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Three chords & [somebody's] truth: Trajectories of experience and taste among hard country fans

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ABSTRACT

To date, much social scientific work on taste has relied on Bourdieu's concept of habitus to account for changes in tastes across the life course. But little empirical work has explored the dynamics of taste formation implied but not explicitly theorized by the concept. Dewey enriches Bourdieu's work by providing a vocabulary to theorize processes of re-socialization. This paper demonstrates Dewey's utility for understanding taste development by considering a weekly country event where no taste-class homology exists. The analysis centers on taste trajectories, or paths to appreciation taken by patrons who acquired the ability to appreciate country later-in-life. Data point to three types of regulars (Listeners, Players, Dancers); trajectories produce structured variations in experience, indicating prior engagement shapes present experience of music. Taste and experience are shown to be tightly bound; experience shapes perception and makes individuals into persons capable of having particular tastes.

1. Introduction

One of the most theoretically exciting and generative issues in the contemporary sociology of culture regards the processes whereby tastes are formed. Most notably, Bourdieu (1984) posits that people develop capacities to appreciate some but not other aspects of culture via primary socialization in childhood. Specifically, tastes develop out of classed experiences so that those sharing similar social positions will have similar tastes. In addition to functioning as symbolic boundaries, tastes are expressions of capacities: the ability to recognize a cultural good means being able to appreciate it. People thus enjoy things they can recognize, and competencies are shaped by context. This theory turns on the concept of habitus; generated by experience and a generator of experience, habitus is an embodied and pre-reflective matrix of dispositions. It informs action, judgment, and perception, and accounts for socially patterned differences in taste.

Many have followed Bourdieu (1984), quantitatively and qualitatively assessing the degree of homology between class position and taste (e.g., Atkinson, 2011; Alderson, Junisbai, & Heacock, 2007; Bellavance, 2008; López-Sintas & Katz-Gerro, 2005; Savage & Gayo-Cal, 2011), and the stability of preferences and consumption trends over the life course and across generations (e.g., DiMaggio & Mukhtar, 2004; Friedman, 2012; Lizardo & Skiles, 2015; Mohr & DiMaggio, 1995; Rossman & Peterson, 2015; Van Eijck, 1999). Of course, the degree to which patterns outlined by Bourdieu characterize contemporary first-world societies is debated (e.g., Bryson, 1996; Coulangeon & Lemel, 2007; DiMaggio, 1987; Gripsrud, Hovden, & Moe, 2011; Hanquinet, Roose, & Savage, 2013; Peterson & Kern, 1996; Prieur & Savage, 2011; Warde, Wright, & Gayo-Cal, 2008). But these studies raise a second issue: whether the most general aspects of habitus acquired via primary socialization can

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account for taste development across the life course and if not, how secondary socialization leads to the acquisition of new tastes. Certainly, many preferences persist into adulthood. But as Bourdieu (1984) himself acknowledged, tastes are far from "locked in"; aesthetic development continues across the life course, sometimes steering people to tastes social position would not predict. But studying the process of taste development requires an approach different from that typically used to establish more general class differences in aesthetic appreciation. Specifically, this effort requires a shift from considering homology to the micro-dynamics, observable at the individual-level, via which tastes *form*.

Sociologists (e.g., Benzecry, 2011; Friedman, 2012) are beginning to do such work, and it is no accident that they do so by considering tastes acquired relatively *late* in life, rendering the taste formation process available for empirical exploration via interview and ethnography. But these studies draw attention to the potential *limits* of the tool most commonly used to account for taste—habitus—to studying the nature of secondary socialization, or re-habituation. In what follows, I propose that John Dewey's concept of "experience" can enrich the understanding of taste Bourdieu provides. I then demonstrate the utility of "experience" for studying re-socialization by considering a particularly clear-cut case of class discrepant, later-in-life acquired taste: Honky Tonk Night.

2. From habitus to experience: a Deweyan take on taste

2.1. The analytic limits of habitus

A key difficulty facing researchers using the notion of habitus to explain taste development is that habitus arrives "at the scene" as a conceptual totality; it is a perceptual-evaluative matrix that accounts for taste with reference to itself. So, people like the things they like because these are the things *they are able to like,* and their choices "correspond to the condition of which [habitus] is the product" (Bourdieu, 1984:175). Because habitus is a "structuring structure" *and* a "structured structure" (170), it, *by definition,* already exists, embodied in actors, as a mirror of social conditions; it captures a state of synchrony with the environment and thus *presumes* "body/world isomorphism" (Engman & Cranford, 2016:30). Hence, it is the result of a [re-]socialization process implied, but not explicitly theorized, by it.

This becomes problematic in light of Bourdieu's account of how tastes change: beyond primary socialization, moments of disjuncture—when actors' practices and knowledge fall out of sync with the environment—are critical for transforming habitus. In "crises" (Bourdieu, 1977), habitus integrity is threatened as it "cease[s] to suffice as a basis for action" (Crossley, 2013:151). Resolution in the form of re-habituation comes from the acquisition of new competencies acquired via secondary socialization and embodied in specific habitus. But Bourdieu was primarily interested in accounting for stability; in general, "practices are adjusted to the regularities inherent in a condition" (1984:175). The focus on reproduction makes it difficult to theorize actors' experiences when habits fail and *there is not yet* "spontaneity without consciousness or will" (1990:56)—the very situations his theory suggests precipitate re-socialization.

The concern I raise with using habitus to explain taste development later-in-life is *not* over whether researchers can account for primary habitus-discrepant tastes in adulthood with specific habitus (they can), but rather whether with it, researchers can grasp re-socialization dynamics. Habitus is not ideal for theorizing what happens between moments of disjuncture and re-habituation because it is, by definition, a structure attuned to the environment, embodied in actors, and already regulating action; it captures an *achieved state* of harmony, rather than the *process* of reorientation leading to it. Using habitus to grasp the dynamics of re-socialization may thus obscure the "enskillment" processes that precede perfect adjustment and render it possible (Lizardo, 2014:360). These processes pertain not only to action—say, for example, a ballet dancer learning to swing dance—but also to appreciation. While Bourdieu's theoretical tools are powerful for capturing the *completed state* of internalization of external conditions as capacities for aesthetic response, they are less adept at dissecting re-socialization dynamics. This is unfortunate because, as Dewey [1922](2002) suggests, "what happens" in "pre-practical" phases may be important for shaping some tastes: in his words, sometimes "Desire for flowers comes after actual enjoyment of flowers" (22).

2.2. Theorizing the gap with "experience"

Dewey's ([1922] 2002; [1925] 1958; [1934] 2005) work provides a means of theorizing moments "in which the organism falls out of step with the march of surrounding things" ([1934] 2005:12) by providing a vocabulary that makes grasping dynamics of re-habituation easy. His writings on aesthetics and human growth more broadly center on "experience," defined as a transaction between humans and nature: "things and events belonging to the world, physical and social, are transformed through the human context they enter, while the live creature is changed and developed through its intercourse with things previously external to it" ([1934] 2005:257). Experience cultivates habits. Like Bourdieu's "dispositions," these are achieved competencies that manifest as ways of perceiving and evaluating. Thus, tastes too are habits; they are ways of sensing and responding, cultivated in experience, which make particular aesthetic experiences possible (see, e.g., Dewey, [1922] 2002:31). Important for the study of taste formation, Dewey posits a reciprocal relation between habit and reflection, such that their interaction enables actors to overcome resistance, or instances when habits fall out of sync with the environment. Indeed, it is from their interaction that actors develop novel capacities for perception and response. Critically, reflection itself draws on and depends on habits; the latter are the "sole agents of observation, recollection, foresight and judgment" (Dewey,

[1922] 2002:176). This stands in contrast to Bourdieu, who emphasizes practical action arguably at the expense of reflective thought, thus making it more difficult to theorize what happens when practical action fails (Crossley, 2013:151).

