

## **The Consumption of Music as the Construction of Self**

Tia DeNora's *Music in Everyday Life* (2000) was an attempt to understand the theoretical underpinnings behind music and its consumption. The power of music to influence mood, create scenes, routines, and occasions are widely recognized and serve as DeNora's inspiration to acknowledge music's ability to influence character, social structure, and action (DeNora 2000). As a response to the macro-oriented approach that she coined as the 'grand tradition' which spawned numerous works and pieces from sociologists such as Howard Becker and Richard Peterson that focuses on the production of culture, DeNora attempts to reclaim the sociological relevance in music through a reconciliation of Theodor Adorno's claim that music was linked to cognitive habits, modes of consciousness and historical developments with emphasis on the consumer's relationship with the semiotics of music.

Continuing where Adorno left off, DeNora seeks to approach music with a 'little tradition' or micro-sociological paradigm to evaluate the relationship between music and the aesthetic and affective dimensions of social life. In her book, DeNora conducts ethnographic research that spans across a wide range of topics relevant to sociological inquiries, including the construction of the self, embodiment of music, and devices of social ordering. Although DeNora's claims are reinforced by empirical evidence, a logical critique of her propositions resides in her inability to connect the results to broader sociological theories which would have resulted in a more persuasive argument in establishing music's significance in sociology and more specifically speaking, sociology of culture. In essence, the goal of the paper is to connect DeNora's empirical evidence to sociological theories that discuss the construction of the self performances, and the cultural toolkit as a way to not only elucidate the results but can also extend the theories for an improved understanding of them by accounting for music. Also, I will be providing an

alternative theory using music as a gateway to ameliorate the understanding of how the self and performances should be conceptualized using the concept of 'multiple selves or faces' to expand our knowledge.

### **DeNora on the Construction of the Self**

In the chapter that discusses music as a technology of the self, DeNora claims that literature on the self and its accompanying narrative of the 'unitary individual' is a linchpin or cornerstone of modern social organization (DeNora 2000:46). More recently, focus has turned to the 'reflexive project' of the self, whose care and cultivation rests upon the amalgamation of social, material, and discourse practices that a social actor encounters and interacts with. To advance knowledge in the area regarding the reflexivity of the self, DeNora uses music to bridge the connection between cultural material and the constitution/construction of the self and identity. By focusing on intimate musical practices, concerning private or one-to-one forms of human-music interaction, it offers an idealized vantage point and opportunity to view music or culture in action, and how music comes to be implicated in the construction of the self as an aesthetic agent appropriated by the social actor. Drawing on ethnographic interviews, DeNora seeks to understand how social actors that regulate, elaborate, and substantiate themselves as social agents through the self-generation of social agency as they engage in musical practices (DeNora 2000). According to DeNora, music serves two purposes concerning the technology of the self: firstly, it reconfigures the self to engage in specific forms of social action through its ability to shift moods and atmospheres, and secondly, it creates and maintains self-identity through constant maintenance (DeNora 2000).

Many participants in DeNora's study have mentioned the transformative powers that music has, it "does things, changes things, and makes things happen" (DeNora 2000:48). Music helps social actors arrive at a gallery of practices in and through which people mobilize it for accomplishing and feeling something within the social world. This is done through music's ability to help actors shift moods or energy levels as perceived situations dictate, a part of the 'care of the self' or maintenance of the individual identity. Music's specific properties such as rhythms, gestures, harmonies, and styles inform social actors of their next available action. It is a representation of the social actor's desire for where they wish to be, to go, emotionally, and physically (DeNora 2000:53). In other words, people construct the self by choosing music that suits their preferences to achieve what the situation necessitates in the current moment, easing and priming them for the event that they are preparing to perform in. For example, participants in DeNora's study required the usage of 'slow' music to soothe and calm the body for activities like studying or taking a bath. On the other hand, activities such as having lunch or interacting with family or friends are associated with music that is 'upbeat' or energetic, potentially creating the atmosphere primed for conversations and lively discussion.

The significance of choosing music to suit your current needs resides not in the semiotics of music chosen, but rather it is the display of agency that actors undertake. It is how social actors articulate their music choice by identifying semiotics and symbols within the music that allows them to sketch imagined or felt states through its consumption. They are then able to express themselves and their identity through deliberation and articulation through thinking ahead of time and choosing music that is associated with certain situations and actions but not others. In other words, the amount of actions that music choices can afford at the moment or

what is the 'right thing' to do is dependent on the social actor and which actions that they associate certain forms of music with.

