense of place" where listeners create a sense of identity linked to a nation.

The authors of these previous studies mostly used ethnography, interviews, and historical analysis. However, there are missing pieces to their studies that should be examined. Much of the previous literature revolves around the historical development of Irish traditional music and the musicians. Although selections from Stokes (1994) involve the listener, they only focus on the space people create when listening to Irish music. No one has examined how individuals make sense of this preference. It is important to have a richer understanding of how listeners of Irish music make sense of their taste because people see music as a central aspect of their lives. Also, in order to evaluate the applicability of Gans' (1959) theory of symbolic ethnicity, it is important to know if the listener refers to their identity as part of their account of listening to Irish traditional music.

Vocabulary of Motive

C. Wright Mills' (1940) concept of the vocabularies of motive helps us understand explanations individuals give for specific actions. This theory is mostly used in studies dealing with controversial actions; however, I will use his theory to explain how individuals account for their taste in music. In this section, I will summarize Mills' theory, other scholars' contributions to the paradigm, and its connection to this study.

Mills (1940:904) differentiates between motivation and motive. He explains that motivation is our "internal spring to action" and can't be known or studied. However, motive is the stated reason individuals give for a specific action which can be studied. In other words, Albas and Albas (2003:349) describe motive as "…reasons and purposes on the basis of which

people steer their conduct. They are in effect parts of action, not precursors of it." Albas and Albas (2003) explain that the use of language and words are central to the concept of vocabularies of motive. They describe how Mills (1940) sees motives as answers to questions. When someone asks you why you do something, the answer you respond with is your motive for that action. Albas and Albas (2003) describe how there are different vocabularies for different subgroups and in order to be convincing, their motive must match the vocabulary of that subgroup. For example, a person who donates money to a charity may explain the reason as a tax write off to a group of close friends, but say it was because he loved the mission of the charity to a group of co-workers. This cultural way of describing action tells us more about everyday life; showing us that highly personal things are part of a shared experience. One might think that if an individual's motive for action changes depending on what subgroup they are explaining it to, their answer might be disingenuous. An important aspect of Mills' (1940) ideas on vocabularies of motive deals with importance of truth behind the explanation of motives individuals give to others.

Albas and Albas (2003) state that Mills (1940) does not find it important to take into account the truth of individuals' explanations. If others are convinced by the reasons individuals give for an action, the motives are not "less real" if they are false. Mills (1940) focuses more on the functional purpose of motives rather than their sincerity. This is important to keep in mind as I analyze internet comments. Although some people may lie or use hyperbole when accounting for their taste in Irish music, a genuine explanation is not of great importance as long as the explanation is convincing. The truth behind the motive is not as important as the social function the motive uncovers.

Also, Mills (1940) expresses that we, as researchers, should study the words people use across many cases and scenarios dealing with the same action. Therefore, the use of qualitative content analysis is a credible method to examine individuals' vocabularies of motive. Qualitative content analyses have been used in many studies focusing on vocabularies of motives. For example, this method is useful in looking at contested practices. According to Silva (2007), contested practices are behaviors individuals engage in that receive some sort of public challenge. He used the vocabularies of motive theory to explore how individuals justify their support for sports teams' use of Native American mascots which can be seen as a racist and offensive practice. Silva (2007) did a qualitative content analysis of letters to the editor that opposed the removal of Native American symbols as sports team mascots. This allowed him to see how individuals account and justify the actions of using such a controversial symbol. He found that individuals usually defend this action using one of four types of accounts: denial of injury, assertion of benefit, claim of authority, and rejection of challenge (Silva 2007:250).

Another study uses Mills' (1940) vocabularies of motive to look at an action that is not necessarily a contested practice, but that could be called into question. Doyle and Melville (2013) use this frame to look at why individuals volunteer as foster parents for children with high support needs. Volunteering as a foster parent is not a controversial action; however, foster parents may have to justify why they take on such an emotionally strenuous activity. Doyle and Melville (2013) conducted qualitative interviews of foster parents to explore how they account for their choice in being a caregiver to foster children. They found that initially individuals had "child-centered altruistic motives." As they delved deeper in the interviews they were able to uncover a financial motive that individuals were unwilling to present as an initial account. The

economic motives seemed to be removed from their accounts as to not be seen as a greedy person (Doyle and Melville 2013:71).

In my research, I will explore the motives of people who listen to Irish traditional music to explain what their consequential situations are and if there are themes that emerge from them. Mills' idea (1940) is that different actions would have a different vocabulary of motives. Also, he describes motives as being strategies of action; a characteristic of this being that individual's actions are reinforced by others agreeing with them and accepting the action. It is important to see if motive reinforcement is a mechanism for continued listening and participation in Irish traditional music. It will shed light on not only how they understand their taste in the music, but how much of an influence reinforcement by others has on the listener. In preliminary coding, I had found numerous individuals mentioning that the community associated with Irish music encouraged them. For example, individuals mentioned that other ITM community members would help them discover new songs or teach them about the instruments which played a role in their continued interest in the genre.

Ethnic Identity and Symbolic Ethnicity

There is reason to believe that music taste is related to identity. I will explore whether or not accounts are present on how music influences identity construction. Ethnic identity among whites in the United States is a complex topic. Distinctions were once made between white ethnic groups. Some were even marginalized and carried negative stigmas. Now, these distinctions are fading which, in turn, creates a broader ethnic distinction that encompasses anyone of European descent. These changes occurred for many reasons including but not limited to advances in academic and class achievement, intermarriage, and social integration (Alba 1990). In terms of social integration, whites' friend circles tend to be ethnically diverse with

very few people having ethnically homogenous organizations or circles of friends. Alba (1990) highlighted intermarriage as an important factor that blurred white ethnic lines. Intermarriage not only involved marriage across white ethnicities, but also across religious lines. Mixing of ancestries through intermarriage diminished the importance of ethnic identity in individuals and decreased the probability of someone identifying ethnically. As marginalization decreased among white ethnics and the third generation heritage emerged, there was less defensiveness and more pride regarding ethnic roots (Alba 1990). Alba (1990) asserts that to maintain ethnic identity, it must be seen in action and experience. If ethnic identity is not reflected in this manner, it is known as symbolic ethnicity.

According to Gans (1979), first generation immigrants built ethnic identity through reaching out to other ethnics as a need to survive and integrate into jobs and the community in a new society. However, third generation ethnics are more likely to identify with their heritage symbolically. Symbolic ethnicity involves a "nostalgic allegiance" to a particular culture and ethnicity without living out a complete ethnic lifestyle (Gans 1979:9). Essentially, symbolic ethnicity is when you are able to take off and put on a distinct ethnicity with cultural symbols rather than constantly living out the customs. Gans argued that what others call an ethnic revival among the third generation is really just those individuals using ethnic symbols rather than needing support through ethnic cultures and organizations (Gans 1979). Gans (1994) later adds that organizational support might be critical to the perpetuation of symbolic ethnicity.