Further, Dewey argues that although an aesthetic response is always a response to a stimulus' properties, the response is not entirely traceable to the stimulus itself. Rather, response it is a reaction to the meaning a stimulus has to an actor, itself evolved from experience. Linking perception to experience does not relativize objects; objects possess qualities above and beyond their perception. But because perception is "mediate," actors can only respond to what their perceptual capacities render sensible ([1905] 1977:170). This is because qualities are "*potentials* for experience." Although their "actualization" in perception hinges on actors' histories, they exist in objects even when not "actual" (Martin, 2011:186; see also Dewey, [1925] 1958:336).

The critical takeaway is that all tastes—i.e., *habits of perception and judgment*—are "funded" by past experience; an object is what it is, to a particular actor, because of the previous experiences that have given it meaning and from which perception flows. Experience thus drives changes in tastes, and in a very literal way, experience makes objects *mean* one thing and not another, just as it makes people into particular kinds of people. Actors' histories thus matter for the kinds of experiences they can have, and those with different biographies have different experiences of cultural objects. They orient to different qualities and so, hear, see, or feel *different things*. Differences in experience are relevant not only to the polar extremes of preference; just because two people like the same song does not mean they have equivalent experiences of it. Rather, previous engagement with music shapes a song's present experience and makes it sound one way or another. The dynamic is ongoing: each new aesthetic experience changes the actor and enriches his/her response by making new qualities perceptible. So, just as all perception is acquired perception (James, [1890] 1950: II, 79), all taste is cultivated taste (Martin, 2011).

Dewey's work is compatible with Bourdieu's (1984) view of tastes as capacities for response acquired through socialization experiences. But, it enriches it by allowing analytic purchase on dynamics of taste development assumed by Bourdieu, but only vaguely theorized. Notably, pragmatism has been used by some scholars, most prominently by Hennion (e.g., Hennion, 2001; Hennion, 2005; Hennion, 2007), to provide an alternative to Bourdieu's (or more generally, "critical sociology's") understanding of taste. I however, ground my position in the work of other scholars (e.g., Crossley, 2013; Emirbayer & Goldberg, 2005; Leschziner & Green, 2013; Strand & Lizardo, 2015) who have convincingly argued for their complementarity and demonstrated that pragmatism can speak to and be fruitfully leveraged to extend Bourdieu's work. In line with this, I see scale of analysis as the key differentiating factor in Bourdieu and Dewey's respective approaches to aesthetics: the former was interested in identifying and understanding macro-level patterns of taste distribution, whereas the latter was oriented to micro-level dynamics of aesthetic experience. I argue that this difference in scale of interest, while necessarily yielding apparently different characterizations of taste, does not make Bourdieu's basic model of [re-] habituation inherently incompatible with Dewey's work. It does however, open the possibility for the latter to be brought productively to bear on the former's account of habit formation—an account which Bourdieu's own set of research interests led him (Bourdieu) to merely sketch out (see especially Crossley, 2013).

Dewey's work suggests a tactic to empirically explore tastes: to examine the entire set of past experiences that organize them. However, conducting a "womb-to-tomb" ethnography in order to observe the development of taste over the life course is obviously impractical. Moreover, the experiences organizing tastes acquired in primary socialization are likely beyond the recall of most people. But as some (e.g., Benzecry, 2011; Friedman, 2012) have demonstrated, tastes develop *beyond* primary socialization, and the processes via which this occurs are cognitively accessible. This indicates taste formation can be studied by considering tastes acquired later-in-life when relevant organizing experiences are more accessible to memory. An ideal way to explore these processes is to consider cases of later-in-life-acquired class discrepant tastes. They make it possible to examine the experiences that undergird tastes without needing to consider enculturation experiences beyond informants' plausible recall.

3. Honky tonk night: a case of later-in-life, class discrepant taste

3.1. What is it?

Honky Tonk Night (henceforth, HTN) is a hard country[1] "happy hour" established in 2001 and held at a "punk rock dive," or small music venue that doubles as a bar, in a large mid-western city. HTN is an anomaly both in the otherwise "trendy" neighborhood where it takes place, and in the bar that hosts it, which typically showcases the music of up-and-coming "indie" artists. Further, HTN patrons are not representative of the bar's typical clientele in terms of age, occupation, and class (more on this below). The event's name comes from the setting it seeks to imitate: those of the dance clubs and drinking establishments that rose to popularity in the wake of the late 1920s Texas oil boom (Peterson, 1997). A five-piece country band plays HTN and a significant portion of regulars dance (e.g., the Texas two-step, Western swing). Regulars have a taste for what Lena (2012) calls the "traditionalist genre": they are interested in preserving the country sound of the late 1920s, and in

[1] Also called traditional or honky tonk country, hard country emerged in the late 1920s and was overtaken by the "Nashville sound" in the 1950s. It had a brief revival in the 1970s as "outlaw" country (Jensen, 1998); see Peterson (1997) for a more extensive overview of the ongoing generative tension between "hard" and "soft shell" country.

keeping it distinct not only from the "countrypolitan," or Nashville Sound that emerged in the 1950s, but also from contemporary "pop country."

About 150 people attend a typical HTN, roughly 40 of whom are regulars who attend every week and have been doing so for 4–15 years; more than half have been attending for 6 or more years. Notably, regulars who began attending HTN as country fans are the exception; most found HTN "accidentally" (e.g., stumbled in looking for a beer or a place to dance; accompanied friends) and admit that prior to it, they did not deem country to be "for them." Most are in their 40s and 50s. Men and women are equally represented,[2] but the event is racially homogenous; a handful of non-white patrons attend sporadically, but they tend to be friends of white regulars. With the exception of a small minority, regulars are self-identified "liberals" who are stably employed as teachers, professors, doctors, and journalists; many have advanced degrees and live in the city's more expensive neighborhoods and suburbs. About half are musicians (henceforth, Players), a quarter are dancers (henceforth, Dancers), and the last quarter are people who attend simply for love of the music (henceforth, Listeners).

3.2. Why HTN?

The late onset of regulars' appreciation, coupled with its class discrepant nature, makes HTN an excellent case with which to analyze processes of re-socialization. That HTN is a *country* music event is also significant: work on omnivorousness indicates some genres are especially hard to "get into," or to cultivate appreciation for. In the U.S., country is often employed by otherwise-omnivores for purposes of symbolic exclusion (e.g., Bryson, 1996; Lena, 2012; Lizardo & Skiles, 2015; Peterson & Kern, 1996). It is also associated with a specific segment of the population—the rural working class—and is assumed to speak to "their" issues. Finally, in the past decade, the genre has become linked with "intolerance, xenophobia, and localist jingoism," making its rejection especially appealing to liberal, "cosmopolitan" audiences who do not fit its presumed intended audience (Lizardo & Skiles, 2015:20).

And yet, the people *least* likely to have a taste for and *most* likely to reject country frequent HTN: the vast majority are upper-middle class urbanites that fit the description of the "elite" honky tonk lyrics compare "everyday people" favorably to (Jensen, 1998). Further, most did not grow up with country but acquired the capacity to enjoy it later-in-life; in fact, many admit actively *disliking* it prior to HTN. This makes it possible to access re-socialization experiences, and to trace their paths to appreciation. In addition to regulars who acquired the taste for country late, I also studied some who grew up with country. Although I do not give these "country from the cradle" informants explicit attention, their histories were vital contrasts and helped in developing the theoretical claims I make here.

