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Songwriting as Inquiry and Action: Emotion, Narrative Identity, and Authenticity in Folk Music Culture

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Songwriting as Inquiry and Action: Emotion, Narrative Identity, and Authenticity in Folk Music

Culture

by

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of the requirement for the degree of
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is lovingly dedicated to my grandmother and guardian angel, Betty Jane Walker Gibbons. Thank you for everything. We miss you so.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation can broadly be summarized as an examination of the construction and maintenance of a specific type of "authentic" American identity through the lens of folk music. Drawing from interpretive perspectives within the sociology of culture and social psychology, social constructionism and symbolic interactionism in particular, I combine ethnographic research with 61 interviews at two different "folk musicians' festivals" (festivals where attendees, not hired professionals, produce the music).

My principal focus at these festivals concerns the various practices and stories surrounding the creation and performance of original folk music. I use the empirical platform of musicians' festivals, where folk songwriters are plenty, combined with the theoretical synthesis of music and narrative, to examine how such practices and stories shape, and are shaped by, culture, emotion, and identity. Specifically, I am interested in the cultural "work" accomplished by the interrelationships among music and narrative *at* festivals, *around* songwriting, and *in* songs, particularly as such "work" relates to the (re)production and reception of folk and festival culture, participants' emotional experiences, the construction and maintenance of participants' personal and collective identities, and the purposeful evocation of social change.

In attending to the importance of process and meaning-making, I examine the process through which one accomplishes authenticity as a folk and festival member, the creative process of songwriting, and the process through which listeners experience and interpret "good songs." I offer the concepts (and processes) of *songwriting as inquiry* and *songwriting in action* to account

for how these interrelationships "work" for songwriters and listeners, but also for sociologists, particularly in terms of including the (mostly neglected) lived and embodied dimensions of emotional experience. Throughout, I explore how stories and practices in and around the process of musical production and performance are largely influenced by broader cultural narratives that circulate in and around folk music culture, particularly as they relate to the notion of "authentic identity" through emotionality, creativity, and social justice.

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is an examination of the construction and maintenance of a specific type of "authentic American" identity through the lens of folk music. Drawing from interpretive perspectives within the sociology of culture and social psychology, social constructionism and symbolic interactionism in particular, I combine ethnographic research with 61 interviews at two different "folk musicians' festivals" (festivals where attendees, not hired professionals, produce the music). My principal focus at these festivals concerns the various practices and stories surrounding the creation and performance of original folk music. I use the empirical platform of musicians' festivals, where folk songwriters are plenty, combined with the theoretical synthesis of music and narrative, to examine how such practices and stories shape, and are shaped by, culture, emotion, and identity. Specifically, I am interested in the cultural "work" they accomplish in terms of the (re)production and reception of folk and festival culture, participants' emotional experiences, the construction and maintenance of participants' personal and collective identities, and the purposeful evocation of social change. Throughout, I explore how stories and practices in and around the process of musical production and performance are largely influenced by broader cultural narratives that circulate in and around folk music culture, particularly as they relate to the notion of "authentic identity" through emotionality, creativity, and social justice.

While at first glance "folk music" and "songwriting" appear to be insignificant topics for sociological inquiry, my dissertation contributes empirically and theoretically to a variety of key issues that extend far beyond the topical focus of my research. To begin, music has played (and continues to play) a momentous historical role in the construction of symbolic boundaries around political, national, cultural and personal identities (DeNora 1999; Roy 2002; Lena and Peterson 2008; Shelemay 2011). In addition to creating boundaries, music also *constructs*, as opposed to reflects, "reality" (Vambe 2004), "place" (Garrett et al. 2011; Berish 2012), "emotion" (Dibben 2006), "truth," and "experience" (Frith [1996] 2011), which is why many have productively linked Americanist music to American identity and nationality (Garrett et al. 2011; Berish 2012).

For these reasons, folk music, particularly when described as "the peoples' music," or the musical voice of the "common" folk, working class, or proletariat, has received much attention in terms of its ability to resonate with a perceivably "authentic" American identity, or "we" who do "American" right (Lund and Denisoff 1971; Rosenberg 1998; Roy 2002; Ingram 2008; Crutchfield 2009; Roy 2010). Embedded within understandings of what it means to be a "good, authentic" American are layered systems of meaning around issues of continuing relevance, for example, modernity, commodification, capitalism, mass consumption, technology, race, class, poverty, the environment, and the diluting effects of "authentic" music courtesy of the "music industry" (Lund and Denisoff 1971; Morrison 2001; Thurmaier 2006; Helsel 2007; Ingram 2008; Lena and Peterson 2008; Frith 2009).

Given these historical and contemporary concerns, and since the 1930's, folk music in the US has been and continues to be "socially conscious" and overtly political (Tachi 2004; Thurmaier 2006; Roy 2010; Shelemay 2011; Street 2012). Music orders realities and serves as a sense making device, especially in times of crisis (Vambe 2004; Garrett et al. 2011; Berish 2012;

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Kuutma and Kästik 2014), an important function of music that has not been lost on "folk" or music scholars in "the face of today's abundant uncertainties" (Garrett et al. 2011). In short, folk music has played an important role in shaping cultural and political understandings of who we "really" are as a country and how we fall short, as evidenced by the formidable body of work written on the history and impact of the "folk revival" (Nettl 1976; Rosenberg 1993; Cantwell 1996; Cohen 2002, 2006; Mitchell 2007; Scully 2008; Dunaway and Beer 2010).

