Chapter 1

Music Genres

I start every semester in my Sociology of Hip-Hop and Rap Music course by asking the students to tell me a story about the origins of this musical style. The collective narrative that emerges, cobbled together from episodes of VH1's *Behind the Music*, *Vibe Magazine* articles, and song lyrics, is that rap music's origins lie in the desire of inner-city, poor, black men to document their lives and critique the social order that blocks progress for our nation's minorities. In criticism of this, a second group of students argue that this political narrative is a smoke screen, masking and justifying the sexism, violence, and profligate lifestyle of rap songs and artists.[1]

The terms of this debate would have been totally foreign to proto–rap artists in the mid-1970s when they were performing DJ sets in courtyards, parks, and community centers. Oral histories reveal a group of young men and women seeking to make money and a name for themselves as disco DJs. According to at least one account, the first "rap party" was a celebration of DJ Kool Herc's sister's birthday, organized as a fund-raiser for school clothes for the siblings.[2] It was only years later that rappers began to bemoan the sacrifice of politics to profit. But the power of the political reading of rap has nearly obscured what early performers have said about this period, and about their goals in making music.

Evidence of the power of this account is found not only in my classroom discussions, or the popular media that teach students to view the music in this fashion, but also in the actions of canonizing organizations. For example, the first rap song added to the National Archive of Historic Recordings (in 2002) wasn't the first rap song performed, or even the first one recorded (an unabashed party song called "Rapper's Delight"), but instead was Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five's 1982 single, "The Message." This song's staccato vocal track describes the living conditions

and frustrations of those mired in urban poverty. It is neither the best-selling rap single of the period, nor the song with the most radio play, nor, I would argue, the best loved by fans. It is, however, the first rap track that exemplifies the lyrical conventions that characterize a strain of politically oriented rap.

That the canonization process would define political, or so-called Black Nationalist, songs as the characteristic style within a genre dominated by African American performers should not surprise any student of twentieth-century U.S. history. It should also not surprise us to know that there are multiple, conflicting accounts of rap's origins. The adage that "history is written by the winners" suggests how strongly our present circumstances color the knowledge and interpretations we make of the past. So-called revisionist histories are required when the desire to explain the present as the necessary outcome of past events blinds us to other events and explanatory factors.[3] Such thin historical accounts identify a small number of explanatory factors (think of "for want of a horse" accounts of King Richard III of England's death at the Battle of Bosworth) and prevent us from revealing "event structures" and the relationships that produce outcomes.[4] Thin histories are flawed not because they identify the wrong events and people, but because they focus on too few of them, and because the importance of events and performers is determined by contemporary values. The need to revise thin histories in light of new discoveries or shifts in political and cultural attitudes means that we never get an "authoritative" history; rather, we accumulate multiple accounts of history and its significance.[5] A thick account of history defocalizes the actions of individuals (e.g., charismatic leaders, kings and reformers, divisive wives) and shifts our attention toward social structures and collective action.

Music is particularly in need of thick histories. In most histories of music, the focus is placed on individual actors: genius performers, opportunistic promoters, or divisive wives. By attributing credit for bold innovations to single individuals, we have a fragile, thin explanation for the very complex worlds in which these innovators lived. Moreover, historians often identify and lay substantial credit at the feet of idiosyncratic events, serendipity, and luck (or their opposites).[6] By defining acts of invention or providence as outside of history, as the product of individual genius and serendipity, these accounts suggest that creativity and innovation operate

despite societal influence and social interaction. But if we take a closer look, each of these "great man" accounts has a shadow history in which geniuses depend upon the social systems in which they create their magic. As sociologists have shown time and again, great American art is produced by collaborative links between skilled practitioners.[7]

If you've ever been a member of a music community—as a fan or performer—you know that it takes tens, scores, or even thousands of people to make that community work, for better or worse. Music is a participatory, community-based activity.[8] At different stages of development, music communities are organized to lend themselves to different forms of participation. To return to the rap example, it is only after the community was large enough to sustain many, and many different, performers and songs that it was even possible to argue about whether the music "should be" seen as a political expression. As we look across musical communities, we discover more evidence that debates over the political content of music is keyed to the scale of the community size. Debates over profit, authenticity, or politics are extremely common once any music community has reached a relatively mature state of development.[9]

Documenting and understanding the attributes of music genre communities that emerge during different stages of development is the objective of this book. In looking across communities and musical styles, we can discover something that is rarely offered in musical histories: an analysis of how music communities *in general* operate: what shared obstacles and opportunities creative people face, what debates tend to characterize different states of the field, and so forth. These patterns are the grammar that allows us to understand the cultural language of popular music. Ultimately, my goal is to use the study of shared attributes across musical communities to provide a model of sociocultural classification. I seek a model that can be used to analyze many different cases in which people collaborate to draw boundaries around groups of things: ideas, artworks, people, organizations, to name just a few.

Banding Together is a study of the ideological, social, organizational, and symbolic attributes of twentieth-century American music. Three questions guide the investigation: (1) What are the common economic, organizational, ideological, and aesthetic traits among contemporary music genres? (2) Do music genres follow any patterns in their development,

and if so, what explains their similarities and differences? and (3) Using contemporary American musical genres as a point of reference, how can we discover new genre forms and trajectories? I explore these questions in music in order to offer a comprehensive view into both classificatory schema employed to organize sound and sociocultural classification systems in general.

To identify these uniformities, I begin by isolating the formal characteristics of twelve attributes found across styles of music. These organizational, economic, interpersonal, and aesthetic attributes are used to differentiate one musical style from another, and a given style from one moment in time to the next. Drawing from an inductive coding of histories of sixty American market-based musical forms from the twentieth century, I demonstrate patterns of attributes.

What Is a Theory of Sociocultural Classification?