4. Method

Data were collected over the course of 15 months via a combination of participant observation, informal field interviews, and semi-structured in-depth aesthetic life history interviews (n = 30; Listeners: n = 7, female: 4, male: 3; Players[3]: n = 12, male: 12; Dancers: n = 11, female: 6; male: 5) ranging 80–100 min in length. These data come from the 30 regulars who agreed to an interview, but my findings take into consideration data collected from the remaining regulars who preferred informal field interviews. These data were supplemented with data gathered in non-HTN settings, such as other music and social events. These settings allowed me to observe how country operates in regulars' lives beyond HTN.

All aesthetic life history interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by the author. Their goal was to gage regulars' relationship to music across the life course and to access how regulars got into country, or changed their minds about it (if it had been previously stigmatized). With slight variations, the interviews proceeded as follows: respondents were asked about their earliest musical memories, such as the first records they recall purchasing, and music they remember hearing or seeing around the house as children. Most Players began playing prior to entering middle school, so when relevant, they were asked about early experiences playing. The interview then shifted to focus on musical likes and dislikes across the life course. To this end, I broke down the life course of each respondent into 4–6 year chunks, concluding with his/her current age. For each chunk, respondents were asked the same basic set of questions regarding their musical involvement (e.g., "What artists did you like/avoid and why?"; "How many of your friends listened to the same music as you doing this period?"; "In what contexts would you listen to/play music?"). Drawing on previous qualitative work on taste that has demonstrated the utility of life histories for illuminating moments "when a certain taste or style is developed across the lifecourse" (Friedman, 2012:477; see also, e.g., Atkinson, 2011; Lahire, 2003), I constructed aesthetic trajectories from the data. They organized data into an aesthetic timeline, chronicling each respondent's aesthetic development from his/her earliest music memory to his/her present engagement with music.

5. "Getting into" country: taste trajectories

Much work on taste has assumed that appreciation is a single dimension spanning rejection to acceptance (e.g., Bourdieu, 1984; Lizardo & Skiles, 2015). Taste trajectories suggest appreciation is not one-dimensional, and that people can appreciate

[2] Musicians are a notable exception: nearly all are men; this is likely due to the genre.
[3] Players include both HTN band members and musicians who attend the event as audience members.

the same cultural goods in various qualitatively different ways. Importantly, variations in trajectory stem not solely from *where* people are coming from in Bourdieu's (1984) social space, but also from what people are *doing*. Variations in cultural engagement produce a range of equally positive, but *qualitatively different,* experiences of country. I found three types of regulars: Listeners, Players, and Dancers. Type overlap is rare: Players do not become Dancers, and Dancers do not become Players; Listeners generally do not become Dancers, and Dancers do not become Listeners; Players do not give up playing to become Listeners, though several *began* as Listeners. This suggests experience may not be exchangeable. Instead, trajectories cultivate particular relationships to sound that affect experiences of country. Types are distinguished by primary mode of engagement with music: Players and Dancers engage *kinesthetically* with country by playing it and dancing to it, respectively, whereas Listeners engage *aurally* with country music, by listening to it.[4]

5.1. Traversing the "space of tastes" and cultivating appreciation through action

Some sociologists (e.g., Bourdieu, 1984; Bryson, 1996; Mark, 1998) have conceptualized tastes as located in social space. To acquire a taste is thus analogous to moving to a different location in the space. The notion of a "space of tastes[5]" is reflected in how regulars talk about "getting into" country.[6] Specifically, Listeners and Players got into country by—in their words—"working their way to" or "digging back" to it through other genres. Their language gestures to the experience of slowly progressing across the field, gradually acquiring the taste by exploring related genres "on the way." In contrast, Dancers describe the process of "getting into" country as a "conversion." These regulars thus "leapt" across the space of tastes, bypassing genres sharing similarities with country. The different ways of traversing the space of tastes, in conjunction with regulars' mode of engagement with the genre (i.e., listening, playing, dancing) have important and non-obvious implications for their experience of country and for its impact in their lives more broadly.

5.2. Listeners and players: "working their way" to country

In their gradual movement to country through the space of tastes, Listeners and Players resemble each other. In particular, they describe the process of "getting into" country as "working their way" or "digging back" to it via other genres. But they engage differently with music: Listeners engage aurally, whereas Players engage kinesthetically by playing. Listeners' mode of engagement is most straightforward: at HTN, they listen to country at the bar, and most drink while doing so. Typically, they remain seated for the event's entirely, moving only to request a song, dart to the bathroom, or shake hands with band members during the set break. Most arrive before the show to claim choice seats and to, as one regular put it, "get liquored up." Of regulars, Listeners are those most likely to have cultural roots in the south and to have grown up with the genre. Still, the dominant path to country, even among Listeners, is through other genres. For example Molly (regular 10 years), a 55 year-old West Coast transplant, worked her way to country via folk music. A lifelong Bob Dylan fan, her first encounters with country as a child—seeing Conway Twitty in his "gaudy suits" on TV—turned her off to the genre and kept her uninterested for years. But, Dylan led to Joan Baez, who led to Gillian Welch, Nancy Griffith, and Lyle Lovett. Then, a friend introduced her to The Judds. This discovery coincided with that of Willie Nelson, and together, the artists forced her to *rethink* country; she realized her *experience* of country contradicted her *cognitions* about the genre (i.e., that it was "hokey"). In this way, *experience subverted and re-organized cognition*; Molly's present taste for country is funded by experiences that, over time, altered her former habits of perception and made her into a person equipped with– in Dewey's [1934](2005) words– the "channels of response" (102) requisite for appreciating country that she previously lacked. As with other Listeners, Molly's engagement consists of recorded and live aural exposures, supplemented by information picked up from album covers/liner notes and radio and television programs. Her mode of engagement is strictly aural, and stands in contrast to that of Players and Dancers, for whom the body plays a more central role in the experience of country.

In general, Players develop appreciation for country by learning to play it. Their narratives, like Listeners', relate the experience of crawling through the space of tastes. They also illustrate how particular experiences *playing* music can jumpstart and guide re-orientation, alter ideas about the genre, and lead to the acquisition of an unexpected taste. Mick (regular 15 years) is a 51 year-old guitar player, and his trajectory is typical of Players: growing up, he listened to the radio on morning drives to school. These drives exposed him to Johnny Cash and Willie Nelson. His father was also an avid Roger Miller and Johnny Horton fan. But Mick did not care much for their "sound." Rather, his first musical passion was for classic rock: "I learned to play guitar playing rock and roll. I heard the high squealy guitar and right away I was like, I wanna make

[4] Some scholars (e.g., DeNora, 2000) have argued for a conception of listening as embodied; while all listening inevitably engages the body to some extent, differences in Players'/Dancers' and Listeners' engagement are qualitatively distinct, such that they are not merely differences in degree, but differences in kind.

[5] The space of tastes captures regulars' sense of "how far" different genres are from each other. While many genres clustering in the space share aesthetic similarities (see Malone and Neal, 2010 for a review of the relationship between country and other genres), the space exists in its particular form because respondents corroborate each other's narratives of the taste acquisition process. For instance, they agree that it is implausible to "go from," say, hip hop to country without "passing through" folk. This inter-respondent agreement about plausible versus anomalous routes to country suggests a latent idea of a space of tastes.