However, although individuals engage in a range of mostly tacit identity work to construct their self-identity through consumption practices, an important aspect of identity construction is reliant on how the individual presents the self to others and to themselves, which provides a coherent image of self-awareness or 'who they think they are' (DeNora 2000). This involves the social and cultural activity of remembering and transmission of past experiences to cultivate the imagery of self. Music becomes a device for the reflexive process of remembering, which constructs who one is, consequently providing further structuring of future identity and lines of action. For example, respondents in the study used music as a way to remember key people in their identity, such as family members who had died, or people respondents identified to being in a romantic or intimate relationship with. Listening to music associated with these individuals forced them to recall the memories, emotionally heightened phases or moments in their lives. Reliving experiences or memories through music is to reconstitute past experiences, making apparent within memory which may have been suppressed or absent initially; such as listening to a song that is associated with a departed family member would elicit sorrow and grief, whereas, for another individual, it may elicit other emotions. The act of recalling and responding to memories is part of the presentation of self to self, and other social actors. Music essentially acts as a social force that reiterates the structures and underlying social processes that shaped the self through expression with music. It becomes an identification with the past or 'who you are', and it maintains and upholds the self as a coherent being over time, producing a projection of forthcoming actions that the actor may select through listening to a certain song or genre.

Music is also correlated with the active construction of self and allows social actors to locate the sense of 'self' and elaborating self-identity (DeNora 2000). Music is something that can be converted or transposed, through interpretive appropriation into something supra-musical that allows the individual to perceive themselves. In this sense, music acts as a reflection of personal choices and tastes, which is transmitted to others as an illustration of identity. However, individuals who do not possess the aesthetic reflexive skills to articulate semiotics in music would, therefore, be unable to produce the knowledge or concepts that can be evoked concerning self-identity. As a result, using the example of music therapy, individuals under the supervision of therapists would be able to fill in the gaps in the knowledge of who they are through music consumption. Therapists would use music strategically to facilitate their clients' self-perception by heightening their ability to reclaim the repressed image of themselves, allowing them to gain a sense of character and individuality through questions that inquire more about their feelings, emotions, and moods when listening to music.

Conversely, music can be used to expand a pre-existing identity to attain cultural cosmopolitanism or create a 'new' part of the self that supplants or replaces an 'old' part to constitute the self in its newfound entirety. Through exposure to new genres of music or songs, individuals can define their identity in terms of its multi-faceted character, simply by displaying a diversity of musical tastes and practices that represents a range of personae that constitutes the self. Within this environment, individuals through exposure to new-fangled material have expanded their 'toolkit' to account for a wide range of situations. They are capable of finding the 'me' in life and can command their aesthetic environment convincingly through mastery of 'omnivorousness'. In contrast to individuals that adopt more musical tastes as a part of their identity, some could 'drop' specific tastes in music as well. Bearing in mind that music is a

reflection of the self through cultural expression, identities could shift or change which results in an alternate reflection, hence different musical tastes that no longer coincide with their identity. For example, some respondents in DeNora's stated that they simply just lost "interest" or it was just a "phase of their life" that is simply just over (DeNora 2000:73). Thus, in turning to different types of music, we can see how meaningfulness in semiotics can be established through how well it reflects and register self-identity. From this perspective, it seems like the template of self and its reflections are tenable and habitual, but also could be unpredictable and fluctuate through interaction with new-fangled material.

In conclusion, music is used as a resource by individuals to claim their inimitability and distinctiveness. It is how we interpret the semiotics in music and mobilize it for usage that separates one from another; this reflects our identity and reiterates a sense of 'who we think we are'. Although the self may seem habitual or definite through the justification of past experiences, DeNora seems to imply that the identity is stable with appropriate solutions to certain problems in regards to music, but it is only stable until a new problem arises which will call for new solutions, hence the switch to other forms of music to prepare for action. However, implications are distinct from explications, and DeNora's work could be improved beyond using vague references to theories regarding the self.

### **Parallelism of Music with Society as Subjective Reality**

As previously mentioned, DeNora does not make any connections to broad sociological theories relating to the construction of the self, her studies and research have the potential to extend theories on the self by reconceptualizing what it means for the social actor to develop an identity unique to the self.