Questions of symbolic classification have been central to sociology since its earliest days because distinctions between classes become the nucleus around which we develop identities, affiliations, hierarchies, knowledge, and conflict. Classifying rap as political, misogynist, or profit-oriented has enormous consequences for fans, artists, and promoters. Since the advent of their discipline, sociologists have generated systems of sociocultural classification for a diverse set of phenomena, including forms of organization, religious belief, fashion, gender, sexuality, art, race, and societies at large (to name a few of many examples). The sociological concern with systemic change in such classification systems is venerable, yet there is no robust and generalizable theory of dynamic change, though efforts have been made in domains including nation building, social movements, name-giving practices, and French cuisine.[10] In the case of music, stylistic distinctions (between jazz and blues, for example) organize people and songs within a system of symbolic classification. While numerous studies chronicle the history of specific styles of music, none seek to document recurrent processes of development and change *across* styles. The objective of this book is to generate a robust theory of musical communities, culminating in a system of sociocultural classification that can be applied

to a wide range of phenomena. Such a theory of classification should produce thick histories.

I study music to illuminate processes of sociocultural classification for several reasons. First, and perhaps most importantly, my expertise lies in the sociological study of music, and rap music in particular. One of the reasons I chose to study rap music was that I found myself in an intellectually vibrant and progressive department during graduate school. While scholars in general were at pains to distinguish consecrated musical genres from "vernacular" ones, my colleagues encouraged me to disregard these distinctions and treat rap music as another case to which the tools of social science could be usefully applied. Second, I chose music because it helps me to have a lot of the right kind of company. Within the academy, music is a focus of experts across a number of fields, including those studying digital technologies, regulation and deregulation of industries, firm and market structure impacts on industries, taste, identity, history, censorship and surveillance, and authenticity.[11] While some scholars might seek to avoid densely populated research fields, I was delighted to discover a wealth of primary and secondary data sources on which I could rely. These many histories of musical communities have provided the data for this book. Since they document the numerous features of music communities potentially relevant to a theory of sociocultural classification, this is a final and critically important reason for my selection of music for this study.

After more than ten years of research and teaching within the field, it became obvious to me that formal similarities across musical communities exist. For example, there are clear and recognizable differences between a "garage band" and groups making music for mass audiences. In the case of the former, performers play in front of small groups, have no consistent access to performance spaces, meet and practice in private spaces like homes, and tend to be musically unsophisticated. Disagreements within these groups emerge when individual performers push their personal agendas—musical, social, political, and economic—on members of the small community. At the other end of the spectrum, popular musicians play in front of huge audiences, have difficulty getting booked in all but the largest performance venues, and meet and practice within formal organizational settings like recording studios. With the exception of lead performers, musicians cycle through a variety of groups because unanimity of

performance conventions makes individual instrumentalists relatively interchangeable. As a result of widespread consensus over the conventions of musical performance, disagreements are highly interpersonal and unique, or technical. After noting that certain characteristics immediately differentiate moments in a musical style's trajectory, I began to document how the social organization of musical production changes over time.

Creating an exhaustive list of these characteristics or attributes required that I construct a conceptual template and then iteratively refine it. Identifying the attributes that characterize musical communities was a straightforward, but lengthy, process. First, there was the question of how to draw boundaries around the case—that is, how to define what "counted" as data, and what did not. These are common problems when scholars seek to produce "thick" histories of the sort I described in the chapter's opening pages. The simplest solution was to cast a wide net while ensuring that the sources of information are reliable. It was immediately apparent that music made outside the United States, and before the early twentieth century, faced drastically different circumstances during its birth and death, so I decided to exclude such music from consideration. The more difficult problem was to identify musical styles that could be properly analyzed as genres.

I define musical genres as systems of orientations, expectations, and conventions that bind together industry, performers, critics, and fans in making what they identify as a distinctive sort of music.[12] In other words, a genre exists when there is some consensus that a distinctive style of music is being performed. You will immediately notice that I do not use the word "genre" to refer to musical idioms (e.g., polka or techno), and instead refer to such idioms as musical *styles*. I believe my definition of genre facilitates a deeply sociological approach to the subject, in that it focuses attention on the set of social arrangements that link participants who believe themselves to be involved in a collective project.[13]

Genre communities draw together a diverse constituency of record labels and other complex organizations; fans, listeners, and audiences; musicians; and "historical legacies that come to us within broader social formations."[14] Genre communities are art worlds: networks of cultural production, distribution, and consumption.[15] Art worlds include technologies or artistic materials (e.g., cameras, brushes); regulatory systems (e.g., copyright law); distribution systems and display locations (e.g., compact discs,

galleries); reward systems (e.g., sales charts, awards); organizations (e.g., record labels); systems of appreciation and criticism (e.g., college curricula that convey art historical resonance); gatekeepers (e.g., talent scouts, newspaper critics), and audiences.[16]

Given this definition, genres are numerous and boundary work is ongoing as they emerge, evolve, and disappear.[17] That is, while genres need some degree of consistency for coherence, they also must change: "genres do not work by simply reproducing the same patterns over and over; such repetitive logic would likely have little appeal to popular music audiences."[18] The shifting boundaries of genres make them difficult to pin down. Musicians often do not want to be confined by genre boundaries, but their freedom of expression is necessarily bounded by the expectations of the other performers, audience members, critics, and the diverse others whose work is necessary to making, distributing, and consuming symbolic goods.[19] For example, "'heavy metal' is a term that is constantly debated and contested, primarily among fans, but also in dialogue with musicians, commercial marketing strategists, and outside critics and censors. Debates over which bands, which songs, sounds and sights get to count as heavy metal provide occasions for contesting musical and social prestige."[20] The genre within which particular songs, or performers, are positioned can change over time.[21] These debates serve not only to sort bands and songs into groups but also to identify those who are aware of current distinctions from those who are outsiders or hapless pretenders. Within the stream of electronic and dance music, for example, keeping up with the introduction of new styles—more than three hundred in just 1998 and 1999—is an accomplishment only the most diligent and committed fan could achieve.[22] The ongoing boundary work that characterizes music genres is therefore an attribute worthy of study, not a problem to be avoided in the endeavor of examining how genres work. In this book, I included every variant style, group, or performer that made a claim to a given genre community. Since my focus was on the formal attributes of music communities, there was no need to adjudicate the status of any particular band.