Elaborating on Gans' work, Waters (1990) described ethnic identity as a social process where, among whites, it is a choice. She sees symbolic ethnicity as a paradox in the lives of individuals. This paradox consists of the quest for community while at the same time having a desire for individuality (Waters 1990). Waters also dealt with the possible implications of

symbolic ethnicity. She showed how there is a struggle between the innocence and privilege of using symbolic ethnicity. Whites use it as a way to feel connected and to celebrate their history. It shows how culture and tolerance can exist in our society. However, symbolic ethnicity can be a double-edged sword. Waters showed this through acknowledging that although ethnicity can be a choice for whites, it is not as easy or voluntary for Asians, Hispanics, and blacks. There are always social and political consequences for these minority groups because of their ethnicity and the stereotypes that follow. Minorities are constantly questioned with "What are you" even if they do not identify ethnically (Waters 1990). Waters argued that there are many variables that go into choice of ethnicity among whites. Both Alba (1990) and Waters (1990) suggest that intermarriage among white ethnics has opened the arena for ethnic choice for later generations and has had a profound impact on ethnic change in America. Other factors that influence ethnic choice include how well a person knows their family history, socioeconomic status, last name, generation, how others view that ethnicity, and many other variables (Waters 1990).

Waters (1990) also described two categories that contribute to ethnic meaning: cultural practices and social psychological traits. Cultural practices would include ethnic influence on language, food, holidays, weddings, and funerals (Waters 1990). Social psychological traits would be idiosyncratic behavior an individual performs. People construct their ethnic identity from what they learned through family experiences and societal messages. These experiences and messages are in some cases influenced by stereotypes. According to Waters (1990), much of what the people she interviewed spoke of in terms of cultural practices and social psychological traits were symbolic and practiced intermittently. When Waters (1990) describes cultural practices, she does not mention music as a factor; however, it could fit into her description. Likewise, Alba (1990) does not explicitly mention music as part of the ethnic experience, but

describes practices of the same notion. These authors look at cultural practices as a whole while this study will focus specifically on music and examine if it is an ethnically symbolic practice for individuals.

Saylor and Aries (1999) studied the ethnic identity of students moving from home into the college setting to test Gans' theory that organizational support might be important to symbolic ethnicity. The study showed that students maintained and strengthened their ethnic identity by joining ethnic organizations on campus. The researchers also explained that joining ethnic organizations did not alienate the students or negatively impact their level of campus involvement (Saylor and Aries 1999). This study showed the importance of ethnic organizations in shaping and maintaining ethnic identity.

Smith and Hendry (2007a) also conducted research looking at what factors strengthen ethnic identity. Their study looked at the social and cultural construction of Irish ethnic identity in Savannah, Georgia. The researchers specifically looked at strength of ethnic identity among Irish organization members, the cultural content of their ethnic identities, and the relationship between the ethnic social structures and their own personal construction of ethnic identity. They used a mixed methods approach of mailed surveys and in-depth interviews. They found that the specific cultural content such as attending ethnic events, the number of friends of the same ethnic background, and importance of family and ethnic organizations are all significantly correlated with the strength of ethnic identity. The researchers concluded that involvement in cultural contexts and immersion in the ethnic community strengthen ethnic identity (Smith and Hendry 2007a). Likewise, religion and family/organization membership influence strength of ethnic identity (Smith and Hendry 2007b; Smith and Hendry 2007c; Smith 2008).

Potential Contributions

There has yet to be research focusing on the vocabulary of motives associated with taste in music. Most literature focuses on contribution to the theory (Albas and Albas 2003) or accounting for vocabularies of motive on other topics, such as contested practices (Silva 2007). It will be important to see how everyday personal actions can take on shared meanings through vocabularies of motive. Likewise, the literature on Irish traditional music has not looked at how listeners are building identity. In Ireland, there has been expansive research done by organizations like Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann on preserving Irish music and generating interest among listeners; however, academic literature in the United States has neglected the listener. Although the role of music has not been specifically addressed in the United States, there is reason to believe it helps to maintain Irish identity as suggested by Moloney (2002). Although Bennett (2015) mentioned that there should be no doubt that music shapes our identity, he does not have concrete evidence to support this claim. Like the ceili, perhaps other forms and contexts of traditional Irish music can provide a forum for Irish and non-Irish alike to have "an important site for the construction, experiencing, and negotiation of different senses of community and identity" (Foley 2011:43). Gans (1959) discusses the importance of cultural practices to the maintenance of ethnic identity, but he does not go further into specific practices. While Waters (1990) elaborates on Gans (1959) and gives examples of specific cultural practices, she does not include music as one of these practices. Arguably, music can be included in the list of cultural practices of white ethnics and should be examined in terms of its relationship to ethnic identity as it is so prevalent in our lives.

When using the theoretical frame of the vocabularies of motive, Mills suggests qualitative analysis of the words people use in a variety of arenas where the action is present.

Scholars such as Silva (2007) have used qualitative content analysis to explore vocabularies of motive. Silva (2007) examined letters to the editor because they are public declarations that are easily observable. Drawing on the culmination of literature, it is easy to decide that a qualitative approach is important to gain a richer understanding of how people understand their taste in music.

CHAPTER 3

ACCOUNTING FOR TASTE IN IRISH TRADITIONAL MUSIC

METHODOLOGY

I will be conducting a qualitative content analysis of public internet comments and posts that describe why the individual listens to Irish traditional music written from 2001-2016. A qualitative content analysis of these posts is a useful method to explore the vocabulary of motives for a number of reasons. The internet is a platform where individuals can publicly post about themselves and their opinions on topics. These records are easily accessible and provide evidence of individuals' public explanation of their taste. An alternative method, such as in-depth interviews, would allow me to dive deeper into understanding and give a better overall picture of intentions and purpose. However, to get at shared vocabularies, it is best to analyze content in order to explore the *statements* rather than *internal* reasons individuals give to account for behavior (Silva 2007:249). A content analysis also has allowed access to a larger number of individuals who declare their taste in Irish traditional music publicly than a search for interview participants would. This is beneficial as it gives me a greater number of individuals in my sample so that I can get to the point of saturation (Braun and Clarke 2013). Altheide (1984) describes ethnographic content analysis as an alternative to quantitative content analysis. He describes how this method can help us "understand the communication of meaning" and should be a highly reflexive and interactive process. This process is less rigid than a quantitative approach in where there is constant discovery and emerging themes. Altheide (1996) also provides a descriptive methodological process for analyzing media/documents in a qualitative manner which I will be following.