[6] In contrast, "country from the cradle" regulars who grew up with the genre were unable to describe their trajectories to country. Unsurprisingly, they spoke of country as something that has "always been there," suggesting little to no movement in the space of tastes.

that sound." But then in high school, he made some older friends who redirected his trajectory: "The way I think about it is, I dug back. So it [was] like, I like rock and roll. So there's this guitar player, and he mentions in something you read that he learned how to play cuz he listened to so and so. So I'd go, 'Oh—who's so and so?' And I'd dig back and listen to so and so. And so through rock and roll, I dug back into blues and then to country."

Players claim learning to "imitate" country songs cultivates appreciation. Thus, they learn to enjoy country by engaging with and eventually mastering the country lexicon. For example, Leo (regular 8 years) a lifelong electric guitar player and self-described "sound nut" in his late 50s, credits the shift from "occasionally putting on country records" to "listening to country all the time" to the decision to learn pedal steel. He explains that "aside from trying to imitate steel on a guitar, I didn't really play and listen actively to traditional country music." The country sounds he absorbed came from non-country sources: "The Pretenders threw a lot of country stuff into what they were doing— certain licks, musical phrases that are part of the lexicon. I picked them up from listening to rock guys, rather than going straight to the horse's mouth." After nearly 40 years of guitar, he wanted a change: "I decided to play steel, and since I started playing [4 years ago], I've been listening almost exclusively to country."

Playing made a difference for 35 year-old Sam (regular 12 years), a bass player and jazz aficionado, too: "It wasn't really until I was playing in bands that I got into country music. I came to it through an alt-country place, like Whiskeytown, Old 97s. We'd play a lot of originals, but we'd cover Merle Haggard and Johnny Cash. I mean, I'd *heard* honky tonk before, but being in bands and playing are what really got me interested. I would listen to more of that stuff and try to play more of those things. I got into it from there." Pete (regular 10 years), a 40 year-old drummer who worked his way to country through punk and jazz after some at-home exposure to the genre as a child, believes playing cultivates appreciation because it alters listening: "Once you learn to play a thing, it changes. I think you're closer to it. It makes you listen to music differently when you have to figure out how to play something." Other Players echo Pete. For example, over the course of his 40-year career as a musician in punk, jazz-fusion, country, and "experimental" rock bands, James picked up "most instruments you'd run into—woodwind, drums, bass, keyboard, guitar, singing, all that stuff." In playing, "your ear starts listening to different stuff, especially moving around on instruments. With whatever you're learning, you listen to recordings for that instrument, to see what other people did with it. So [switching] from guitar to bass, it's a different way of listening. It's not about melody anymore." Playing does not just motivate Players to listen *for* specific parts of music. As Dewey [1922](2002) noted, the ability to "single out a definitive sensory element in any field is evidence of a high degree of previous training, that is, of well-formed habits" (31). Thus playing facilitates a different way of listening *to* music, allowing for real-time decomposition of a given song. Further, according to these regulars, learning to play alters one's knowledge of and relationship to a piece, making one "closer to it." Further, it enables them to hear a piece at a different "level" than non-Players. In Pete's words, learning to play makes you "start focusing on the minutiae of what you're picking apart." This modifies listening: "You can then get so deep into the listening, when you figure out how to do it yourself."

Part of the change in appreciation precipitated by playing is, of course, technical. Mick remarks that people often assume country is "simple." He shared this belief—until he joined a country band. His attitude quickly changed: "Three fucking chords? Well by all means, play them. Let me hear—go ahead." Learning to play country made Mick realize that while country may be *structurally* simple, effort and skill are involved in making three chords "pop." But mastering the genre requires more than perfecting technique; Players talk about mastering "the feel" of country. Pete explains that "nailing down" a song requires "playing it the way you hear it": "You have to learn how to recreate a feel, otherwise you're just learning the top layer, stopping at 'close enough.'" The goal is to "figure out how to make it feel the way that [the artist] made it feel. Technique is a whole other thing." For country, this amounts to, as one Player put it, "getting country into the notes." In addition to linking appreciation to playing, Players acknowledge the importance of their instrument to their experience of country. Specifically, they talk about country as the outcome of an intense collaboration with their instrument, making their experience of country embodied *and* extended: they train their bodies, via repeated listenings and emulations, to produce sound, and collaborate with and invest energy (and themselves) into their instruments. For some, a *particular* instrument altered their relationship to country. For Mick, country didn't "stick" until he picked up a Telecaster, the "guitar associated with country":

> *I was playing some country and doing recording sessions, but I was still playing my Gibson. Then it got ripped off, and I needed to buy a guitar because I had a gig coming up. I liked Teles and I liked country music, and I said, well Teles are pretty cool, let me buy one. So I bought one. And then I started really thinking about [country], trying to play more, paying attention, going, 'What're those chords, what's going on?'*

5.3. Dancers: "converting" to country

While Dancers, like Players, came to country via physical engagement with sound, their experience is distinct from Listeners' and Players' because unlike the latter two, Dancers *leapt* from one zone of the space of tastes to another and "skipped over" genres in between. The "conversion" narrative employed by many gestures to this point, and explicitly links the process of learning to dance to country to "getting into" country. The link makes sense if one considers music as an object and dance as interaction with it: how one moves to music reflects one's perception of it, and knowing how to move to a song is analogous to being able to perceive its relevant qualities. Dancers' experiences suggest physical engagement with sound through dance can, like playing and repeated aural exposure, cultivate receptivity. Most regarded the genre ambivalently

prior to learning to dance and use phrases like "it sounded dumb," "simple," or "not for me" to describe their pre-HTN feelings. Callie, a 30 year-old regular of 9 years who dabbled in ska, rockabilly, and swing prior to becoming a regular, explained how growing up in a small town in the southeastern U.S., "there were two kinds of music: rap or country. I can recall specifically *disliking* country. I thought it was lame—the concept of it. Like dumb, uneducated people listen to that." Now she attends country events several nights a week: "I used to say, 'I listen to ska.' I would never say country. But now I tell people, 'It's all ska and honky tonk.'" In this way, her *experience* of country modified her cognitions about the genre. Callie's trajectory illustrates the power of experience—even one as trivial as stopping into a bar to dance—for jumpstarting re-habituation: prior to HTN, she believed country was "not for her." But her experience at HTN reorganized her perception of the genre and led to a new taste. Put another way, for Callie, the experience of enjoying herself at a country music event came before—and critically, *made possible*—her appreciation of the genre (see Dewey, [1922] 2002:22).

Forty-nine year-old Lynn (regular 10 years) too admits never "having an appreciation for country" until discovering dance. She recalls how years ago, a friend invited her to a country bar after work. Initially, she refused because she "didn't like country." But, her friend insisted until she agreed to go. She was surprised: "The men would come up, ask you to dance. You'd say, 'I don't know how to,' and they'd say, 'ok I'll show you.' They'd take you around the floor for a dance, bring you back and leave. So we started going, having fun and learning how to dance. That's how I started liking country music." For Dancers, dancing isn't just about "accompanying" music. In the words of Briana, a 6-year regular in her late 60s, dancing is about "interpreting" the music. Dancers' experience with country is thus deeply embodied and holistic: whereas accompaniment implies "going along with" something external to oneself, interpretation implies taking something *within* oneself and making it one's own. As for other Dancers, appreciation heralded changes in her physical appearance and wardrobe: "My appearance changed. I started wearing different kinds of clothes and let my hair grow and started cultivating a cowboy boot collection."

Greg (regular 4 years), a 39 year-old history teacher, also disliked country prior to HTN: "I thought it was hillbilly and I was predisposed not to like it because I thought it went against my politics. Like, how many liberal country artists and fans are there?" But when he stumbled in on the event and spotted dancing—something he always aspired to—he began reconsidering.