Musical styles vary widely by popularity and longevity. Some music forms, such as rock 'n' roll, become very popular and last over a long period of time. Some, like disco, are very popular and short-lived.[23] Some, like polka, thrive over many decades without becoming widely popular, and

many, such as big beat, Northern soul, psychedelic country, and range rock, have only a transitory existence. Most evolve out of one or more earlier musical styles that develop in analogous sectors of society and share cultural characteristics. For example, there is a recurrent affinity of avant-garde art with art-oriented pop music. Late nineteenth-century French modernist artists' incorporation of popular music sensibilities into their work culminated in the appropriation of jazz elements in the 1920s. The process operated in reverse when bebop jazz musicians of the late 1940s asserted their work to be related to the latest avant-garde art of their time, a pattern to be repeated later by the Beatles and the Velvet Underground, among others.[24]

Some musical styles, over the course of decades, spawn a number of variants.[25] These families of music retain their coherence through shared institutions, aesthetics, and audiences. I call these sets of styles "streams" through which a number of genres may flow.[26] For a musical example, rock 'n' roll, drawn from rhythm and blues (R&B), country music, and pop, began to be considered a distinct style in 1954.[27] In the decades since, it has spawned numerous new styles, including rockabilly, glitter rock, punk, heavy metal, emo, and more, ultimately forming a rock stream.

What Are Genre Forms and How Are They Identified?

Reading histories of musical styles created in the twentieth-century United States, I began the iterative process of identifying the attributes that characterize different communities. I ultimately examined sixty domestic and four international styles, documented in over three hundred primary and secondary texts. I used a preliminary survey of works on bluegrass, grunge rock, rap, and bebop jazz to generate a list of attributes. I then brought this preliminary list to bear on the remaining fifty-six domestic genres, and proceeded to add, condense, or remove attributes as necessary. This process resulted in the template of attributes represented in table 1.1. Each of the twelve rows represents a dimension common to all sampled styles, and each cell represents specific attributes. During the construction of this list of attributes, it became apparent that there was an additional dimension of difference that roughly corresponded to the complexity of the musical world at a given time in its history. Particular attributes of the musical

community tended to accompany other attributes. And so, for example, communities with very few members lacked regular access to performance venues, and often did not even have a name they used to describe their emerging musical style. Also, music that attracted national or international

Table 1.1. Genre Forms and Dimensions

Dimension	Genre Forms			
	Avant-garde	Scene-based	Industry-based	Traditionalist
Organizational form	Creative circle	Local scene	Established field	Clubs, associations
Organizational scale	Local, some Internet	Local, Internet linked	National, worldwide	Local to international
Organization locus	Homes, coffee shops, bars, empty spaces	Local, translo-cal, and virtual scenes	Industrial firms	Festivals, tours, academic settings
Sources of in-come for artists	Self-contributed, partners, unknowing employers	Scene activities, self-contributed	Sales, licensing, merchandise, endorsements	Self-contributed, heritage grants, festivals
Press coverage	Virtually none	Community press	National press	Genre-based advocacy and critique
Genre ideal or member goals	Create new music	Create community	Produce revenue, intellectual property	Preserve heritage and pass it on
Codification of performance conventions	Low: highly experimental	Medium: much attention to codifying style	High: shaped by industry categories	Hyper: great concern about deviation
Technology	Experimentation	Codifying techni-cal innovations	Production tools that standardize sound	Idealized orthodoxy
Boundary work	Against estab-lished music	Against rival musics	Market driven	Against deviants within
Dress, adorn-ment, drugs	Eccentric	Emblematic of genre	Mass-marketed "style"	Stereotypic and muted
Argot	Sporadic	Signals membership	Used to sell products	Stylized
Source of music name	Site or group specific	Scene members, genre-based media	Mass media or industry	Academics, critics

audiences was plagued by debates over the expertise of performers. In order to capture these similarities, or clusters of attributes within dimensions, I created four genre forms: Avant-garde, Scene-based, Industry-based, and Traditionalist. These types are represented as columns in table 1.1. Thus genre types are characterized by constellations of dimensional attributes. For example, in the upper-left-corner cell of table 1.1, "creative circle" is the representative organizational form of Avant-garde genres.

The entries in a column of the table represent an ideal-typical construction of a genre type and so do not operate like those of the periodic table of elements or the genetically based taxonomies in biology. This is because each specific attribute is neither necessary nor sufficient for a musical style to be coded as having a particular genre form. The table of dimensions and types should be considered a conceptual tool for understanding genre. Had I made more detailed distinctions among attributes, it would have been possible to create more than twelve of them, and perhaps, more than four genre types. For example, I could have chosen to break "press coverage" into two dimensions: one that captured the size and demographic attributes of readers, and one that reflected the content or character of specific articles. While it is possible that readership and content do not work in concert, there is substantial evidence to suggest that these attributes are correlated. In considering the inclusion of new dimensions, I sought to ascertain whether they meaningfully distinguished musical genres from one another. Ultimately, the four-genre type by twelve-dimension resolution was the most parsimonious.

Organizations and Money

Over time, musical communities experience particular organizational forms, produce and distribute works for differently sized audiences, and operate within certain kinds of organizations. These dimensions—organizational form, scale, and locus of activity—are the first three rows in table 1.1.