One of the major theories that can be connected to DeNora's research is the work conducted and posited by Berger and Luckmann, how society can be regarded as subjective reality. According to them, construction of the self is a social process that is organized by external factors. It is only within a society or 'objective reality' that the individual has an opportunity to be socialized and can develop an identity, learning what they are and are not simultaneously. In other words, without external factors acting upon an individual's notion of the self or 'who they are', we can not definitively distinguish oneself from another. The conceptualization of the self begins from conception, where an arduous process of socialization occurs that imparts knowledge onto the individual for internalization. The individual is not born a member of society but becomes a member of society through socialization in a temporal sequence in which the individual is inducted or summoned into participation in the social dialectic (Berger and Luckmann 1966:149). Berger and Luckmann differentiate two forms of socialization: primary and secondary. Primary socialization exists in the form of parenting and serves as essentially as the 'base recipe' of knowledge for the individual as it acts as the first interaction with social actors. Here, Berger and Luckmann argue that the individual learns 'its first reality' or acknowledges its position in the 'homeworld', learning effectively what is 'natural' and what is not. Further socialization exists in secondary socialization, where knowledge exists in 'sub-worlds', where individuals gain the rest of their identity as they learn to grapple with information that may deviate from their developed sense of the self. Secondary socialization insinuates a base of primary socialization, that imparts role-specific knowledge and normative behaviour that builds on primary socialization to identify functions that a role should fulfill.

However, to maintain the self, the individual requires constant maintenance and confirmation from 'significant' others. Due to the presence of numerous if not infinite amounts of

'sub-worlds', there exists a wide range of affirming and competing information that the self or identity has to contend with. There exists no such thing as the totality of self, but it is through constant transforming in secondary socialization that we manage to create the image of self in its entirety. Competing or alternative information is inevitable and would undermine the self's core values and beliefs, resulting in a low degree of symmetry between self and structure. Due to this, constant confirmation is key, and it takes form in conversations or verbal communication. What seems to be casual and unnecessary communication between social actors is a constant mutual reconfirmation of each other's internal thoughts, in that it maintains subjective reality. As a result, the identity of an individual is subject to a struggle of affiliation with sometimes conflicting realities in a complex world. For example, the reality from primary socialization can be in contrast with the reality from secondary socialization, but it is through an oscillating process that an individual undertakes to establish their social world, which acts on the self as a reproducing structure that operates to preserve subjective reality.

Using DeNora's research, we conceptualize how there are inconsistencies with the theories posited by Berger and Luckmann. DeNora's claims could solve some of these inconsistencies within their theory by extending and clarifying the key concepts that are vital to self and identity construction. Music is social work and can be regarded as a mode of interaction that expresses and constitutes social relations, whilst personifying cultural assumptions (Roy and Dowd 2010). In Berger and Luckmann's terms, music exists in the same realm as individuals do, meaning they are constituted within a shared society or 'objective reality'. Considering that DeNora claimed that the individual can connect with the properties of music such as rhythms, gestures, and harmonies from the moment they were conceived as a fetus, the rhythm of their heartbeat are structured by ambient noises, which creates a state of symmetry with music and



body. Using this idea, music is entrenched in the body which may exist as a form of socialization for the individual to construct the self which may not have been considered by Berger and Luckmann. Although Berger and Luckmann cited how important the usage of conversation and verbal communication is to the constant maintenance of the self, they may have overlooked the significance of materials that could deliver conversations just the same as other individuals can. Music's semiotics can communicate or convey messages, ready to be used and mobilized. To solve the issue on whether or not social actors are the only resources of socialization as Berger and Luckmann failed to specify, music emerges as one of the external factors that can influence how individuals maintain the self and constructs identity and should be regarded as such. This is evident in the example of music therapy, how individuals who cannot effectively construct their identity, relies on music as the building blocks of their subjective reality.