Learning to dance took months and initially, he was unsuccessful: he could not "hear" the music well enough to time steps to it. But now, he is able to tell almost immediately what dance a particular song calls for. This ability coincided with the ability to enjoy honky tonk. In his view, dance lets him "participate in the music": "I'm not a musician, but I love the music. Getting out on the dance floor is a weird little way of making me feel like I'm inside the music. It's an enjoyable place to be, when you're hearing the music, and you're moving to it, and it's all working. It's like hitting the zone."

Dancers' "hitting the zone" has corollaries in Players'[7] experience of country, and describes a state similar to what Csikszentmihalyi (e.g. 2008) calls "flow," or "the optimal state of inner experience" that occurs when "psychic energy—or attention—is invested in realistic goals, and when skills match the opportunities for action" (6). For Dancers, "investment" is total and unreserved: "hitting the zone" denotes a shift from being outside to *inside* the music,[8] and is analogous to "feeling" the music. Callie articulates what "feeling" the music means: "A band puts crescendos in the music, or they'll pause for two beats on a note, and you can see in somebody who's dancing and knows these songs how the music and the moves go together, because they time their moves with things that go on in the song. Like, they'll be more expressive as the band gets louder. They *know* [what's] coming and they do that with their bodies." In other words, they commit themselves—bodily and emotionally—to the tune. Others agree: dancing is "as close to really being inside the music as people can get."

6. Structured differences in experience

These data reveal structured variations in how regulars hear country and experience HTN—differences which imply that prior engagement, detailed above, affects perception by making qualities differentially perceptible and by delimiting the kind of aesthetic experiences regulars can have. Because habit, acquired in experience, "filters all the material that reaches... perception and thought" (Dewey, [1922] 2002:32), regulars' experiences of country are *funded*, and their tastes are different; while they all claim to enjoy the same genre, their tastes are not the same or even, phenomenologically speaking, for the same thing. While perhaps unsurprising that Listeners talk about country as *music to listen and drink to*, Players as *music to play*, and Dancers as *music to dance to* because that is what each *does* to country, the implications each mode of engagement has for regulars' experience of country are non-obvious. Differences in engagement affect the musical qualities regulars orient to, what they find appealing about country, and their beliefs of what makes a "bad" and "good" country song and HTN. This is because modes of engagement are acquired *ways of knowing* (Crossley, 2015); they index particular relationships to

[7] The experience of flow is notably absent from Listeners' narratives. One possible explanation for this absence links back to the predominantly aural nature of their engagement with country: flow is facilitated by movement and activity and, relative to Players and Dancers, Listeners engage more "passively" with country. So while they may, say, tap their feet or sway on their barstools to the beat of a tune, Listeners' mode of engagement is not characterized by the same degree of "full-body" involvement that dancing and playing demand.

[8] There are many similarities between Dancers' claims that "feeling" the music entails passing from outside to inside music, and the "passings" of drug users and music amateurs detailed in Gomart and Hennion (1999) that allow their respective passions to emerge.

sound and determine what actors recognize objects *as*. Because they cultivate particular sensitivities, differences in "body techniques" (478) lead to different tastes and to differences in the gestalts requisite for having a proper aesthetic response.

6.1. Qualities at the fore: tradition, sound, & beat

Perception develops out of experience, and the qualities regulars orient to when listening to country vary as a function of past engagements with the genre. Listeners pay attention to "markers" of tradition (of which lyrics are of utmost importance), Players to sound, and Dancers to beat. To elaborate, Listeners focus on "closeness" to tradition; when a song or an artist emulates tradition, Listeners are pleased. Notably, while a portion enjoys the band's original songs, most prefer covers. Or, if the band strays too far from an original rendition, they balk. For example, Glenn's 6 year passion for HTN turned lukewarm when the singer began to throw in originals and to make the classics "too much" his own: "He's good, don't get me wrong. But he's not doing what I know." Listeners take measures to ensure a good HTN by making requests for classics and "songs about drinking"; although Dancers and Players encourage the band to play originals and not "strictly traditional" songs (e.g., "Wagon Wheel," "Southbound Train"), a set with *too* many originals disappoints Listeners.

Furthermore, Listeners pay attention to the singer and expect him to fill the stereotypical honky tonk singer/songwriter "tortured soul" role, or to "live the life [he] sing[s] about" (Peterson, 1997:152–3). One way of conveying this is to act like a traditional honky tonk artist by for instance, interacting with and "riling" the audience during a set. Listeners actively look for such signs as confirmation that the band really *is* a honky tonk band. Finally, Listeners are also those most likely to talk about lyrics as an appeal. Specifically, they appreciate their "relatability," and have a soft spot for "songs about drinking." This is unsurprising: most drink for HTN's entirety, and a large fraction arrive early—and stay after—to do so. In the words of one Listener, honky tonk songs *are* songs "about getting drunk and truck driving and that sort of thing." This understanding is shaped by *what* they do when they listen to country. Many also praise singers for being able to "honestly" articulate the "hard emotions" (e.g., loneliness, disappointment) they purport feeling. As Sean (regular 6 years) notes, when sung by a good singer, lyrics are "direct lines to the soul" with power to "crush."

Players on the other hand are self-described "sound people" who admit being drawn to country by its "intoxicating" sound. The most commonly cited initial draw is an inexplicable, almost magical "attraction" to the sound of pedal steel. Several trace their "sound obsession" to childhood. For example, Jake (regular 10 years), a 45 year-old drummer, recalls that as a child, his dad "had a reel-to-reel player that sat on a wall. He'd listen to musicals—'Fiddler on the Roof,' "Finian's Rainbow," a couple others. My parents didn't play much, but when they did, I was fascinated by the sounds coming out of the system." Leo too, explains that when he got his dad's stereo, he "started paying attention to the way things sounded—tones and harmonics and the quality of the reverb" and that they, "no pun intended, resonated." Mick gets right to the point: "The way some people liked baseball, I liked music. I just dug the sounds."

Attention to sound extends to vocals. Unlike Dancers who cite the self-deprecating humor of honky tonk lyrics as appealing (*if* they note them at all), or Listeners who enjoy their "relatability," Players focus on their sound. Leo recalls the first time he "got" country: "On a road trip, I stopped at a truck stop and bought a cassette of George Jones. It was like an atom bomb going off. It was the soul-crushing sadness and joy that the sound of his voice encompasses." He stressed that it was the *quality* of Jones' voice that drew him in: "It was the sound. That's the thing: a *real* singer is all sound."[9]

Importantly, what Players experience as sound is not the same as what Listeners experience as sound. More specifically, both talk about how sounds make them feel. But, they *feel* differently: Players talk about *sensory* feeling, whereas Listeners talk about *emotional* feeling; Players do not experience feeling divorced from the body, but *in* the body. Of course, as Leo notes, a good sound will elicit both kinds of feeling: "I can tear up listening to the sound of an instrument or somebody's voice. I've gotten desensitized, but I'd be in a bar and someone would put [Jones] on the jukebox and I'd be like, ok I need a minute." Moreover, Players talk about sound as if it is has tangible properties. They describe country songs as having good "bodies," "shapes," and "forms." This is unsurprising, as many refer to themselves as "craftsman"; one Player even equated playing to "working the clay," suggesting that he experiences music as a tangible product. The experience of sound having form is further reflected in how they talk about listening as a physical encounter with sound: "It's the feeling of being taken over by an entity. Sound comes at you, and there's no real room to get out of the way, like a machine coming at you and it's going to get you." Such moments are flooring: "It's strange for your body to go through. But they're the moments when I think music is the most powerful because you're not just hearing it—your body is absorbing it. Not just through your ears, but through your body." Leo concurs: "Sound is physical. It's visceral."