Each phase of a musical style exhibits a typical form of social organization: a circle, a scene, the diffuse actors moving in and around formal organizations, and a fourth state in which participants are fractured across all three forms of social organization.

Musical communities can range from the hyperlocal to the global, and I refer to this dimension as organizational scale. Genres can be housed in neighborhoods, nurtured by a local scene, or supported by the massive machinery of global enterprise. The center of activity is a musical community's organizational locus. For example, doo-wop groups in the late 1940s often performed in the same two clubs: the Royal in Baltimore and the Howard in Washington.[28] Performers, fans, record label talent scouts, and anyone else interested in the style found their way to those spaces. The form, scale, and locus of doo-wop in the 1940s was local, Scene-based music. Similarly, in Seattle, during the years when Sub Pop Records sought to create a market for the so-called Seattle sound (later dubbed "grunge rock"), promoters showed their resourcefulness by creating new bars, clubs, and other performance venues in a city where such spaces were rare, particularly if one sought to attract an underage crowd.[29] In these examples we see both that genres depend upon existing music performance spaces, and that they can create the organizational locus for the music from raw materials. In their Scene-based phase, several music styles relied upon a group of venues spread across cities, in which they found local audiences for the music. In black musical styles, performers traveled the "chitlin circuit," salsa performers gigged on the "cuchifrito circuit," and Jewish entertainers played the "Borscht Belt," while Reverend Dorsey and fellow Chicagoans created the "gospel highway."[30] In the Traditionalist genre form, community members rely on formal organizations, both large and small, to support their activities. Fans and performers create clubs and associations that distribute information on the history of the style and the current activities of its members. But Traditionalists also draw resources from large organizations designed to serve the needs of larger or diverse groups. Museums and universities often provide physical space and financial resources that allow genre members to write histories, host conferences, air radio programs, and mount performances. Record labels devoted to the production of contemporary music may agree to produce one or a small number of remastered or rerecorded albums. Although these organizations are not dedicated to serve the genre community, their support is key to the vibrancy of Traditionalist genres.

It is extremely important to analyze the spaces in which music is experienced because spatial arrangements impact the form and nature of community engagement. The size of the venue, the amount of distance

and interaction between musicians and audience members, and the volume of the music in the space all guide participants as they figure out how to act and interact, and determine what they should expect about the other "rules of the genre."[31] For example, contemporary punk music often occurs in venues with raised stages above dance floors to accommodate the pit slam dancing of fans. The combination of collision and mutual protection among punk fans within the pit reflects the blend of individuality and camaraderie that characterizes the rebellious attitudes in contemporary punk music.[32] In contrast, classical music and opera are typically performed in venues that are filled with tightly locked rows of chairs and provide no space for dancing. This conveys the expectation that these styles are designed for passive, thoughtful consumption, and not for other forms of physical engagement.

The organizational form, scale, and locus of a musical genre reflect several other features of production and consumption. Clusters of these attributes may predict the nature of a music community's relationship with the state. Smaller, hyperlocal circles that don't generate much attention or profit may not be exposed to tax policies on income or business ownership, but members may be especially vulnerable to police supervision if they are seen as dangerous elements within the community. Only those musics with a relatively advanced division of labor are likely to pursue government subventions to cover the production of works.

These examples also reveal that organizational form, scale, and locus reflect the status and role structure of the group. We should not expect a small musical community to develop a bureaucratic infrastructure, for example. Patterns in the organization of the music may also influence the means of communication employed by group members, such that smaller groups rely on person-to-person contact, and larger groups rely on Web pages, newsletters, and other mass media technologies that reach beyond face-to-face interaction. For example, as I discuss in more depth in chapter 2, most heavy metal styles survive through the circulation of music and information through "distros," or distribution lists. Lists such as these nurture the growth of death metal, as members share not just music, but also information and advice. For example, many groups (including Nasty Savage, Death, and Morbid Angel) relocated to Florida in order to record with Scott Burns and his staff at Morrisound Studios, based on the recom-

mendations of fellow musicians.[33] This suggests that the arrow of causality points both ways: the means of communication within a community is both produced by, and can produce, the music's primary location in physical space. Since relations with the state, the degree of bureaucratization, and communication media are consistently associated with attributes of a music's organizational form, scale, and locus, they were not included as distinct dimensions in table 1.1.

The sources of income available to artists largely reflect the organizational form, locus, and goals of the genre, and have been of specific interest to scholars working at the intersection of political economy, urban social dynamics, and cultural production.[34] There are no studies that exhaustively document the amount and kind of income that musical artists earn, although contract negotiations, financial hardships, and cross-platform branding strategies feature in most profiles of music producers, label heads, and bands.[35] However, we know that the kinds and amounts of funding available to groups of artists determine, to a large extent, the size and diversity of the public that hear their music. Conversely, the size and diversity of the fan base for a musical style determines, to some degree, the kinds and amounts of funding available to artists.

At the Avant-garde stage, music producers require meager resources: really just the time and space to experiment. In music scenes, the sources of practical support are the most diverse of across all genre forms: artists often rely on family members, friends, and nonmusical employment to support their creative labor. For example, most singers in doo-wop's Scene-based phase held "straight" day jobs in the community with businesses that formally and informally supported the music community: performers were allowed to work on a part-time or ad hoc basis to accommodate tour schedules. Alphonso Feemster of doo-wop group the Four Bars of Rhythm explained that in the group's early days: "I'm singing, still singing, working day job at Morton's [Department Store], right. Eddie Day worked at an old mattress factory around the corner from Morton's. Melvin worked in there with him. We were all in the same area."[36] Baltimore and Washington, D.C., businesses sponsored radio programs for doo-wop music, sold records, and sometimes sponsored or managed talent shows, contents, or even groups themselves.[37] In Industry-based genres, artists no longer need to rely on family, friends, and nonmusi-

cal employment to earn a living, but this is an exceptional achievement for musicians. Musicians earn income from recording contracts, concert ticket sales and appearances, merchandise sales, and sponsorship agreements. While many organizations involved in Traditionalist genres are nonprofit businesses supported by donations and grants, universities also play an important role, supporting musical styles by hiring historians and musicians to teach courses on the subject.[38]