Musical tastes can also be the result of primary and secondary socialization; one that is entrenched in the habitus or musical tastes inherited from parents, and the other from musical tastes that are molded through interaction with alternative or competing forms of music. Although DeNora's work can not be thoroughly connected to concepts such as primary socialization, its existence in music consumption can be interpreted. As previously mentioned, primary socialization is essentially the 'homeworld' for the self, or in Bourdieusian terminology, the habitus. Applying it to DeNora, it is music that the body or self has grown accustomed to and is what we would most likely gravitate towards. However, through her examples of cultural cosmopolitanism and musical omnivorousness, we can see the effects of secondary socialization has on self-identity. Primary socialization insinuates a tendency or gravitation for music, but as participants in her study cite the presence of a multi-faceted personality, we can see how individuals manage to reconcile secondary socialization or competing sources of information in

the form of music and combine them into the cosmopolitan self as the prevailing identity. This is something that Berger and Luckmann would argue against as their position on the subject refers that alternative information might be ignored as it does not fit into the established identity. Besides, secondary socialization can be broadened to include information that is not of role specificities, but also any information that is supplementary to the self. To guarantee internalization and knowledge of the self, it requires and necessitates a high degree of symmetry between self and structure. However, with musical omnivorousness, we see how the individual is certain of their identity despite a low degree of symmetry between self and structure. Perhaps, we should not think of internalization as a dual process between individuals and a structure, but a two-step induction of the individual to participate in more than one social institutional structure.

However, Berger and Luckmann were correct with one proposition, is that with the existence of conflicting realities, we can observe how the individual struggles to reconcile information between primary and secondary socialization, or the 'home-world' and 'sub-worlds'. Individuals manage to strip away facets from their established identity to accommodate new pieces of information for internalization, evident in the examples that DeNora posited with consumers of music citing reasons such as "loss of interest" to justify a change in musical tastes (DeNora 2000:73). The appropriation of new forms of music or 'sub-worlds' exemplifies the instability of primary socialization, that despite the structural elements that it provides, individuals can resonate with information that differs from 'home-world' and adopt it for self-identity and personal usage. This is not only suggestive of social agency of individuals illustrated by the ability to choose new musical tastes that suit their 'new self', but also demonstrates the fluidity and flexibility of identity construction.

### **Parallelism of Music with Performances and Dramaturgy**

Another major theory that discusses the construction of self-identity is proposed by Erving Goffman in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, in which he uses the imagery of the theatre to portray the importance of human social interaction, which would become the known as the dramaturgical approach.

Goffman claims that life is similar to a never-ending play in which people are actors. Once we are born, similar to Berger and Luckmann, we are thrust onto the stage or the 'objective reality', and that our socialization consists of learning how to play our assigned roles from interactions with others. In the dramaturgical perspective, Goffman claims that in during interactions between social actors, the face or 'self' that we see from social actors is essentially an act or a performance, and this said performance could either be a sincere portrayal of who their 'actual' self is and want to persuade others that the presented self is real, or it could simply be a façade that the social actor portrays to avoid conflicts or confrontations. Goffman distinguishes these two performances as sincerity and cynicism (Goffman 1959). In this sense, the self is a sense of who one is, a dramatic effect emerging from the immediate scene being presented. In other words, the self presented is merely a representation of what the situation temporarily calls for, and may not reflect core values internalized by the actor, rather, it is the ideals of what interactions with social actors dictate. Consequently, there exists the possibility of multiple selves in a single identity, which is created to contend with the variability and unpredictability of the combinations of interactions that the individual may encounter to avoid embarrassment, conflicts, confrontations, and overall makes traversing through the social world more accessible.

To perform, the individual is placed with a theatre environment that composes of locations that Goffman distinguished as front stages and backstages. During our everyday life, we spend most of our time posing a social front or on the front stage, and our actions are present

for individuals to observe. The front is constrained by society in terms of what it should include, and if society prescribes certain roles, we do not have much agency over the front we can adopt as there is little room for manoeuvre. However, in the backstage, we are not liable to perform, but rather we can be our 'real' selves. When all is said and done, the individual is free to express emotions and conduct certain actions that would not be condoned in the front stage. These actions reflect our true feelings and emotions that may not be tolerable for the audience the individual is acting for. Essentially, the backstage is where performers could act as the 'true' version of their identity.