Finally, Dancers are "beat people." In Callie's words: "I need a beat. Some people listen to country for the lyrics or for pretty chords and melodies, but for me, the beat has to be there. That's my primary attraction to a song." The most obvious reason for their focus is beat's indispensability to dance. And for Dancers, country music *is* music to dance to: "Honky tonk is music for dancing. Bar none, that what the music's always been there for—people getting off work, pulling their heels on, boozing it up, and dancing." Dancers' experience of country as music to dance to is best illustrated by what they do at the start of a new song: almost without fail, they turn to each other and ask: "What is this?" The answer they seek differs from what Listeners and Players seek when they pose it: Listeners and Players want to know what a song is called and who wrote

[9] It is interesting to compare HTN's Players to Benzecry's (2011) opera fans: both share an orientation to the *sound* of a singer's *voice* (rather than to lyrical content), and regard it as a key source of aesthetic pleasure.

it; Dancers want to know what dance is appropriate to the tune. Hence, what country music *is* reflects how regulars have engaged with it in the past.

A clear, steady beat is indispensable for answering the question; it is the beat that signals the dance and gives a song its meaning, and it is in being able to listen to several bars and produce an answer that Dancers' ability to hear country reveals itself. In a very literal way, without a clear beat, they cannot "hear," or discern what the music "calls out" for them to do. Put another way, they *can't recognize it as country music*. Liam (regular 10 years), a 39 year-old Dancer, expresses frustration at bands that play "as if dancers weren't there": "It's frustrating when a band calls itself country, but you can't identify—like, is it a two-step or a waltz or a triple-two? The beat is the number one thing." HTN's band plays to the Dancers, and they regularly praise the band for "their shuffle," or "the beat that you can move easily to that you need to dance." In addition to the practical issue of being able to discern the dance a tune requires, a good beat is indispensable for "getting into" the music. If Dancers cannot "get into" the music, they cannot "participate" in it and have the proper aesthetic response. This is demonstrated by their evaluations of other local country bands: the "good bands" are those that nod to dancers via choice of music. The "ok bands"—those they *appreciate less*—are those that play "as if the dancers weren't there."

6.2. The bad kind of country, and why

Although Listeners, Players, and Dancers orient to different qualities, they agree on what sounds "bad": "pop," "new," and/or "modern" country. But, reasons for objection differ by group. Listeners (and two Players who identify as songwriters) focus on pop country's failure to sound like—and thus *be*—honky tonk. Specifically, they lament the "pop" or "rock" beat, and the dearth of "drinking songs." In straying too far from "old country" and substituting "girls in tight shorts" for booze and life's trials and tribulations, pop country fails to *be* country. For example, one Listener notes modern country has "too much of a pop beat" that "doesn't sound anything like country." Another explained that the mood new country "creates" is different: "Where would you listen to that crap? Definitely not here, not in any bar I can think of." And for Listeners, country music *is* music to drink to at a bar. Pop country songs also aren't about "country" things: "Flag waving, how much you love your girlfriend, how great you look in jeans. They're not writing about killing and cheating anymore, that's the problem. That's what you gotta write about." In sum, the qualities Listeners perceive when listening to honky tonk are absent in pop country. Thus, pop country actually is a different object than honky tonk.

Players condemn pop country for its "over-complicated" and "over-produced" sound. Objections link back to what they consider appeals of country—its simple sound and structure, and the improvisational freedom it affords. As James asserts: "early in country, you had guys playing simple riffs. Then they got a lot fancier. There are some pretty good pickers in modern country, but I can't listen to that stuff because it makes me nauseous." Players like James take seriously the idea of country as "three chords and the truth"; traditional country artists like Buck Owens, George Jones, Jimmy Rogers, and Ray Price were masters at "tak[ing] three chords, or sometimes just two" and "captivating" an audience. But "today music gets bogged down in virtuosity and getting a bazillion chord changes in." Such "shows" of skill are "not necessary"; a good country artist makes "the most simple chord structures sound not simple and makes them pop." The same applies to production: "Just put a microphone on it and let the tape roll. Less is more—alive, raw, real-sounding." In part, the desire for simplicity has to do with what Players think sounds good. But, it also has to do with the enjoyment of *making* music. In particular, songs that have "room built in" to improvise are ideal for "hitting the zone." Lenny (regular 12 years), a pedal steel player in his early 60s, explains that honky tonk songs "aren't songs you have to learn all the parts to. You're improvising an accompaniment, and if you've heard them before, you know how they go. You don't have to think too much and you can get really high, joke around, have fun." Sam agrees, noting that "traditional country guys" are skilled improvisers: "We know *generally* what we're going to play, and if somebody calls out a song that nobody knows—ah, we'll go for it." This is due to the "nature" of honky tonk: "There's a body of tunes, so even if it's not an original, you can call it a Hank or a Cash tune, and anybody familiar with them can pick on it."

Pop country makes on-the-spot improvisation hard: "it's formulaic; there's more rehearsing, more, 'Ok we're going to play it this many times and then go into the chorus, and you're going to solo and then the song's gonna end.'" Such music is not "fun to play": "There're parts you have to play. So, if you played a modern country song three times, you'd play it exactly the same every time."

Finally, Dancers dislike pop country because it "isn't danceable." Callie expresses her frustration: "On the radio nowadays, the majority of what they're labeling as country music isn't even danceable. It's not two-step or swing or any of the dances I know. I don't know how you could dance to that pop stuff. It's just not really country." The reason for its "non-danceability" is its lack of steady "shuffle" essential to identifying tunes. Without being able to identify the tune as calling for particular movements, Dancers cannot dance, "feel," or "get inside" the music.

7. Continuous and discontinuous taste trajectories

All regulars claim to have a taste for country. Yet their narratives reveal variations in experience that suggest more fundamental differences in tastes. Differences are patterned by trajectory, suggesting country *means* and *sounds* on the basis of past cultivation experiences. Dewey's work throws light on the significance of trajectory for taste. He posits that in experience actors encounter stimuli with particular habits that delineate sensible qualities. He also acknowledges the role of reflective thought— itself structured by habits acquired in past experience and used by actors to make sense of novel

situations—in cultivating new capacities for perception: through the interplay of habit and reflection, actors' habits—as well as cognitions—are modified, producing new capacities for aesthetic response (see Dewey, [1922] 2002:176). So, Listeners, Players, and Dancers approached country with different habits of perception shaped by past music experience. But HTN modified old habits, created new capacities for aesthetic response, and altered their conceptions of country. In short, it made them into people able to appreciate country. Variations in sonic orientation and in understandings of country stem from differences in the habits regulars came to HTN with, and in how they came to engage with the genre once there.

Given the contingency of taste, it is no surprise that a key difference in trajectory with implications for taste is *how* regulars traversed the space of tastes. Specifically, Listeners' and Players' trajectories are *continuous:* they gradually worked their way through the space of tastes and experience their enjoyment of country, as one regular put it, as a "logical progression," or development, of existing preferences. This is because previous experiences with related genres had already begun to shape them into people able to get into the genre. Put differently, there existed greater "fit" between existing habits and those needed to appreciate the genre. "Fit" is key, because actors employ *existing* habits to make sense of novel stimuli (Dewey, [1922] 2002:176). Thus, similar genres—those closer together in the space of tastes—will require fewer and less drastic modifications of existing habits for appreciation; the actor will be closer to "knowing how" to hear.