I collected 200 pieces of data that include internet article comments, forum posts, and opinion articles that have been posted from 2001-2016 that have some sort of declaration about an individual's taste in Irish traditional music.   These data were found by Google search. My search terms were as follows: "Why do people listen to Irish music," "Why do people listen to Irish traditional music," "Why listen to Irish music," "I like Irish music because," "Traditional Irish music," "Irish music," "I love Irish music," "Irish music and identity," "Irish music blogs," "Traditional Irish music blogs," "Irish music forums," "Traditional Irish music forums." Some search terms led to websites, for example thesession.org, which had a large number of forum posts that I combed through for relevant comments. While these search terms were successful, there were some searches that were not. Searches for data through Facebook groups and pages were not successful because either the group/page owner would hide public comments or the comments visible did not mention why they like or listen to the music. I also searched for forum posts from CCE sites. However, the national website as well as the local CCE pages did not have forum/discussion sections.

The population from these data are from a variety of locations. For most of the users, I was unable to determine what their location is. However, from those that posted in their profile or mentioned their location, I was able to determine these users are mainly from the United States, Australia, and Ireland. There were a small handful of individuals from European countries such as Norway, Denmark, and Germany.

It is important to note how I define Irish traditional music in this project. This term is extremely broad for the genre and can range from very early folk-like music like Celtic Women to modern rock-like music such as Flogging Molly. My definition for what Irish traditional music is has emerged from how the majority of online commenters define it. Reading through

comments, I was able to see what terms they used to describe Irish music. Most users did not like the term "folk music" as they saw that as too broad. Irish Traditional music or just Irish music were the commonly used and agreed upon phrases. Commenters used these terms to describe a variety of songs from "airs" to "jigs and reels" as well as bands such as The Dubliners, Planxty, The Pogues, The Irish Rovers, and more. Although there is much debate over what bands truly fit the genre, forum commenters and online users seemed to consistently use this term to describe a wide variety of Irish music.

After data collection, I followed the methodological procedures outlined in Braun and Clarke (2013) and Altheide (1996) for developing categories and analyzing the data. First, I read through each piece of data, identified important characteristics, and created a code for each type of motive. I wrote memos in a separate notebook as I noticed distinctions and trends between accounts. Later, I categorized the codes and found six themes that characterize why people listen to Irish traditional music.

CHAPTER 4

ACCOUNTING FOR TASTE IN IRISH TRADITIONAL MUSIC

FINDINGS

After consolidating and recoding the data, six themes emerged: epiphanic moments, activity association, cultural identity, emotion, musical pattern/content, and instrumental rationality. These themes are not mutually exclusive and will overlap for many individuals. In this section, I will define each theme, describe them further by explaining the sub-groups within the themes, and give support for them using direct quotations from the data. The themes are listed in order starting with the theme referred to most by the data.

Epiphanic Moments

This theme encompasses distinct moments that listeners and players of Irish music identify as important. These moments are usually identified as a specific time, location, person, or object that played a pivotal role in their listenership. This theme had the most references in the data making it the main explanation people in this population use to describe their taste in Irish traditional music. Sub-groups within this theme include specific time, specific location, introduction by third party, and specific band/CD/song. These sub-groups will be further explained and supported.

Specific time

Many individuals are able to identify a specific moment in time when they first started listening to Irish traditional music. These people recounted a particular age or a specific year that played a pivotal role in their relationship with ITM. The discernment of time when individuals

discuss why they listen to ITM makes these moments epiphanic. Epiphanies are pivotal

revelations and newfound insight into something. An epiphanic moment in this case happens

when the person comes to a sudden realization, at a specific time in space, about their preference

for ITM. Many individuals can recollect the exact year they went to a concert or found an album

they enjoy. "Actually I got the 45 first, then the album later. And when I saw the Irish Rovers in

concert in 1970 - that did it!" , "I was in the Lounge Bar in Lerwick, in 1988. I heard Stuart

Pottinger play a blistering set on the banjo and thought 'That's for me!'" When individuals

discussed an epiphanic experience they would sometimes describe it with an "impulsive" (Turner

1976) explanation such as "that did it" or "that's for me." Even though the moment had long

since passed, these people remembered the exact year they had their epiphany. This demonstrates

that these experiences were meaningful to the individuals and had a large impact on their taste in

music. The identification of specific time and place can be noticed in further quotes seen in this

paper.

Specific location

Another distinction individuals made was in describing a specific location they were at

when they discovered and found interest in ITM. These locations varied and included live

concerts, sessions, and festivals. Individuals described these locations as pivotal moments either

changed how they saw ITM, introduced them to the genre, or made them want to continue

listening to it. "For me it was hearing Eoin Duignan playing Dance of the Gypsy Queen in the

Small Bridge Pub in Dingle, Ireland. That moment changed me." This individual could

specifically identify not only the concert, but the location of the concert and the specific song

performed that "changed" them and generated interest in ITM. Again, we can see how epiphanic

moments are based on the notion that an individual possesses a core, authentic self (Turner

1976). The individual casts music as an external force that alters some essence in them. Statements, like the one above, suggest that cultural practices, such as music, resonates with people and can modify the way they see themselves. Another commenter on thesession.org mentioned a specific event location that was pivotal in their ITM experience.

> I distinctly remember watching the fiddler on stage who was having such a good time .and thinking that was what I wanted to do when I grew up…I joined a dance band in High School and played for contradances all over the Boston area

The performance this individual watched had a large impression on them that they ended up learning how to play an instrument and immersed themselves in the genre. Although this listener did not write an impulsive phrase such as "that did it for me" or "that moment changed me," he did describe how a distinct moment, watching a fiddler on stage, immediately made him want to participate in the genre when he grew up. In this moment of discovery, he saw himself in a spontaneous way; however, eventually he may identify with the genre through institutional factors such as a musician with the dance band.

Introduction by third party

When speaking about specific epiphanic moments, some individuals mentioned another person, other than an Irish relative, that introduced them to the genre. Individuals who were introduced to ITM by an Irish relative have been separated from this theme and will be addressed in the section on cultural identity. Introductions were usually made by friends, family members, or significant others, or media a outlet. Most individuals were introduced to the music by other people. In this instance, these online commenters started listening to it because of the person they married. "I didn't come to this music through anything other than marriage. Much to my chagrin, none of my near ancestors are Irish, which makes it much more difficult to move to Ireland when

you're from the U.S.", "When I married a step dancer, I was introduced to Irish music, and it wasn't my kind of thing, but I did find some of it to be interesting." Other times individuals were introduced by family members:

> An uncle came visiting from Dublin and gave my dad a Dubliners album: The Patriot Game. My dad didn't like Irish music so he let me have it. That was 1973 or so.
>
> My parents introduced me to traditional music when I was a baby. I've liked it ever since, and it is practically the only thing I listen to (they tried to introduce me to rock, as well, but that never quite took).

Some individuals were introduced to the genre through media outlets like TV shows or radio stations. They describe their introduction to the music through these third parties led to a natural preference of the music. These people simply took to the music which suggests that there is a core self that can only work with certain types of music. In other cases, these narratives suggest that the person can slowly acquire a taste in ITM. In this case, below, the commenter talks about discovering the genre through the third party of a radio show.