However, for a performance or the 'front' self the individual is attempting to convey to be effectively portrayed, the individual or actor has to consider the background processes that go into creating it, such as impression management (Goffman 1959). The status or role we are given in society is synonymous with a part in a play, and the role serves as a script, which supplies a guideline for dialogue and actions appropriate for this role. On the stage, individuals in everyday lives have to manage settings, their appearances, and the way they carry out dialogue to give a particular impression to others, that the front stage is equivalent to the backstage. This performance is a presentation of self, a person's efforts create specific impressions in the minds of others. For successful performances, the actor has to choose certain aspects of their 'self' that they want the audience to know and they highlight it as such, and afterward, they have to believe that it is the way they are in actuality, persuading the audience that it is a sincere performance. However, for performances that are unrealistic or unbelievable, it would be difficult for the audience to believe that it is an authentic performance. Consequently, individuals would have to choose idealized versions of their self by closely observing the situation to avoid miscommunication and misrepresentation, and strengthen elements that align with the presented

self to stay 'in character' by sending out 'correct' signals that align with the self they are conveying or act 'properly'. These signals could range from micro-expressions such as gestures, facial expressions, and body language to physical representations such as height and clothing. The individuals would have not only to act 'properly' in the situation but also conceal any perceivable information away from the audience, otherwise, details that conflict with the performance may lead to the audience misinterpreting the presented self.

Goffman's dramaturgical approach can also be applied to the discourse of music, and DeNora's research could extend how the actor could act out multiple performances simultaneously. When people claim to like or dislike a certain genre of music, they are engaging in the performance through positioning themselves either as a fan or as an adversary of the genre. However, to be convincing as a fan, they would have to engage in particular discourses by acknowledging the 'sense of the game' in the discussion to accurately portray themselves in their desired alignment. In the field of cultural cosmopolitanism and music omnivorousness, it is difficult to express fandom as it would mean that the performer would have to absorb enough information to act out a multi-faceted performance. This would prove to be difficult as the actor would have to invest time into perfecting each minute detail that goes into giving multiple performances to express each genre of music the individual claims to be an enthusiast about. Besides, to perform it flawlessly and congruently would require extensive effort and practicing in the backstage to showcase their knowledge in each genre of music without being seen by the audience as cynical or insincere.

In contrast, when individuals attempt to register or improve their self-identity through choosing certain types of music that they 'lost interest' in, we can observe how performances may be linked to the distinction of 'highbrow' and 'low' culture. For some of the participants in

DeNora's study, some of the participants not only expressed the sentiment that they rejected music that is no longer appropriate with the configuration of the self but also discussed how they engaged in avoidance of specific types of music such as "flashy solo arias" and ways in performing the music (DeNora 2000:73). Music that resonates with the "flashy solo arias" characteristic may be linked to 'lowbrow' culture or the popular expression of 'guilty pleasure'. For a participant, they exemplify the distinction between the front and backstage through her consumption of that form of music, as she plays certain music when engaging in social activities, portraying a social front, whilst consuming "flashy solo arias" music as a backstage. The participant expresses how in her vehicle, she can play the music "as loud as she wants" and can "sing along to every note of it" without regard for any critique or negative responses from other social actors (DeNora 2000:73). This postulates that music despite cultural omnivorousness can be defined in regards to hierarchization based on cultural capital, implying some forms of music are richer in capital than others, which results in individuals consuming it in different settings, catering to the multi-faceted personality through consumption in the front or backstage performances.

Lastly, Goffman is correct in his assumption that every social action or interaction we make is a performance. However, Goffman seems to acknowledge the existence of performances only when there is an audience in place. DeNora's results may offer an alternative approach to the discourses of performances in front and backstage, by suggesting that even when there are no audiences, the individual can still perform but for themselves in the backstage or a 'self-performance'. Using her example of music that recalls memories regardless of the emotion or mood it evokes, the individual essentially 'wearing a mask' for himself or herself to observe. If the memory that the individual recalls, for example, is regarding the death of a close family

member when listening to a certain song or type of music, the performance they are acting out is reaffirming their self-identity through physical or emotional reactions in the form of crying, sobbing, and mourning as possible actions. By reliving their memories and reacting appropriately to how they reminisced it, the individual would be able to perceive their reactions or performances as legitimate and real, positively reaffirming their self-identity through acknowledgment of the existence the memory being firmly rooted in 'who they are' via nonverbal communication. In other words, we do not know if a certain memory is close to an individual unless they recall it and observe if it evokes emotions or moods in them, even if it does not, the individual's performance can still be mobilized to confirm what is relevant for their self-identity and what is not. Also, Goffman acknowledges how actors would use the backstage to perfect their social front, however, the act of practicing in the backstage is in essence, a performance or representation of the self, to the self. Without reflecting on their 'dress rehearsal', they would be unable to participate in self-reflection, consequently neglecting any mistakes, faults, and inconsistencies that may arise when acting in front of others.