This point illustrated in respondents' narratives. Bennett (regular 5 years), a 38 year-old drummer, and Bill (regular 9 years), a 60 year-old songwriter and guitar player, are good examples. Both approached country from punk after brief exposure in childhood. An Elvis Costello record prompted Bennett's trek "back" to country: "There was a quality to it I *recognized*." He started "going back, filling in the blanks, looking over stuff I listened to as a kid, understanding 'okay, that's Loretta Lynn, that's Buck Owens, that's Webb Pierce."' His taste thus has clear roots in early music experiences, and *evolved from* a taste for punk, a genre with structural similarities. Bill also recalls the transition from listening and playing punk to listening and playing country as "easy": "the same thread runs through them—they're of the same fiber." Specifically, they provide the same sensory and emotional stimulation: "Someone told me music should make you want to fuck, fight, dance, or cry. I get that from both." Lenny similarly talks of "getting into" country as growth, and explains that he dug back to country from the Beatles, Allman Brothers, and the Grateful Dead. He recalls the first time he heard an Allman Brothers record: "When I heard the slide guitar, I got sucked in." In high school a friend loaned him some "quasi-country, 'Mama Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to be Cowboys'-type stuff." The sound of pedal steel floored him: "I was crazy about that, and so I started to try to play it. I'd already been playing blues slide guitar, so it was just the next thing to do." Taken together, their narratives speak to the "cumulative continuity" of experience; via habits, past experience becomes "an integral part of the self that acts and is acted upon in further experience" (Dewey, [1934] 2005:108); they enrich and lend meaning to the present, "translating" the "bare continuity of external time into the vital order and organization of experience" (24–5; see also [1925] 1958:257).

It is notable that regulars with brief exposure to country early in life *and* those with no exposure employed the working or digging "back" trope to characterize their path to country. The "regressive" frame likely helped high-cultural capital actors make sense of their appreciation of a previously stigmatized taste. Moreover, the realization that artists they *already* enjoyed were influenced by classic country probably assured them of the genre's value and established it as "authentic" and "genuine" (rather than as "manufactured" and commercially-driven [Peterson,1997]), thus legitimizing their taste and rendering country "safe" to learn to enjoy.

Although Listeners and Players both experienced the taste cultivation process as a progression of preexisting tastes, differences in mode of engagement produced variations in their experience. Hence, what country *is* and *means* to Players and Listeners reflects—indeed, flows from—what each *does*. Players thus have a taste for country *as simple, sonic-physical structures that "feel"*—at the bodily level—*"good,"* and Listeners have a taste for country as *honest and relatable drinking music.*

In contrast, Dancers' trajectories are not characterized by organic progression, but by a discontinuous jump from one position to another—a *conversion*. Unlike Listeners and Players whose past experiences had already begun to shape them into people able to enjoy country, Dancers experienced a poor fit between existing habits, and those needed to appreciate country.

The discontinuity produces a different experience of the genre and of their taste. To elaborate, acquiring the taste results in changes that reverberate beyond HTN. For instance, prior to HTN Dancers generally have scattered and superficial aesthetic histories: a handful struggled to articulate favorite artists, and several admitted to never paying much attention to music in the past. In this way, Dancers had further to "travel" to become people able to enjoy country. Dancers' holistic involvement with country via dance yields a distinct re-socialization experience. For them, re-socialization was rapid, and had an all-consuming, transformative impact; figuratively speaking, Dancers "jumped into" their taste. As Callie noted, "The more I went [to HTN], the more I loved it. I started going once a month, and then it became every week. It's addictive. It's amazing to think I went from not really knowing or giving a crap about country, to being obsessed, just like that. The more you listen to it and dance, the more you love it."

Their trajectory makes taste an "all or nothing" matter: they *must* unreservedly involve themselves in country because they jumped into it rather than gradually worked up to it. There is thus no "middle ground" for them to fall back on; put another way, they do not have tastes for nearby genres in the space of tastes. This may be because in the space, country is largely surrounded by traditionally non-dance music. While close-by genres like blues and folk are in some places deemed "dance-friendly," HTN's Dancers do not perceive such music *as* dance music. This is problematic, as their primary mode of engagement with music is via dance. Related, for Dancers enjoying country means "being inside" the music; being outside or

leaving a part of the body "outside" is analogous to dancing poorly—which, in turn, means lacking the ability to recognize and enjoy music.

Learning to enjoy country prompts global changes, and many talk about the personal transformations undergone with surprise, betraying an awareness of the taste's class discrepant nature. As one regular noted: "*This* isn't me—or *wasn't* me. I never thought I'd have four pairs of boots." Briana refers to her taste as a "life change": "After going [to HTN] awhile, it became a happy habit. I found myself wanting to build my weekend around it. Now I know lots of bands that I'm a regular fan of, places with cheap beer and no cover that I go to three nights a week, at least." It is worth noting what Briana claims it would take for her to stop attending HTN: an injury severe enough to *prevent dancing*.

The "all or nothing" nature of Dancers' taste is also reflected in their penchant for wearing country-western garb (e.g., western-style shirts, cowboy hats and boots); while nearly all "dress up" for HTN, a fraction also wear such garb in their "everyday" lives.[10] Gomart and Hennion (1999) provide a possible explanation. Conceptualizing taste as performance, they argue that actors use "techniques" to facilitate attachment. Clothing may play such a role, enabling Dancers' taste.[11] That they would need "props" to facilitate attachment is unsurprising; "techniques" cultivate tastes and tasting actors, and of regulars, Dancers have farthest to go in becoming people able to appreciate country. The discontinuous nature of Dancers' trajectories also throws light on their desire to implement rules at HTN. For instance, they disapprove of patrons who break dance conventions, and several openly judge Dancers who "take up too much room." Patrons who threaten dancing—those who "clown" and "come out drunk"—are tagged as potential problems. Their "strictness" is warranted: understood in the context of their trajectories, disruptions *are* threatening; while Listeners and Players are able to experience the music *as* country and enjoy HTN with or without "clowns" and "drunks," the latter disrupt Dancers' experience of country because they inhibit dancing—their past, and only, mode of engagement with the genre. Dancers are thus in an ironic position: of all regulars, they are most holistically engaged with country. And yet, they also have the most *fragile* taste: previous engagements have cultivated a taste for country as *music to dance to* and made them sensitive to the qualities of country essential to dance (i.e., a steady beat and "shuffle"); absent those qualities, Dancers can neither recognize nor "feel" the music.

8. Conclusions

Although Bourdieu's theory of taste allows that tastes can change over the life course, the processes via which they do so have to date been left vaguely theorized (Crossley, 2013; Lizardo, 2014). Instead, Bourdieu-inspired work on tastes has tended to focus on the social distribution of tastes, and on the "products" of primary and secondary socialization, i.e., primary and specific habitus, respectively. However as recent qualitative research on taste employing life trajectories has shown (e.g., Friedman, 2012), habitus may not always be attuned to its environment, and these moments may re-direct trajectories and jumpstart changes in tastes not predicted by primary socialization. But analysis of these moments is difficult for researchers using the concept of habitus, as the latter accounts for the state of synchrony *achieved* from a process of re-socialization presumed but left largely unaccounted for. This raises the question of how social scientists can grasp the dynamics that underlie, make possible, and structure habits of perception and judgment.