> I was in a writer's workshop in the Boston area, and drove up there once a month on Sunday afternoon. A radio program, The Celtic Sojourn, was on WGBH at that time, hosted by Brian O'Donovan (it is still on, but late on Saturday afternoon instead of Sunday). I started to enjoy the music more and more...

The individual continues to delve into how after listening to the radio show, they started buying ITM albums to listen to and started attending concerts. This person's experience suggests that although the individual initially enjoyed listening to the radio, his taste for the music slowly developed through buying albums and attending concerts after the initial introduction.

Specific band/CD/song

When some individuals did not recognize a specific time, location, or person to explain why they listen to ITM, they mentioned a specific band, CD, or song that created that moment

for them. In this sub-type, individuals could point out listening to a certain band, CD, or song

that turned them on to ITM. Many people talked about their discovery process of different bands

and laid it out in their comments.

> It was a slippery slope. Enya led to Clannad Clannad led to Fairport Convention Fairport
> Convention led to Steeleye Span Steeleye Span led to Solas Solas led to Cherish the
> Ladies and here I am.

This individual starts with the first band they listened to and shows us the steps that led them to

where they are today in their relationship with ITM. Once an individual found interest in ITM,

the slippery slope of discovering more and more artists was inevitable. Many of the commenters

had similar stories about their process of band discovery. Most listeners have a favorite band,

CD, and/or song which come from these pivotal moments of discovery. This forum poster on

chiffandfipple.com talks about her favorite bands and the songs that kept her listening to ITM.

> One of my very first traditional LPs was a Corries one too. I still love 'em to bits. But
> what started me off was very specific. I bought a cheapie compilation double LP in 1980
> which had all sorts of Irish stuff on it, a bit of Christy, De Dannan, Bothies, Fureys etc.
> But one track just set me on fire and I just had to find out more. It was Planxty doing
> Raggle Taggle Gypsy/Give Me Your Hand. I couldn't believe how such energy could
> come from an all-acoustic band. I didn't even know what the instruments were! That got
> me blood up for ITM, but the record that got me playing was that great Jackie Daly solo
> album, Music from Sliabh Luachra Vol.6 (what an unromantic title!).

The Planxty song and Jackie Daly album were pivotal songs/CD's in this individual's ITM

experience. She describes them as giving her energy and inspiring her to play ITM rather than

just listening to it. Taken together, these motives present appreciation of ITM as a natural match

between the self and the genre. These epiphanic moments give individuals newfound insight into

what their taste in music is which then, can help them refine their taste through discovering other

artists in that genre.

Activity Association

This theme focuses on individuals who mention participation in a specific activity that coincides with ITM. Either the activity they enjoy is typically found in relation to the genre, thus the activity introduced them to the genre or the individual already listened to ITM and later found an activity they enjoy that reinforced their listenership. For example, this category includes people who play instruments that typically are associated with ITM, people who enjoy dancing to the music, and people who enjoy hanging out and listening to the music in a group setting. These activities are motives for their listening to the genre.

Playing music and sessions

Many people within this theme suggested that an instrument they learned happened to be associated with Irish music or that the genre inspired them to learn to play one of the instruments. Many of the people who play ITM participate in sessions. As mentioned in the literature review, sessions are improvised groups of musicians who play tunes together usually in a public setting such as a pub. It is important to note as well that most individuals who play ITM do so as a hobby rather than as a full time career. While some people may be paid a small amount to play somewhere, the financial reward is not the focus of why these individuals do this activity. Rather, playing instruments and participating in sessions are motives for why they listen to ITM. "For me, the interest in Irish music flowed from an interest in the whistle…"

> I, too, came about it [ITM] through the whistle. Saw the nifty little thing on the internets, and decided I wanted to play it. Irish music was the natural choice for material, and I've come to realize just what a wonderful and colorful tradition it is.

In these instances, the individuals were introduced to the genre through an interest in an instrument typically played in ITM. Once the individuals started playing, they came to like the genre. Other individuals talked about not only the aspect of playing an instrument associated with the genre, but also mentioned the sessions as playing a role in their interest in ITM. "House sessions were much more fun because we could just play the tunes, hear a few songs, dance a bit, and drink some beer. Just fun, no politics." Individuals like the man quoted above, liked not only the activity of playing the music, but also secondary activities that came along with playing in house sessions such as dancing and drinking with others. Listeners who associated themselves with not only the genre, but playing the genre as well see themselves through the social structure and their roles. These individuals see their identity in ITM as achieved through being a musician.

Dancing and participation

This sub-group focuses on those who may not play an instrument, but who still participate in activities that help explain their motive for listening to the genre. Dancing is a popular activity that comes with any genre of music. In ITM, dancing is particularly associated with live music, performances, and sessions. Some individuals in this group are part of Irish dance groups and enjoy the music associated with it while others just enjoy dancing to the music in an informal setting. One user with the username Podrisco talks about how his wife only enjoys listening to the music when she is dancing.

> My wife who I met at Set Dancing enjoys dancing to ITM but not so much just listening to it (which seems to be typical of other people that I have met at Set Dancing).

It is interesting to note that some people who dance to the music and enjoy dancing to the music may not necessarily enjoy listening to it without the activity associated with it. Others mentioned

different aspects of participation. "Participation, in a word. Thats why most people play folk

music!"

> Most tourists to Ireland take time to enjoy at least one traditional Irish music session at some point on their itinerary. The moment a listener makes the vital decision to join in, magic happens. By clapping those hands and tapping those toes, visitors experience the rich and intricate combinations of notes and rhythms, at a spiritual level. Irish music can simply stir the soul.

These listeners achieve their identity within ITM as being a participatory member through

clapping, playing, and "join[ing] in." Individuals in this theme enjoy all the activities

surrounding the genre of music, not just simply listening to it.

Activity association is distinct from epiphanic moments because of the way the individual

relates themselves to the genre. Epiphanic moments are moments of discovery for the individual.

When individuals associate their listenership with an activity, they are positioning themselves

institutionally through identifying as a participant or musician of the music. Their identity is

achieved rather than discovered. We can see that motives explaining activity association are

independent of any claim associated with Irish identity. Individuals who do activities associated

with the genre are not necessarily Irish. Although most individuals do not explicitly state their

ethnicity, some do describe how they participate in these activities even though they are not Irish

or do not identify as Irish.

Cultural Identity

When individuals mention how the music is part of who they are as a person, the data

were categorized into the theme of cultural identity. This theme includes those who mention their

ancestral ties as well as identity in relation to ITM. These individual's express feelings connected to the culture, tradition, and country.

Ancestral ties

Many individuals within this theme sought to explain their Irish ancestral history. From the context of the data, people ostensibly mentioned their ancestry to establish that they are indeed Irish or to make a point about feeling connected to their Irish roots. "It didn't hurt that I'm middle-aged, 3rd generation Irish American and curious about my heritage."

> But I think I fell in love with Ireland first, my grandmother being Irish even though it was rarely mentioned. When I was little, I loved the Celtic culture/stories, all the stuff having to do with fairies and magic. Then at some point, that early love was augmented by the music.