The nature of media coverage is differs substantially among the various genre forms. In the Scene-based period of many musical styles, local media will carry sympathetic and informed pieces on the emerging community. In grunge rock's Scene-based period, local Seattle radio stations like KCMU and KJET included the music on their playlists, and locally operated, alternative press outfits like *Backlash* and the Seattle *Rocket* published stories on the music.[39] Of course, scene members can use the media instrumentally to advance the popularity of the music. In grunge, Sub Pop record label owners Pavitt and Poneman hired a London press agent to promote the bands in the United Kingdom (believing the British music press's endorsement would build interest in the genre), and paid for *Melody Maker*'s Everett True to cover Seattle's "grunge phenomenon." After influential British DJ John Peel began to positively review Sub Pop's music, the rock press caught on and Seattle bands were soon described as "the saviors of rock."[40] Grunge quickly became an international popular sensation, propelling the scene into an Industry-based genre.

In contrast, the Industry-based phase is often dominated by poorly informed and critical feature pieces in the national media. While some of the better music periodicals will seek out performers and produce stories on the politics and lifestyles of musicians, major news media tend to sensationalize Industry-based music, spinning the lifestyle as a danger to its fans, or claiming a danger is posed to society by its "lawless, anti-social, and hedonistic" fans.[41] In Traditionalist genres, the media focus on the music as material to review, not as a news story. These media support the goals of such genres: to preserve the history of the Scene-based phase, to introduce new fans and performers to the music, and to adjudicate claims of authenticity among the community. And so, for example, in the 1960s and 1970s, the rock press didn't write pieces analyzing the vocal approaches of older groups, or their instrumentation, but instead "concen-

trated . . . on finding the 'true auteurs' of the groups, usually the composers or the producers."[42] Thus the focus ceases to be on the music itself and shifts toward an authentication process that only loosely addresses sound. Characterizing the scale and nature of press coverage is an important tool in identifying a musical style's genre form.

Genre Ideals and Style

Genres are defined not only by features of the organizational environment and institutional practices that arise within it, but by attributes of the artists and the music they play. These dimensions include the genre ideal, performance conventions, technology, boundary work, codes of dress and speech, and the source of the genre name.

Genre stakeholders have a set of target goals, or "a set of preferred changes toward which [they claim] to be working," not unlike social movements. I call these target goals the *genre ideal* of the group; these are, specifically, a group of preferred changes the genre members seek to enact.[43] Genre ideal bears a strong similarity to the sensitivities of "critical communities," where a group of critical thinkers cultivate a sensitivity to some problem, and develop consensus about its causes and a shared sense of how it should be addressed or solved.[44] In music, these often emerge out of grievances with the status quo. For example, Avant-garde grunge artists developed a genre ideal built from their shared objections to the hair metal, pop, and rock of the time. Grunge was antimacho and antimainstream, a reaction against both the "fluff" of pop singers Madonna and Paula Abdul and the big hair and "beef cake posturing" of hair metal bands like Mötley Crüe, Poison, and Bon Jovi.[45] Grunge vocals were simple, often unintelligible, because singers avoided the operatic voices of hair metal. The emergence of a new artist, school, party, or movement is marked by the facts that it poses problems for other artists, and that its arguments become the focus of conversations and struggles.[46]

Even when a genre ideal is not expressly stipulated, group members come to share a sense of what changes they seek to make in existing music. As the genre ideal matures, however, community members turn their focus toward the preservation of a historic or earlier style. When doo-wop

reached its Traditionalist phase, in the late 1960s, the British invasion was drawing a large, middle-class audience to rock 'n' roll. Doo-wop aficionados, in fanzines like *Big Town Review* and *Record Exchanger*, lamented the ignorance of the new rock audience, and especially their lack of understanding of doo-wop's role in the invention of the popular style.[47] Since Traditionalist genres have less fan support than most contemporary, popular music, they often ennoble their tastes through implied kinship with artistic forms characterized by unimpeachable aesthetic credentials and a small, discerning audience. For example, jazz player Bob Wilber said of the 1990s: "I think it's maybe the most important movement in jazz in the next decade, the restoration of early jazz. . . . In other words, we play Mozart today and it isn't considered old-fashioned. Why not play Jelly Roll Morton, King Oliver, early Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman, and Charlie Parker?"[48] The comparison of early works in several jazz styles with Mozart is meant to reframe the nadir of jazz's popularity as a harbinger of canonization to come.

Genre ideal is used to refer to a set of performance conventions adopted by the group so that players know what to expect of each other. These vary widely from being very open and experimental to being rigidly codified. To show that they are part of the scene, fledgling musicians must show that they understand the coalescing genre performance conventions. Innovators or stars within the community are produced when artists are able to introduce or modify performance conventions in ways that meet with approval. Of course, most conventions are borrowed from other genres in the music stream, but some are modified or unique to the style-in-formation. Conventions governing audience behavior are also consolidated over time.[49] In addition, conventions concerning the evaluation of performance develop and become the center of critical discourse in and around the genre.[50] While smaller groups tend to prioritize innovation, and local groups seek to nurture a community of support, other genres seek to produce revenue, or to preserve heritage.