This work moves the study of taste forward by addressing this question. I propose a means to access dynamics of re-socialization, and demonstrate the relevance of these dynamics to understanding taste. While important for a general grasp on how tastes develop, these dynamics are especially critical for grasping how class discrepant tastes form. To be clear, I do not suggest scholars cannot account for the existence of class discrepant tastes or for more general changes in taste beyond primary socialization with the notion of specific habitus. But I *do* suggest using specific habitus to understand taste development beyond primary socialization risks obscuring the processes that cultivate particular orientations to cultural goods. These processes are important, as they structure tastes. As I have argued, Dewey's work offers a means to specify processes of taste development in a way that furthers Bourdieu's conception of taste. Dewey's concept of "experience" captures the generative dynamic between actor and environment that creates possibilities for new tastes. Specifically, as actors go about their lives, they must regularly overcome disruptions between existing habits and the environment. To do so, actors adapt to new conditions by modifying old habits. The interplay of habit and reflection makes re-adaption possible. In the context of aesthetics, when actors encounter cultural goods, they do so with habits of perception and evaluation acquired in past experience. But experience changes actors: in trying to make sense of and adapt to new situations, habits of perception and evaluation change, leading to new capacities for aesthetic response. In this way, tastes are funded by experience.

In addition to clarifying how tastes develop over the life course, there is another reason for studying processes of re-habituation: it allows researchers to grasp how objects, through experience, acquire meaning. Cultural objects therefore have the particular meanings they have to actors on the basis of past experience. My findings thus indicate that when studying taste, it is not enough to consider *what* actors' tastes are for without also examining *how* they have acquired their tastes. This is because the *things* actors have tastes for are intimately tied to *how* they have acquired their tastes for them.

[10] Dancers are not only more likely to adopt a country-western style of dress than are other regulars, but also to experiment with some "country-appropriate" lifestyle choices.

[11] Alcohol may play a similar attachment-enabling role for Listeners.

Unless social scientists grasp the set of experiences that fund tastes, they merely scratch their surface.

My findings also speak to work on taste in a number of other ways. Most basically, they confirm that tastes can change over time and that actors are subject to multiple "heterogeneous" [re-] socializations (Lahire, 2008:174). They also address issues of distinction and illustrate how it plays out within class bounds and is shaped by field logics (see Bellavance, 2008; Friedman & Kuipers, 2013; Hanquinet et al., 2013): regulars draw boundaries between themselves and other fans by distinguishing between new and old country. Interestingly, they do not regard new country as the "lower" or more "authentic" form; they see it as a *different* genre altogether. But nuances aside, the "old/new" distinction appears to do the same symbolic work the "low/high" distinction does, i.e., legitimize taste—something HTN regulars' high status may make especially necessary. That said, my data suggest that although distinction operates *within* the field of hard country, taste may not always be an expression of distinction more broadly, or clearly linked to class and predicted by primary socialization.[12] Consider Friedman's (2012), (but see also Coulangeon & Lemel, 2007; Van Eijck, 1999) excellent study of upwardly mobile comedy fans as a foil: there, one can understand why the acquisition of a high status taste would be desirable to a lower cultural capital consumer. But HTN presents a case of *downward* "mobility": for regulars, there is little, if any, status-related benefit associated with "getting into" country. Recently, scholars (e.g., Fleury, 2011; Wacquant, 2004) have suggested explicable forces (e.g., field effects, cultural institutions) other than those of distinction and primary socialization that may impact tastes. In some cases, these logics (including those of distinction) may do *more* than reproduce tastes: they may create *new* ones (Friedman, 2012). Certainly, distinction continues to be relevant, as shown in the recent Poetics Special Edition on new forms of distinction. But without denying its power or that of primary socialization, HTN demonstrates other forces, including banal events (e.g., walking into a bar for a beer and seeing dancers) unrelated to the acquisition of cultural capital, can redirect trajectories and launch aesthetic re-orientation. This is consistent with Dewey's account of habit formation, where actors are regularly adapting to changing conditions and acquiring new capacities for response via everyday experiences—experiences that may *precede* dispositions.

Consistent with Bourdieu (1984), these findings illustrate that differences in primary and secondary socialization, captured in taste trajectories, and key sources of individuation. They also support the view that "taste diversity . . . reflects the slope of . . . life trajectories" (Friedman, 2012:477), but show that "slope" is not solely determined by shifts in cultural capital. They also echo work pointing out the relevance of *how* goods are consumed. This has recently become a point of interest for social scientists interested in distinction (e.g., Holt, 1997; Jarness, 2015). For example, Jarness' (2015) consideration of cross-class differences in styles of consumption unveils variations in *ways* people enjoy and evaluate the same goods, demonstrating that "liking the same things does *not* necessarily indicate similar tastes" (77). Scholars (e.g., DeNora, 2000; Hennion, 2005) who stress the active and embodied nature of taste make similar observations when they note that *how* people engage with cultural goods shapes the nature of their attachments. The body thus plays a critical role in creating capacities for response, and different "body techniques" result in different tastes (Crossley, 2015). Dewey clarifies why engagement matters: modes of engagement cultivate different relations with cultural goods. These relations make qualities differentially perceptible, afford different experiences of cultural objects, and manifest as different tastes. Practice should thus not be ignored in studies of taste, as doing so amounts to removing that which gives tastes their integrity. Its significance to taste also underscores the need to supplement genre-oriented quantitative work with qualitative work; relying solely on the former may obfuscate important differences in consumption practices that yield variations in taste (see Friedman, Savage, Hanquinet, & Miles, 2015 for further discussion). Relatedly, doing so may impede identification of forces beyond primary socialization responsible for generating tastes.

These findings are generalizable to the extent they point to general dynamics of re-socialization: they indicate past experience matters for the reception of cultural goods, and shapes the aesthetic responses one can have. They do not presume *all* dancers will hear country as HTN's Dancers do; they do however indicate past engagements will affect perception, and people with different histories will exhibit variations in aesthetic response. In short, they will have different *tastes. What* those differences will be, and their relationship to past experience, is an empirical question; here, I have identified some differences and linked them to two aspects of experience, i.e., mode of engagement and trajectory, in one group of people. Importantly, these dynamics are not limited to understanding music tastes, but extend to those for other cultural goods like film, art, and literature.

Of course there are limitations. Because data come from regulars, it is not possible to determine how people who did not become regulars differ in terms of trajectory. It would be valuable to examine differences in trajectories that distinguish regulars from people who dislike country, or more compellingly, from pop country fans. Further, it is difficult to say if regulars exhibit different patterns of orientation to non-country music—whether their respective modes of engagement carry over to influence their experience of *other* genres and lead to similarly structured differences in taste. These questions are difficult to address given this study's predominant focus on one setting, but future work integrating comparative cases—especially negatives cases of "failed" taste acquisition—would greatly further understandings of taste dynamics.

[12] Interestingly, there are no notable differences in the experiences of regulars with some exposure to country during primary socialization, and those without. A possible explanation for this, consistent with Bourdieu (1984), is that given regulars share the same class position, they would not have been inclined to appreciate it even as children. Moreover, those with exposure characterize it as fleeting—likely too fleeting to make an impact—and often unpleasant.

In sum, this study extends work on taste by offering a way to study processes of re-habituation hitherto assumed but generally not theorized. Dewey's work implies that tastes develop from concrete situations that shape subjectivities. In this way, actors' reactions to and feelings for things in the world are funded: they "implicitly sum up a history" (Dewey, [1925] 1958:257). A full understanding of tastes thus hinges on consideration of the experiences that organize them. Applying these insights to data on individuals' aesthetic trajectories, researchers can work backwards from expressed tastes to uncover the experiences from which they develop. Doing so can bring researchers closer to specifying how actors acquire their tastes *and* what their tastes are for.

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