In these instances, the individuals write about their Irish ancestry although they do not necessarily mention that they grew up with Irish traditions and music in their household. Just the idea that they had an Irish heritage was enough to get them interested in the music.

Nostalgia of cultural experiences and feeling bound to "home"

Not only did individuals explain ITM as connecting them to their ancestry, but also individuals in this theme discuss how the genre created a sense of nostalgia for them. People mentioned how ITM helped them reflect on their cultural experiences and reminisce about their feelings about their homeland.

> A lot of ITM is about feelings which are bound to the land, the country, the weather, the lifestyle, religion, and culture. Some of the subtle nuances in the music are about reflections of these experiences.

These people enjoy listening to ITM because of the way it connects them to their ethnic backgrounds and experiences. It appears that just having the ethnic roots was not enough for individuals and they used music to relive and reflect on their cultural experiences. This sentiment was widely shared among Irish individuals.

One street busker parallels this idea by mentioning how tourists would appreciate him playing ITM because it reminded them of home.

> Still, as a busker here in Seattle that plays ITM on the streets, I find that I fairly frequently get an Irish tourist approaching me and telling me how much they liked hearing a taste of home.

The street musician could identify that Irish individuals connect their nostalgia of cultural experiences and cultural identity to the genre of music. The Irish individuals saw the music as a symbol of Ireland and what it means to be Irish. Individuals who connect their cultural experiences and nostalgia of home to the genre ground themselves institutionally (Turner 1976). This can be seen through the Irish people identifying the music as a tool for reflecting and feeling nostalgia for home. The busker was also able to recognize that the music played a meaningful role in the lives of the listeners. These individuals see music as a way to achieve identity maintenance through a cultural symbol of music.

Growing up with it/tradition

This sub-group rounds out those individuals who were introduced to the genre by another individual, but in this theme those introductions were made by Irish relatives. These data suggest that most of these introductions were made early on in their lives by a close family member such as a parent or grandparent.

> For me it was growing up with my dad. He's a 2nd generation Irish-American who got interested in the music about 1974. He played button box, mandolin, flute and whistle. House sessions, dances, gigs that he played with forum member David Levine. Plus all his LPs we used to listen to at night, The Bothies, Planxty, Tommy Potts, Paddy Carty etc.

Like the quotation above, listeners with Irish ancestry typically describe growing up listening to the music because members of their family were involved in the cultural practice. Listenership was passed down through the generations as a product of the environment they grew up in. Also, individuals in this sub-group mentioned the important relationship between tradition and music. These individuals talk about the historical presence of music and how being a part of the music helps to preserve the culture. Tradition comes with both a historical appreciation and the passing down of the cultural practices to younger generations.

> I like traditions, and I like the idea that the music and the tunes, and their part in an ancient and great culture, will go on long after I am gone and forgotten. I like being a small part of something precious and fragile, yet very much worth perserving.

> lucky for me my uncle and grandma happened to be steeped in the tradition. my grandma learned her music from her own mother and passed it on to us. i heard irish songs from my mother around the house, because when she was a child she thought it was more fun to hang out with her aunts and learn the old songs than play in the basement with her cousins.

Individuals who saw the relationship between culture and ITM focused on preserving the genre as part of their cultural tradition. Again, we can see individuals seeing themselves institutionally by preserving the genre to achieve preservation of their ethnic identity. People see themselves as playing a role in passing down ITM and listening to the genre. Their identity is embedded in the cultural practice of listening to this music.

Identity

Individuals who made explicit connection between ITM and their personal identity were categorized into this sub-group. Some individuals simply stated that the music was a part of their cultural identity. "For me the interest in traditional music comes from wanting to express that part of my cultural identity in my music." Other individuals however had a more nuanced way of describing their identity.

> I think it's safe to assume that people who are interested in their country's cultural arts have a sense of self-pride and identify with them. I think it would also be safe to assume that it would represent their cultures perseverance, especially if their culture had been severely repressed by an occupying force.

This individual mentions how people use cultural arts, such as music as a part of self-identity. The commenter also brings up a point that the music is representative of their culture persevering through arduous times. This comment is supported by another individual who self identifies as Irish.

> When I came to traditional music first it was most definitely an expression of my identity as an Irish person and in juxtaposition to the presence of British troops on the streets of Belfast. I'm not saying that the tunes in and of themselves carry a specific political connotation but they are certainly an important part of the experience of things irish.

This individual agrees with the sense that ethnic music can be a way of someone expressing themselves especially when that identity has had an oppressive history.

One individual posted on thesession.org a sentiment that seemed to be common among listeners who saw the music as part of their identity. This person emphasizes how the music helps them learn about who they are, making ITM a cultural practice that shapes their identity.

I was born and raised in a townland where music and dance, song and poetry are powerful threads that bind us to the land, to our forefathers and our descendants. They tell us who we are and where we come from. They help lessen our sorrows and deepen our joys.

Individuals who share this idea believe that the cultural practice of music can shape their identity. This sort of identity is institutionally created. The listeners see their selves as being developed and achieved through the act of listening and understanding the history of the music.

This theme of cultural identity is similar to the theme of activity association in the way individuals are constructing their real selves. Individuals in both themes see ITM as something that helps them achieve a portion of their identity. However, the idea that their listenership contributes to their sense of self in their nationality is taken for granted. Their enjoyment of the music seems natural and inevitable to the individual, but it is also because of their hope to maintain their "Irishness" that they listen to the genre. However, the theme of epiphanic moments and the following theme of emotion show how individuals see their true selves in a very different manner. These listeners see their identity as a process of discovery that is not necessarily planned. Although one may be able to discover their Irish roots, they still would come to create and maintain their identity in an institutional way.

Emotion

The theme of emotion includes data that show the variety of feelings people have that are generated from ITM. These emotions are described as motives for why they listen to the genre. While most emotions were described in positive terms, there were some individuals who described the genre as eliciting negative emotions.

Many individuals spoke about the positive emotions that came from listening to ITM and explained it as a reason for why they listen to the genre. These positive emotions were described as happy, relaxing, energetic, and even romantic. Some individuals used the music as a tool to put them in a better mood. One user commented on chiffandfipple.com about this same sentiment.

> That is the beginning for me and it has never lefted me. When my world is topsy turvy, on goes the highland pipers on the stereo and it goes for hours but it never takes that long for me come out of whatever funk I was in.

This person describes how ITM could put them in a better mood. Many individuals explained how they would have a similar experience with the music influencing their mood and emotions. Multiple people also wrote about how the music would speak to them or grab them in a way that other music did not. The idea that you can feel the music emotionally enticed listeners and players of ITM even outside of Ireland. "You love irish music, you feel irish music. The reason alot of people outside Ireland plays the music is because it 'speaks' to us." This listener describes how people can have an emotional connection to the music that goes beyond just enjoying it; listeners can "feel" the music. The individuals who connect with ITM on an emotional level recognize it as something natural. These individuals feel a sort of external force that matches their inner self with the music.