### **Parallelism of Music with the Cultural Toolkit**

Lastly, DeNora's study can be elucidated by the theory of cultural toolkit, proposed by Ann Swidler to address the dichotomous explanation of social action: cultural and structural. Swidler attempted to offer a solution on how to approach sociology from a cultural explanation rather than from a structural explanation, which emphasizes the individual's ability to play more of an instrumental role rather than a passive actor.

Swidler argues that culture is "symbolic vehicles of meaning", and these 'vehicles' can take forms in beliefs, ritual practices, and numerous other forms as well (Swidler 1986:273).

These "vehicles of meaning" according to Swidler can be interpreted as knowledge and experiences for people to accept and integrate into their 'cultural toolkit'. Swidler uses the concept of "cultural toolkit" as a rationale to understand what constitutes values. Swidler argues that actors' ultimate ends or goals do not necessarily have a preordained method of achieving them, but rather stringent on the actor's 'toolkit' or selected "strategies of action" (Swidler 1986:276), as efficient means to given ends. People learn a set of skills or repertoire through interactions with culture and social actors, which they selectively choose accordingly for constructing lines of actions (Swidler 1986:277) to use at their disposal to face certain oppositions and ordeals. These sets of skills and habits are arguably longer lasting than what we accept as goals, as we choose what to perfect, and what works well becomes recognized as the 'proper means to an end'. People will come to value ends for which their cultural equipment is well suited, meaning that if an individual doesn't have the skills to pursue a certain line of action, they should look for another line where their cultural competencies or 'tools in their toolkit' are going to shine or be more useful; as trying to force yourself to another line would require "drastic and costly cultural retooling" (Swidler 1986:277).

Applying the cultural toolkit to the study of music, it becomes apparent that the cultural toolkit is varied which is contingent on the social actor. Consequently, it makes the social actor and individual inimitable due to their choices of actions to resolve ordeals or problems, similarly to Goffman's interpretation that actors behave 'appropriately' or following what the current situation stipulates as a result of interactions to avoid conflicts and confrontations. In other words, the cultural toolkit is an inseparable and integral in the formation of the self, as lines of action may be similar between social actors, but experiences in culture and music are divergent due to music's semiotic properties as a web of meanings, which can be appropriated in a wide



range of situations and choices of action. In DeNora's study, participants used music as a solution to their commonplace ordeals. Because music has the transformative properties to "do things, change things, and makes things happen" (DeNora 2000:48), certain genres of music or songs would be able to shift the consumer's behaviour to be more suitable for certain actions.

As previously mentioned, music's properties such as rhythms, gestures, harmonies, and styles have the influence to inform and order social actors to prepare for action. It is in the arrangement of these properties in addition to lyrics do we see the emergence of genres in music. Genres as boundary work imply the existence of a cultural toolkit in objects instead of social actors that Swidler focused on, as genres in music are synonymous with tools in the toolkit since specific genres of music are associated and correlated with certain actions by music consumers. As boundary work, genres and its usage are constructed by consumers, which as a consequence, creates a social structure and institutionalization of how genres should be deployed. For example, there is the notion that 'classical' music or music without words are cited most frequently as aiding concentration in DeNora's study. Although there is nothing immanent in classical music that associates itself with activities that dictate concentration; it nonetheless remains as the dominant form of music to be used in those circumstances. Music, in this case, employs classical music as a part of its toolkit to afford some activities and situations such as studying, reading, or sleeping (DeNora 2000). Unquestionably, the toolkit in music is at the mercy of consumers and how they interpret the semiotics or in this case the tools provided by music. It is through a mutual agreement that the creation of genres that consumers choose to use classical music as a way to induce concentration, however, considering music is of interpretivist nature, other consumers may use it for other actions such as venting or diffusing anger (DeNora 2000). This suggests that even if music seems to have 'a mind of its own' through its delineation of certain

actions with genres, however, it is the interpretivist framework of consumers and how they mobilize genres in their everyday lives that make their cultural toolkit unique and imitable. In other words, music may suggest ideas on how certain genres can be used, but it is the consumers that appropriate it into their toolkits to solve problems in their way that can not be replicated that constitutes individuality in identity; the usage of up-beat music in situations other than social activities such as studying, or classical music to set up the atmosphere for romantic dinners. The focus on the object having a cultural toolkit extends the theory's applicability to not only social actors but opens the field to include objectified culture.