The demonstration and innovation of performance conventions is often dependent upon the availability and mutability of technologies required for the music's production. Changes in technology often augur the emergence of new musics. Such was the case when rap musicians discovered a means by which two turntables could be linked together and synchronized so that music from one or both decks could be heard. With-

out this innovation, the modern art of "turntableism" and the live performance of rap would not have evolved as they did. Genre forms are differentiated based on the use to which technology is put: as an experimental tool or in the form of conventional instruments designed to standardize musical sound.

Members of musical communities seek to identify themselves, more or less strongly, with the group, and so nomenclature, fashion, and slang are characteristics that evolve with the community. Genre members identify who belongs within the community and who does not, using distinctive dress, adornment, drug use, and argot. Some of these identifiers are demographic: for example, members are of the appropriate age, gender, ethnicity, and body type, and come from specific geographic places. Generally none of these is essential, but they make it easier to meld into the community. In addition, identifiers based in elective affinities may include any or all of the following: clothes, accessories, dancing prowess, distinctive language, hair management, body work, sexual norms, drugs of choice, expressive values (white power, flower power, urbanity, rusticity, religiosity, alienation), and other lifestyle elements.[51]

Style is a central symbolic resource that genres (like subcultures) employ in order to identify their relationship to the status quo, particularly in cases where they seek to undermine cultural hegemony.[52] But there is not always a direct correspondence between different "styles" and musical difference; it has been argued that riot grrrl, straight edge, anarcho-punk, and white power music differentiate their communities by political and philosophical, not stylistic or musical, distinctiveness.[53] However, there is no mistaking the correspondence between creative modes of dress and speech and new musical communities, just as the relationship between mass producers and marketers is evident in the case of mature, popular musics. Artists often identify their style as an extension of their group's ideology; consider Chinese rock musician Geo Qi:

> [Our style] represents our attitude, and also had a psychological value. When you have your hair down to your shoulders, everybody looks at you on the street. It naturally draws attention to you. It sounds superficial, but in the Chinese tradition you're supposed to be reserved and discreet, and we need to break through this restriction.[54]

Since rock musicians in China often voice criticisms of CCP (Chinese Communist Party) censure of individual expression and creativity, styles of dress are a simple way to embody their critique.

In other cases, musical communities adopt styles of dress as a form of critical engagement with stereotypes. Doo-wop group the Ink Spots wore clean and pressed white suits with flowers in their lapels. During performances, the group members used sharp, precise movements and a formal posture. In doing so, they adopted a different stature from that of most other black artists, or from the stereotype of black artists, and their "shuck . . . jive . . . and blackcrobatic dancing for white Hollywood. The Ink Spots were not stereotype."[55] The group used their style as a form of political critique and genre affiliation.

In the Industry-based genre, a music's style is mass-marketed, and often appears across multiple formats as firms seek to profit from the sale of as many consumer products as possible. As signatures of the Industry-based phase of grunge, a popular movie was released that was centered in the Seattle music scene (*Singles*), and the alternative rock festival Lollapalooza sold out stadiums across the country.[56] Soon, "alternative," a descriptor applied to grunge bands from Seattle, was being used to sell consumer products like Budweiser (the "alternative beer") and to describe an MTV video program (*Alternative Nation*); the "grunge aesthetic" inspired designer Marc Jacobs to incorporate flannel shirts, wool ski caps, and Doc Marten boots into the centerpieces of Perry Ellis's 1992 spring collection. The Style section of the *New York Times* ran a front-page story titled "Grunge: A Success Story."[57] The editor of men's style magazine *Details* was not alone in observing that the packaging of grunge as style is ironic, in much the same way that punk music's mass merchandizing was ironic: "the thing about grunge is it's not anti-fashion, it's unfashion."[58] Of course, part of the mass appeal of both grunge and punk was its presumptive sincerity.

Specific slang and argot function to draw a boundary around musical communities, but names durably define the group. The chosen name can be used to distinguish musical types and reveal processes of collective memory and discursive structures that link nomenclature to genre forms. These names emerge from many different sources, and at different stages in any music's development. It is frequently the case that disc jockeys and

critics are viewed as the progenitors of the names of musical styles: disc jockey and television personality Alan Freed is famously credited with popularizing the term "rock 'n' roll."[59] Often multiple individuals lay claim to having invented the name that sticks. For example, while Venezuelan radio disc jockey Phidias Danilo Escalona used the term "salsa" to denote Latin dance music in the early 1960s, New York publisher Izzy Sanabria claims to have invented the term.[60] Performers and fans sometimes reject particular names that are seen to have been invented by firms seeking to profit from the music, designating these terms as inauthentic. For example, when band leader Rubén Blades was asked, "What is Salsa?" he responded, "I never liked that adjective. It was used for identifying a series of rhythms coming from the Caribbean area in order to sell it to North Americans and the rest of the world. That is to say, to simplify a form of musical information that is really complex. . . . It came to obtain the pejorative acceptance of a spoiled genre in the most hidden part of Latin American culture."[61] Indeed, some genre designations have been created by fiat by powerful elements of the music industry, as when, on June 25, 1949, *Billboard* magazine introduced the "Rhythm and Blues" (R&B) chart to represent the best-selling records in the diverse and contending genres in the field of popular black music. The invented term R&B replaced an earlier term, "race records," also invented (by the Okeh Record Company) to refer to music created by and for African Americans.[62] Race records included sounds now associated with diverse styles including gospel, blues, black vaudeville, spoken-word texts like sermons, and some jazz. Like the earlier term, R&B is more a marketing category than a description of a cohesive set of aesthetic traits. *Billboard* similarly created a chart called "country and Western" (C&W) to encompass hillbilly, honky-tonk, western swing, cowboy music, folk, and country jive. Finally, the term "world music" was created by record labels seeking to sell folk music, primarily that recorded by African musicians, to Western consumers.[63]

These twelve dimensions of musical communities organize or describe four characteristic genre forms: Avant-garde, Scene-based, Industry-based, and Traditionalist. The four genre forms can be used to describe any of the sixty U.S. genres at any one moment in time. Given a description of the organizational form or locus of a musical community, the clarity of its dress codes, or the degree of consensus over musical conventions,

any musical style can be sorted into one of these genre forms. The forms provide a shorthand to illuminate the obstacles and opportunities faced by community members.