Very few people mentioned negative emotions associated with the genre. The main negative emotion elicited was sadness. This sense of sadness was mostly associated with slower songs and "airs" and also was associated with sorrowful lyrics. "it's the languid slow airs which move me mostly." Some of these sad emotions were bound to the images stirred up in the minds of the individual mostly associated with the historical plight of the Irish people.

But it is also the cultural expression of a complex, rich, sometimes happy, often sad, historical experience. When I play the music I think that this is the music which, for an individual, perhaps hundreds of years ago, expressed exactly what they thought about a certain life experience, happy or sad.

In the quotation, above, the emotion is not just brought out by the way the music sounds, but also because of the history associated with the cultural music. It allows individuals to reflect on the hardships endured by the Irish in the past. The emotions felt vary from positive to negative. Individuals enjoyed the rollercoaster of emotions associated with the genre. "And it's that last part the irish music is great at, from the sadness of a good slow air to the joyfulness of a fast dancing tune." This person points out that ITM can generate a whole spectrum of emotions from sadness to joyful ness. Listeners with the emotional connection to the genre can have a wide range of feelings associated with songs depending on the musical pattern and lyrics. Their preference for this style of music comes from an impulsive place of discovery. The onset of emotional feeling is spontaneous in nature and can lead to individuals discovering which songs make them feel certain ways. Their relationship with the music is similar to that of the theme epiphanic moments. Individuals are drawn to the music through a natural connection. The decision to connect with the genre is impulsive and follows a path of discovering one's true self which is opposite of the institutional ways of achieving identity through activity association and cultural identity maintenance.

Musical Pattern and Content

References to preference of the musical pattern and/or content were categorized into this theme. This theme includes individuals who mention that they like the way the music sounds in terms of musical mode, pattern, rhythm and beat. Data within this theme also described how

individuals enjoyed the historical context and lyrics of the music. It additionally includes

individuals who enjoy ITM because of its similarities and roots to other genres of music.

Musical pattern/melody/rhythm

This sub-group refers to data that mentioned taste in the genre specifically because

individuals liked the way it sounded. Emphasis on different parts of music varied between liking

the musical pattern, the modal key ITM is mostly played in, the beat, and the typical melodies.

One individual, John, posted on chiffandfipple.com about his preference for the modal key of

ITM.

> for some reason the modes that are used in irish music appeal to me as though i'm primed
> in some way to appreciate them more - i particularly prefer the flattened 7th you get in
> irish music in the minor modes as compared to say a g# in a minor - i can still appreciate
> the skill of musicians in other traditions but i don't connect with it - has anyone
> experienced anything similar?

John identifies a specific key or mode that he sees as a common theme across ITM. He explains

that he likes this genre over others because of his preference for this mode. In doing so, he

suggests that he has an authentic core self. Others point out the unique melodies and rhythms of

ITM that they enjoy.

> [it] has twisty, catchy melodies that are often played fast, and I found some of the same
> joy that I found in the other dance music styles that I was into. Good energy, a bit of
> underlying anger, and toe tapping rhythms.

The preference of musical pattern has come from a seemingly natural connection to specific

styles of music. This preference is highlighted through individuals using phrases such as "music

styles that I was into" and "I don't connect with it." This process of developing a specific

personal taste comes from a journey of discovery rather than achievement.

Root of other music

Some individuals recognized ITM to be an older root or ancestor of other genres of music such as American country, bluegrass/folk, and rock. While some people enjoyed these other genres listed, they also enjoyed ITM because they could see the interconnectedness of the music. "That said, I've liked folk music, C&W, bluegrass since the 1960s. ITM is a root source for many aspects of these musical areas." The following quotations suggest that ITM is closely related to more popular strains of music which in turn helps it become more accessible to the general population. These quotations show a relationship between ITM being a root of other music and the genre being accessible. "People all over the world play and enjoy Irish music because it is so accessible. I believe this is because it is the direct ancestor to modern popular music."

> ITM is a much closer relative of the folk/country/western*/Jazz/Blues/Rock family of genres than the Balkan/Gypsy/Klezmer family. Given that the first cluster includes the dominant strains of popular music in generica, it's not surprising that ITM feels more accessible than, say, hungarian, arabic, or gamelan.

Again, we can see people connecting to the genre as part of discovering their personal taste. Individuals recognize the process of discovery by listening to music with similar styles and roots, building their range of musical preference along the way. There is not a specific goal that is achieved as the process is a never-ending journey of self-realization.

Historical appreciation/context of songs

When people mentioned the story behind the lyrics of a song or the history of the music, they were categorized into this sub-group. Many individuals who explicitly mentioned their Irish heritage wrote about how they liked hearing the stories of their ancestors through the songs. However, even non-Irish and people who did not mention explicitly their ethnicity appreciated

the historical context and stories behind the lyrics of songs. "...However, the "politics" behind some pieces of music has also enriched my enjoyment (and that of my audience) as it adds context."

> its political significance came to be cherished as i gained insight into how my own "fight the power" tendencies are actually rooted in my family history, and the music's tragic and joyous emotional content came to be cherished as i gained insight into the historical/cultural dimensions of my own family's history of tragedy, self-destruction, humor & joy…..so, the music rang in the neural receptors first, but all the other stuff is there….

Some individuals' sense of historical appreciation of the genre stems not necessarily from the lyrics or story but also from the history of the genre itself.

> Sometime at a session, playing an old tune played by many before me, and danced to by many before my time, I believe I can feel the presence of past generations of musicians and dancers with us. They draw nearer to the sound of the pipes and fiddle, their involvement and longing are a tangible thing in the room, sharing again something that is forever new and forever timeless.

Individuals who appreciate the history of the genre see the music as a story being told about past generations. Even though an individual may not be of Irish descent, they can still appreciate and feel connected to the history of the music. For example, an individual with no personal ties to the Holocaust may feel a haunting presence or be moved by the history of the tragic event of past generations. The same idea can be seen here; an individual, despite their personal histories, may still feel a natural connection to the genre through the stories told and appreciation of the rich history.

Like the themes of epiphanic moments and emotion, this theme too describes how individuals relate to ITM in a spur-of-the-moment way. The reactions people have to the music

in these themes are not planned and the people find their relationship with music to be natural match.

Instrumental Rationality

The listeners in this theme provide a pragmatic explanation for listening to ITM as though it is a mechanism to reach a specific goal. According to Weber (2012) instrumental rationality theorizes how individuals reason or make decisions. For example, ITM listeners who are instrumentally rational will likely have a practical reason for listening to the genre. The music is a tool that helps them reach an end goal such as maintaining cultural identity, relaxing, or meeting new people.

Accessibility

When people mentioned that ITM is accessible, they typically describe how anyone, anywhere can listen and enjoy this genre of music. ITM has become a transnational genre where people in a variety of countries listen to it rather than just Irish people. The idea that you did not have to have Irish blood, be part of a special group, or be connected to enjoy this genre is the main idea of this sub-group.