### **The Conceptualization of Self in its Actuality**

All of the theories that were discussed are related to the construction to the self explicitly with Berger and Luckmann, and Goffman, or implicitly through lines of action that are exclusive to the individual with Swidler. Theories like Berger and Luckmann as well as Bourdieu's notion of the 'habitus' make the case that primary socialization or past experiences play an integral role in formulating future actions. Exposure to alternative information would most likely be neglected and disregarded due to its unconventionality as it does not align with how the self was structured. The issue with the single self is that there is a reliance on structuralism, effectively undermining the social actor's agentic properties and capacity to participate in structural and social change. For example, Bourdieu's habitus would fail to account for individuals who were able to transcend social classes, which is a characteristic of countries with high social mobility. Bringing Berger and Luckmann into the discussion, they seem to acknowledge that the individual would be exposed to 'sub-worlds' with rivaling information that is divergent from the already established self. Although individuals may use the opportunity of opposing information as a mechanic to strengthen their understanding of their identity through its rejection, there exists the possibility

that individuals may not reject opposing values, but appropriate for usage for whenever it is suitable.

Similar to the cultural toolkit or performances, individuals may lack the proper tools necessary for a successful performance, but due to the complexity of the social world, it is rare to encounter individuals with a limited toolkit or individuals who only have contact with familiar information. It is difficult to imagine the self as a singular entity that is incompetent for social change, but rather, the identity is more fluid and flexible than sociologists like Bourdieu or Berger and Luckmann acknowledges. As a result, I believe that individuals not only accept a wide range of values, but they can also mobilize it to traverse through the intricacy of 'sub-worlds' to avoid confrontations, embarrassment, and conflicts in Goffman's terms. This is achieved through the idea of multiple selves or faces that individuals switch through in their everyday lives, that each event or aspect that occurs in an individual's daily routine supplies material to empower and improve the numerous selves and faces to support a multi-faceted personality to address problems that may arise that deviates from the established self as a result of social structures. It is through acknowledging that the self can be multi-faceted that solves the problem of determinism in the theories related to structuralism. Individuals can not only retain the values gathered from social structures but also adopt new values into their identity regardless of the portrayal of these new values are sincere or not, dependent on the degree and extent of socialization they have received.

To provide clarification, the most sufficient method to envision the possibility of multiple selves is to recognize the dynamism of identities and uncertainty in the face of social interactions. Bayesian theory as a logical critique of affect control theory appraises the notion that the self is objective and deterministic, but rather, it argues that the self exists on a continuum

and it constantly fluctuating through interactions and social experiences. Bayesian theory represents concepts with multiple meanings, which inevitably leads to the possibility of a multitude of identities and paths. The validity of the theory is contingent on the fact that individuals experience miscommunication or objects 'lost in translation', as it prioritizes the concept that the self is multi-faceted through the experiencing a conglomerate of uncertainties and unpredictability (Schröder, Hoey, and Rogers 2016). This is prevalent in the discussion of the semiotics of music, cultural cosmopolitanism, and music's ability to "transfigure, configure, and reconfigure subjects and their modes of consciousness and embodied capacities" (DeNora 2000:159).

Social interactions between social actors have been the cornerstone in the theorizing of the development of the self. However, what music does as nuance is that it focuses on interactions between objectified culture and social actors. It goes without further mention that music's immanent properties do not order the self naturally, but rather it is the interactions that the individual has with the properties of music that bestow it the power to drive and manipulate the body (DeNora 2000:41). The semiotics of music can only be taken seriously when discussed in relation to the affective properties that the individual associates it with, hence the prevalence of the wide range of situations that music can be used in. As previously mentioned, some genres of music are related to some actions but not others, but the individual can express individuality through his or her modification of genres of music that are generally used and appropriate it for their preferences. Music transcends situations or problems that individuals may encounter because it manages to accomplish what the presentation of events that call for action can do, but without the event being present. In other words, music can not only offer modes of being or action, but it presents the same scenic specificity as problems or events in daily life that causes

the individual to shift moods such as suppressing energy or exciting the individual to prepare the body to be primed for some form of action that only a 'face' or 'self' is capable of. Music reconfigures our body and lines of action that aligns with one 'face' and quickly shifts it into another 'face', which affords explicit actions but not others. For example, if the action of studying requires peace and serenity, then classical music would prepare the body by reconfiguring it to suit the action of studying.