What Genres Are Not

Not all commercial music can be properly considered a genre in my sense of the term. Music crafted for specific types of venues or alluded to by reference to a commercial category should properly be considered nongenred music. Examples include Tin Pan Alley, Broadway show tunes, and commercial music that is crafted for a specific demographic and designated by a commercial category (e.g., middle-of-the-road (MOR), music for lovers, dance music, easy listening music, world music). One early problem case is Tin Pan Alley music. The designation is used to describe music created in the early years of the twentieth century on Twenty-eighth Street in New York City by a network of music publishers and theaters. It is not so much a genre as a set of arrangements involving several organizational levels with an elaborate and strict division of labor, and attitudes designed to produce songs with hit potential.[64] Songs in the Tin Pan Alley songbook resemble one another aesthetically, but that similarity derives from artists' desires to emulate other hits; it is "a much more homogenous style than had ever before been the case in the history of song in America."[65] Most importantly, Tin Pan Alley music evolved gradually and without the clear breaks that would have necessitated the evocation of a genre designation.

Much the same argument holds for pop and teen music. At its core, pop music is music that is found in *Billboard* magazine's Hot 100 Singles chart. Songs intended for the pop music market typically have their distinguishing genre characteristics purposely obscured or muted in the interest of gaining wider appeal.[66] Artists making such music may think of their performances in terms of style, but the organizations that assist them in reaching the chart most certainly do not. Songs are created to attract an audience, but not necessarily "fans" who discriminate on the basis of genre distinctions and conventions. In addition, while aspiring artists within genres think of their music as working within the conventions of a set of musics, artists making pop music sample from different styles to

keep their music fresh. The performers who work exclusively within pop music, and no other musical idiom, are typically industry creations. For example, artist development expert Lou Pearlman played a vital role in creating the "boy band" sensation of the late 1990s (e.g., Backstreet Boys, O-Town, and 'N Sync) by drafting performers who answered casting calls. Such star making is a fascinating and underresearched topic. Music from genres can transform into pop music; consequently, the pop charts are a mix of "pure" pop (that is to say, a succession of hits that are marginally different) and songs derived from genres that are popular at the moment, such as rap or punk. Accordingly, pop is best considered as a chart, a way of doing business, or a target demographic, and not as a genre.[67]

World music provides a final example of a commercial music category that should not be confused with a genre. According to a guide that purports to present the "basics" of world music, the term is most often used to describe traditional, folk, or roots music that is played by indigenous musicians, and that may incorporate other musical forms, including influences from global popular forms like rock or jazz. "Indigenous" folk musics that are not fairly described in these terms include rock 'n' roll, R&B, jazz, soul, Broadway show tunes, classical, heavy metal, country music, blues, disco, karaoke, and rap, although exceptions are allowed in the final case.[68] Artists chosen from the domestic repertoire of a variety of countries and regions (e.g., Bulgaria, West Africa, Peru) are repackaged and relabeled as world music, and customers buy it as such. Thus "world music is clearly not music from the 'world,' but a narrow selection of sounds from somewhere else in the world."[69] This convoluted logic suggests a misspecification of the style. It indicates that we should consider world music to be music crafted for a global audience by reference to a commercial category. In fact, the category of "world music" was invented following a meeting in London in 1987 of staff from several small record labels who sought to create a market for music "variously labeled as 'ethnic,' 'traditional,' or 'roots,' which was increasingly in popularity."[70] World music is a marketing category invented to expand the audience for African popular music.[71] World music has no distinctive stylistic or idiomatic features, and the label was created to sell musical styles that were seen to have an underdeveloped market potential.[72] World music should properly be considered nongenred music.

In this book, I focus on twentieth-century music genres from the United States and exclude such nongenred music. I also restrict myself to music created in the commercial marketplace and thus eliminate from consideration the many "classical" and "art" musics. Genres that function in nonprofit or grant-based economies have different creative, organizational, financial, audience, and critical support mechanisms from those of commercial musics.[73] The types and trajectories of genres among nonprofit musics therefore take on forms distinct from those that are the focus here.[74]

It is my intention to use genre as the unit of analysis, and thus to distinguish my work both from those who treat consumers as the object of interest (as in studies of taste), and from work that treats genres as unchanging. There are comparative studies of musical styles, but within these, music consumers are typically used as the unit of analysis, and a reception perspective is employed in the examination of how groups of consumers use available genres to express their social identity or status.[75] Since these studies are frequently based on the analysis of survey data, the "genres" employed (e.g., rock, MOR, classical) are typically very inclusive, closer to what I mean by "stream," and what others mean by "field."[76] They are not, however, much akin to the units of consumption as defined by consumers. Instead, my approach assumes that genres are constituted and changed by the choices individuals and organizations make. Thus I examine the evolution of self-defined collectivities. My approach is guided by the simple observation that it is the case not only that fans of bebop in the 1940s differ from contemporary listeners, but also that bebop as a style has changed as well. Although the music nominated by fans in the two periods may be largely the same, and may share a common history and lineage, the social environment in which the genre is organized has been transformed.

Outline of the Book

The objective of *Banding Together* is to explain processes of music genre development, exploring why some styles gain mass popularity and others thrive in small niches. This requires that we examine the attributes and

activities of music communities, looking beyond legendary performers and events. Rather than seeking to influence your tastes, my objective is to ask you to question how your tastes in music are instruments of power, limiting and encouraging certain social boundaries, between those who are "like you" and those who are not. More generally, my goal is to construct a broad theory of how classification schemes develop. My argument is that in doing so, we reveal the structure of cultural organization, a structure that goes to the heart of social organization. The argument proceeds as follows.