> it's a kind of music that anyone can create, because there is no need for synthesizers and track sampling and all the other technological contrivances they use in popular music.

This listener mentioned liking the genre because it is simple enough for anyone to create. He describes the genre as being more accessible because one does not need technical skills to create it. Other commenters shared the same sentiment of ITM being accessible. "I like the sense of a common leveling ground, where pretty much anyone who can play may join in." Some individuals even mentioned how the genre is accessible because of the community it ITM

creates. Numerous people mentioned the friendliness and openness of ITM listeners being appealing.

> One of the things I love most about this music is that people do it together in a pub or in someone's kitchen and that it builds community and relationship.

The idea that the genre is accessible to anyone shows how the genre can be a step toward reaching another goal. Individuals can achieve certain goals by listening to this genre. For example, an individual can maintain their identity or develop a new skill such as learning to dance or play an instrument through the genre. In the quotation, above, the goal of building a community and relationships is achieved through listening to music together. Access to the music is important in order to work towards one of these goals. The idea that the music is more accessible than other genres makes it a viable option as a means to an end, making it instrumentally rational. This theme is institutional in nature because individuals are accessing the genre to reach goals.

Ethnicity Identification

In addition to coding for why people listen to ITM, I also coded the data by listeners' statement of ethnicity. There are four categories an individual could be coded into: individuals who explicitly mention they are Irish, individuals who explicitly mention they are not Irish, individuals who have Irish ancestry but do not identify as Irish, and individuals who did not mention their ethnic identity. I wanted to see if motive explanations differed based on what category of identification they were in. I found that individuals who did not mention any ethnic identification and those who are Irish yet did not identify as Irish seemed to have an even amount of coverage within each theme. Individuals who mentioned they are Irish as well as those who mentioned they are not Irish had representation in every theme; however, some themes were

more prevalent than others. Individuals who mentioned they are not Irish had more instances in

the themes of activity association, epiphanic moments, and emotion than the other three themes.

Many non-Irish individuals had a discovery moment and emotional connection with ITM that

was pivotal in their relationship with the genre. These data were seen in the themes of epiphanic

moments and emotion. Also, non-Irish individuals seemed to enjoy activities associated with the

genre, specifically playing music. An emphasis by these individuals was made on the idea that

you do not have to be of Irish ethnicity to enjoy and play the music. In one example, an

individual who mentioned he is not Irish compares playing in the genre to blues. "...That said,

Irish blood does not make an Irish musician, any more than black blood makes a blues player."

This commenter believes that anyone can play ITM even if they are not from that specific

background. This idea was also articulated by individuals who had Irish ancestry, but did not

identify as Irish.

> No, I am 100 percent American. I don't particularly regard myself as Irish-American or
> Dutch-American (though the last name is pretty much the result of an adoption), except in
> kind of a tongue-in-cheek way. I figure my family left Ireland for a reason, and came to
> America (1964, in my mother's case, by way of England) and I am very thankful they did...
> My enthusiasm for the music of Ireland had nothing to do with my upbringing, though. It
> was something I came to as an adult.

> For example, though my great-grandmother waved goodbye to her mother at the gate of
> their home in Sligo when she was only 15 and then traveled to America, never to see her
> family again — I don't consider myself Irish. Irish traditional music is just music, a genre
> that appeals to some and not to others. It's a part of one nation's cultural history and
> appreciated by many. Like all genres, I hope it would be played respectfully by those who
> choose to play it. I hope that no one is so one dimensional that they equate 32 bars with
> their national identity. I found it at a whisky tasting (slainte) where I found I liked the tunes
> as much as the whisky, and I really like whisky!

These instances of rejecting Irish identity or listening to the music without relating it to identity

represent a group of individuals who do not see ITM as an important cultural practice or tool for

symbolic ethnicity. These statements counter the idea that ITM exists to create a sense of Irish identity. As the person above put it, "I hope that no one is so one dimensional that they equate 32 bars with their national identity." While some individuals, specifically in the cultural identity theme do indeed see their identity as achieved through listening to the music, others find that notion to be shallow, rejecting the idea that one can be symbolically ethnic.

Listeners who identified as Irish and have Irish ancestry said they had a deeper connection with the music than perhaps someone who isn't Irish would feel. They described their closer relationship to the music by explaining how they might understand the "subtle nuances" behind the music better than a non-Irish person.

> Is it something so deeply associated with our cultural experience and cultural memory that attainment cannot be artificial? Is it something we learn? That "essence" doesn't come in a bottle - to a great extent you inherit it. Yes I suppose you could say that you are born with it!! I believe we can learn an appeciation and feel for a culture other than the one we grew up in - but we can never fully know something unless we have experienced it first hand. A lot of ITM is about feelings which are bound to the land, the country, the weather, the lifestyle, religion, and culture. Some of the subtle nuances in the music are about reflections of these experiences.

Also, they explicitly describe how the genre shapes their identity while non-Irish don't see the music as necessarily changing who they are. One listener describes how although she is far removed from Irish relatives, she still feels a "deep connection" to finding her "ancestral music."

> For me, there is a bit of wistful envy and a desire to be more closely linked with the music I love. Although my only family connection is a triple-great grandfather who emigrated in the early 1800's, and I am most assuredly American, I feel a deep connection with Irish trad. I think it's a matter of finding music that strikes a chord regardless of one's ethnic heritage. But perhaps there's a little bit of me that feels like I've found my ancestral music.

Irish listeners were also represented in all of the themes, but their data were mostly prevalent in the themes of epiphanic moments and cultural identity. Individuals who identify as Irish were

also able to identify a distinct moment in their life when they started listening to the music. The most referenced theme though was that of cultural identity. The listeners who identified themselves as Irish put a larger emphasis on the music being part of their cultural identity than any other theme. They also emphasized this theme more than non- Irish listeners and Irish listeners who did not identify as Irish.

CHAPTER 5

ACCOUNTING FOR TASTE IN IRISH TRADITIONAL MUSIC

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The online data show that there are six main themes surrounding individual's motives to listen to ITM: epiphanic moments, activity association, cultural identity, musical pattern/content, emotion, and instrumental rationality. Epiphanic moments was the most referenced theme. With epiphanic moments, individuals could pinpoint an exact time, location, individual, and/or object that contributed to their taste in the genre. Also, individuals in sessions identified the activities associated with ITM such as playing instruments, dancing, and participation that peaked their interest in the genre. Some people saw the genre as a connection to their cultural identity through ancestral ties, nostalgia surrounding their cultural experiences, feelings bound to the country, and through tradition. People also mentioned just simply liking the way the music sounds through musical pattern, rhythm, and melody. Emotional feelings that were evoked from listening to the genre was another reason individuals mentioned listening to the music. They wanted to feel those emotions and thus listened to ITM. Lastly, some people mentioned how the music blends into their life either because of repeated exposure or the accessibility of the genre. Individuals also saw the genre as practical to reach a specific goal of meeting people or making money. These findings make several contributions. First, this study contributes to the use of Mills' (1940) framework for explaining uncontested practices. Second, I have expanded the literature on symbolic ethnicity. Also, this study supports Turner's (1976) theory of institutional and impulsive selves. I will elaborate on each of these contributions below.