Those who control music, in essence, controls the body. Music is one of those materials that introduce the concept of social order as a consequence and as an effect of temporal action. Music's role as a device of collective ordering, how it may be employed, albeit at times unwittingly, as a means of organizing potentially disparate individuals to behave in mutually oriented, co-ordinated, entrained, and aligned manners. By definition, music is a temporal medium and is capable of fluctuating from moment to moment, and song to song, which makes music an ideal medium for corporeal and social forms of entrainment. In essence, music can be used to cater to the individual to behave in a certain manner, but the effectiveness of body ordering is dependent on the degree of entrainment they have received that stipulates such actions. There is a connection between musical tempo and movement style, which the body is reactive to music and vice versa, music creates the body to reflect the music as a way to match its flow and tempo (DeNora 2000:143). For example, consumers often negotiate the relationship between music and intimate culture, and how the employment of music in intimacy would cater to the self that is geared for intimate activities. In DeNora's study, the participants and their significant others would negotiate the musical backdrop of their time together which highlights their understanding of what is musically appropriate to the occasion, and change the genre of music when it seems 'wrong' or unfit in the situation to music that is 'seductive' from artists such

as Enya. In other scenarios such as shopping malls, for retailers, music becomes an important agent in influencing sales and purchasing tendencies. These affective dimensions of agency are critical because 'impulse' sales are typically transactions that involve consumers' emotions. For this reason, retailers by controlling the flow of music, are inadvertently controlling the body and its actions through the sudden shift in the 'selves' to one that is more receptive to purchasing items. As an example, at the time of seasonal parties such as Christmas festivities or summer balls, 'partying' music is displayed to not only reinforce the goods in the shop but also influence to the actor to make the association between their moods and items, increasing the likelihood that they would purchase goods.

Through accomplishing this, consumers were engaging in the aesthetic reflexive activity of configuring their body or 'selves' via musical choices and delineate their choices based on what they are preparing to do in that given scenario. Music provides an exemplar for styles of being; it may be perceived as representing or making accessible to awareness of various parameters of emotional and embodied conduct. Getting the music 'right' is an attempt to make the action 'right', exemplifying the connection between culture and action that is not merely in the embodied or technical sense, but as a way of prospectively beckoning for forms of agency that are comfortable and suitable in emotional and embodied terms for the situation that is constructed by music. In this way, music enables the possibility of intersubjective, entrained physical conduct which can be summoned at will depending on the genre of music that is in milieu.

### **Conclusion**

DeNora's book provides an in-depth understanding of how music is manipulated and deployed by consumers through the expression of vibrant details and examples used to elaborate on the significance of music in everyday life. Although the book does not fail to provide a comprehensive list of examples to explain her position in the sociology of music and culture, DeNora undermined the potential that music provides to improve upon sociological theories that prioritize the construction of the self as a foundation through her focus on the micro-sociological framework. Music essentially behaves as a medium to bridge the connection between culture/music and individuality, an implicit attempt to illuminate how individuals claim their identity. It is through music consumption that they gain a sharpened understanding of 'who they are' and consequently 'who they are not'. By fixating on the idea of a singular self, it presupposes a structure over agency conception as the self becomes an unyielding entity that is incapable of transformation and adopting new lines of action. Rather, the self is in a state of flux, as people interact with situations, they gain additional information to empower the self. If individuals come in contact with 'sub-worlds' or alternative information that is incongruent with the socialized self, they would accept the information gathered as a means to an end. In other words, they may not internalize the values to self-discipline, but use it to traverse through the social world effortlessly through performances and cultural toolkits, and social actors can retain and manipulate information to secure a successful performance or 'correct' solution to a problem. Music acts as an outlet to conceptualize the self in its multi-faceted personality and forces the body to conduct itself according to music as a device of social ordering.

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