Chapter 2 uses three case studies—bluegrass, bebop jazz, and rap music—to explore in greater depth how genres cohere, that is, how styles, conventions, and goals are crystallized so as to define musical communities. I also focus on debates and key moments when such consensus breaks down or changes. I note that particular attributes of each musical community tend to accompany other attributes. And so, for example, communities with very few members lack regular access to performance venues, and often do not have a single adjective or title they use to describe their style. Similarly, music that attracts national audiences is often plagued by debates over the expertise of performers. In order to capture these clusters of attributes within dimensions, I created four genre forms: Avant-garde, Scene-based, Industry-based, and Traditionalist. In Avant-garde genres, music practitioners come together to share their concerns over the state of the music, but often do so without conceptualizing a set of goals or identifiers for the group. While most Avant-garde genres wither or merge with other genres, a few grow in size and develop a more focused and coherent group identity in the Scene-based phase of development. A very few Scene-based genres are successful and visible enough to draw the attention of commercial interests that transform them into Industry-based genres, during which musics draw the attention of national media and retailers and fuel a rift within the community between "old heads" and "tourists." This rift reaches its apex in the fourth phase, the Traditionalist genre, in which the community seeks to preserve the music of the Scene-based period. Since the objective in chapter 2 is to demonstrate the utility of these genre types for understanding musical communities, I do not present the history of any style from birth to the present. Instead, I show how groups of attributes characterize musical styles at each genre stage.

To prevent the confusion that would result from the scattershot use of examples from sixty different musical styles, I rely on only three: bluegrass, bebop jazz, and rap music.

In matching musics to these four genre types, I discovered that there are characteristic arrays of musical genres that I call "trajectories," and the two common trajectories for music genres are the focus of discussion in chapter 3. The three styles explored in chapter 2 (bluegrass, bebop, and rap) share a trajectory with the majority of musical styles examined for the book. This AgSIT genre trajectory (I coin the term by abbreviating the sequence of four genre forms) characterizes fifty-one of the sixty musics examined for this study. Some eight musical styles manifested a variation on this trajectory because they originated as Scene-based genres. A final group of nine musics started as Industry-based genres, and then developed Scene-based and Traditionalist genre forms, and this second trajectory is therefore abbreviated IST. The first objective of chapter 3 is to identify these two trajectories and illustrate them with examples from several musical styles, including gospel and funk. While these two trajectories provide robust explanations of genre trajectories, almost 58 percent of musical styles did not pass through all the genre forms in their trajectory. For example, grunge rock did not develop a Traditionalist genre, although it had all the characteristics of a musical style traveling the AgSIT trajectory. I find three causes for the blocked emergence of particular genre forms: (1) the absorption of musical styles into other styles and streams, (2) racist exclusion, and (3) aesthetic and social factors that prevent the expansion of the musical scene to new audiences and performers. In the second half of chapter 3, I explore these three mechanisms of inertia that produce incomplete musical trajectories across genre forms. My exploration focuses attention on several musical styles, including Laurel Canyon, grunge rock, house, techno, New Orleans jazz, South Texas polka, and tango.

Thus far, the focus has been on documenting genre forms and attributes in the twentieth-century United States. In chapter 4, I expand the focus to include music produced elsewhere. A preliminary survey of the popular music of countries with widely differing political economies, music cultures, and levels of development revealed that the four genre forms do exist, to a greater or lesser degree, across the globe, but there proved to be another widely distributed form that was not found in the U.S. sample:

the Government-purposed genre. Musics in this genre receive substantial financial support from the government or oppositional groups with a direct interest in the ideological content of popular music. I find two major types: those sponsored directly by governments, which benefit from national distribution and legal protections, and an antistate type supported by an opposition party or constituency. I examine four nation-cases to advance the argument: the People's Republic of China, Chile, Serbia, and Nigeria. In China, we witness an evolving history of central government action where active promotion of propaganda music is temporarily challenged by the anti–status quo power of rock, only to be co-opted by the machine of nationalization and repression. Chile's *nueva canción* is a Government-purposed genre developed by extragovernmental actors and used to fight a repressive dictatorship and to critique Western culture and global media. Nigeria's rich musical heritage gave birth in the mid-1960s to Afrobeat, a globally popular antigovernment genre, whose charismatic leader was subject to repressive surveillance and violence by the state. Like *nueva canción*, this music was also employed to critique global media as modern imperialist powers. Finally, in the former Yugoslav republic of Serbia, ethnic nationalist groups and entrepreneurs created turbo-folk, but the music has now transformed into a multicultural pop phenomenon. This chapter explores a rarely examined and poorly understood phenomenon in popular music, and demonstrates the flexibility of these analytical tools for addressing additional cases of cultural categorization.

In the concluding chapter, I discuss classification systems that exist within music and its peer culture-producing fields. I emphasize the role of power in setting boundaries around categories and defining these categories as legitimate. I consider the application of this model of classification to the sociological study of science and collective memory. Finally, I address the future of music, and close with a consideration of the link between music categories and taste.

By the end of the book, I hope to have shown that music genres can be best understood not as the invention of autonomous geniuses, and not as a succession of musical innovations aligned in an orderly and predetermined lineage, but instead as trajectories of genre forms made of just twelve social, organizational, and aesthetic attributes. For lovers of music, the book should provide a unique perspective on the characteristic social

forms of music communities. Fans intuitively understand that there are differences between garage bands and global pop music, but I hope that presenting those differences systematically and using a huge sample of music styles will enrich their intuition. The similarities among seemingly quite different music communities is striking, and I hope the book can function to facilitate a kind of mutual recognition and respect among artists and fans of popular music.