According to C. Wright Mills (1940), the vocabularies of motive framework is used to explore individuals' explanations for controversial actions. This paradigm was exemplified in the literature review by Silva's (2007) research on the justifications for the use of Indian mascots. However, from my study, we can see that the framework works for action that is not necessarily controversial such as listening to a specific genre of music. We can use Mills' (1940) vocabulary of motive to discover and understand how people explain the more everyday behaviors of their lifestyle, such as listening to music, that may be more taken for granted. Through this framework, I discovered six themes that demonstrate how individuals account for why they listen to ITM. We can also see that individual explanations for behaviors, controversial or not, are culturally patterned. Although every story has unique qualities, we can see that these individual stories can be grouped together based on the intention behind the explanation. It is interesting to see how something so individualized, like taste in music can share commonalities within a larger group.

Following Gans (1979), Alba (1990), and Waters (1990), I expected to find people using music to construct symbolic ethnicity. People could potentially be using ITM as a symbolic cultural practice to maintain a claim to being Irish. The findings show that some individuals did indeed use ITM to build their cultural identity and learn "who we are." Many individuals who mentioned cultural identity as a motive for listening to ITM talked about how the music was a way for them to connect with their history, homeland, and cultural traditions associated with being Irish. People explained that this cultural connection shaped their identity and helped them maintain a relationship with their ethnic roots. It was interesting however, to find that cultural identity was not the most referenced theme found in the data, rather epiphanic moments was. Cultural identity was the third most referenced theme out of six themes. I believe cultural

identity ranked lower than expected because of the number of non-Irish who listen to the genre. It was also interesting to find that although some people did indeed have Irish roots, they did not identify as Irish even though they listened to ITM. The fact that many people who are not Irish or do not consider themselves Irish listen to the genre is a potential reason for cultural identity being less popular than a more impulsive theme of epiphanic moments. Only a portion of the listeners identified as Irish and used the music as a symbolic tool to maintain their ethnic identity. It was surprising to find that a group of individuals shared an anti-symbolic ethnicity sentiment. Previous literature describes cultural practices as tools to reinforce symbolic ethnicity, however some individuals disagree with this notion. Although some individuals do see the music as shaping their ethnic identity, others do not believe that one cultural practice can have a major influence on identity. This idea was strengthened even more by individuals with Irish roots that do not identify as Irish. These people listen to the music, yet do not see it as a way of connecting to their ethnicity despite being Irish.

Despite believing that these data would provide us with information on symbolic ethnicity, I was surprised to find that it had little importance. To fully understand my findings, I delved into literature by Turner (1976) that I had not anticipated using when I initially designed this study. These motives for their musical preference allow individuals to construct both impulsive and institutional selves. Turner (1976) builds on Mead's theory of the self to add more context and details to Mead's idea of the relationship between self and society. Turner (1976) argues that an individual will have an institutional or impulsive conception of the self. He explains how individuals who see themselves institutionally describe their identity in terms of the roles they have within the social structure. People who act institutionally most likely choose actions based on certain standards or motivations. We can see how individuals construct an

institutional self through some of the themes such as activity association, cultural identity, and practicality. Activity association is institutional in nature because the individuals chose consciously to do the activity that happened to be associated with ITM. Cultural identity is an institutional way of explaining why an individual likes this genre as well. Individuals can consciously choose to identify with Irish ethnicity, especially in the United States where being Irish is more symbolic than a truly lived out experience (Gans 1979). In these more institutional themes, Turner (1976) would argue that the real self is something that is achieved or created through actions controlled by the individual. When people describe their taste for ITM in terms of practicality, they talk about how listening to music helps them achieve a goal. With institutional actions, nothing is spontaneous. A person who sees themselves institutionally would likely not focus on the discovery process that comes with unplanned experiences. These individuals are likely to have a practical justification for activities they do, such as listening to music.

Conversely, Turner (1976) explains how individuals who see themselves through an impulsive locus describe their identity through a natural process. These individuals would most likely use characteristics like funny, down to earth, sensitive, or adventurous to describe themselves. People with more impulsive motives such as the themes of epiphanic moments, emotion, and musical pattern are more likely to see their real self as a process of discovery rather than achievement. The choice to listen to ITM comes without control. This is best exemplified when individuals mention that the music just "captures me," "draws me in," and "speaks to us." People used this sort of language in these three themes to describe why they liked ITM. Their tastes seemed to be out of their control, as if they were just listening to it because they wanted to without another motive of purposefully creating an identity. Turner's (1976) theory nicely

captures the different ways a person recognizes their real self and allows us to see how motives may differ between an institutional and an impulsive person. This study reveals, then, how musical taste is a means for constructing both loci of the self. Although I originally anticipated the findings to show a richer picture of how individuals build a symbolically ethnic identity, we can still see how cultural tastes in music facilitate identity building, but in a different way from that of Gans' (1979) theory. Here, individuals are creating a sense of self institutionally or impulsively through cultural taste.

Although this study provided evidence for motives associated with taste in music, there are a few limitations. It was able to account for individuals who are committed enough in the genre where they post on the internet about it. However, not all people who listen to certain niches of music will publicly post online about their musical taste. Future research could be done on listeners who are less committed than online users. This would help us to see if motives change based on how involved in the genre listeners are. Also, individuals represented in this study were from several countries and ethnic identities. With a broad variety of individuals, it is difficult to focus on motives of more specific groups. It was difficult to attempt to compartmentalize individuals by location or ethnic identity because not all online users made that information public. To focus solely on one region or ethnic identity, another method of data collection would have to be used such as interviews or surveys. With these methods, one can explicitly ask where an individual is from and what ethnicity they identify as. With online comments, I just had to go off what information was provided without prompting. However, with other future research, further qualitative content analysis would be useful. It would be interesting to use this method to compare themes of different genres and analyze how they are similar or different. For example, future research could explore why people listen to hip-hop or

country music and compare the themes. The themes I established are a good template that could be applied to other genres. I believe we would see each of the themes appear in other genres of music, so individuals could use these six themes as their coding scheme and add or subtract from it during the coding process. Also, it would be useful to explore other methods of data collection when focusing on musical taste in ITM. Interviews could be used to collect similar data to this study which could help with triangulation to get a more accurate picture of people's motives to listen to ITM. Interviews would be helpful to focus responses directly to the research question. With online comments, the users were not necessarily responding to a specific question. Rather, they were commenting on a thread where they are in control of what topic to address. If I were to conduct interviews, I believe I would get more detailed and focused answers that directly relate to the research question, giving me richer data than just a few sentences posted on the internet.

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