However, while the revival marked an important part of US history, particularly in the 1960s when it "was indeed a major social phenomenon" (Tachi 2004:88), and while historical context is imperative to the folk music of today, "The Revival" is over. While it is true that a great many "revivalists" are still alive, a point evidenced by the demographics of participants in this research, unlike Scully (2008), I do not see the revival as "never-ending." Instead, it was a distinct and important historical moment that has long since concluded. Folk music itself, on the other hand, is still very much alive. According to Gruning (2006), at the time of his writing, there were 450 folk music festivals in the US alone. Hence, there are a great many real people in the real world still "doing" folk music on the ground, and most of these real people are not historical figures, folklorists, massively famous musicians, and many are not recording artists, nor do they make a living playing music. One wonders, then, why there is such a plethora of research on the folk music revival and the industry, and yet such a dearth of research on folk musicians' festivals today. This is particularly perplexing given that such festivals are places where people are getting together by the thousands, some for a month at a time, actively "doing" folk music together.

With few exceptions outside of Gruning's (2006) work, it is difficult to find contemporary research that focuses on everyday people in today's world (re)creating folk music

culture in ways that are equally important to issues of identity, authenticity, and social change as they were in the fifties and sixties. In addition to the neglect of the "everyday-ness" of folk music in the present, social life has changed rather dramatically since the 1950s and 1960s, and cultural understandings in and around folk music have followed suit. This is not to say that its social impact has lessened, but instead quite the contrary: The invent of electronic media alone has revolutionized the ways in which we gain access to music, musicians, and music scenes (Bennett 2004; Lena and Peterson 2008; Garrett et al. 2011), as well as the ways in which we interpret issues of group membership, authenticity (Peterson 2005), and musical production (Gruning 2006). Of course, as Gruning (2006) notes, there are myriad important changes that have taken place over the last 50 years that contemporary scholarship on folk music should take into account.

In addition to the general neglect of the contemporary state, purposes, and practices of folk music, and despite the massive body of work that details its political and emotional impact, there is a distinct neglect of exactly *how* it is possible and *how* people accomplish it. To say that music, and folk music in particular, is "authentic," "political," and "emotional" is to focus on the outcome (i.e., "music") as opposed to the *process* behind its creation and reception, or how this particular cultural "work" gets done. I am decidedly not concerned with the process through which the music industry has, for better or worse, "fabricated authenticity" (Peterson 1997), or the process through which a behind-the-scenes network of collectivities sustains and reinvents "art worlds" (Becker 1982), or the historical process through which folk music came to be riddled with contradiction and paradox (Lund and Denisoff 1971; Roy 2002; Tachi 2004; Crutchfield 2009). This is not because such work has not been profoundly useful, but for contemporary interpretive sociologists, to say that "music," "creativity," "emotion," "identity,"

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"authenticity," and "communities" are "socially constructed," or that there are collectivities and structural forces at work, is now to say rather little.

Instead, what is needed is not another examination of industries, but instead an examination of how people, as producers, listeners, and consumers, actively construct and grapple with these concepts and contradictions; how they utilize cultural knowledge, resources, and creative processes to effectively express and evoke emotion in ways that resonate with listeners; how they shape understandings around what it means to be an "authentic," "emotional," and "creative" "American," and how this informs the perception and interpretation of social problems and potential solutions. When it comes to examining how people make sense of identities, emotions, politics, and everyday life through the making of, and listening to, folk music, sociologists need to turn attention away from "markets," "networks," and "commercialism" (Turley 2001), and towards processes and practices (Collin 2013; Long and Barber 2015; Negus and Astor 2015), interactions (Duffy 2005; Lena and Peterson 2008), musicians (Turley 2001), audiences, and listeners (Dowd 2004; Matheson 2008; Frith 2009). This becomes all the more important when studying a "traditionalist genre" like folk music, whose *members* perceive themselves to be decidedly anti-industry (Lena and Peterson 2008), despite a great deal of industry success.

Furthermore, and at the risk of patronizing all fields of music study, there are actual people out there writing the songs that comprise the "folk music" of yesteryears and today, and yet there is a striking lack of research on songwriting and songwriters, particularly from a sociological perspective. The vast majority of work in this regard is found within the music therapy literature, which at the very least emphasizes songwriting's therapeutic value. Interestingly, the authors of the most recent comprehensive review of such work lament the

widespread neglect of "the 'how'" behind music therapy's effectiveness (Stewart and McAlpin 2015:1), which only brings us back to the (sociological) question of "how." In my literature review, I more thoroughly examine the research on songwriting that exists beyond music therapy, but it is worth noting that this work not only falls considerably short of my goals, but it is also plagued with many of the quagmires and redundancies presented above.

The vast majority of this work is seemingly, and not surprisingly, more concerned with the relationships between songwriting and the music industry, touring and award winning songwriters, case studies involving *one* songwriter and *one* song, the underlying "truth" behind songwriting creativity, and there is a distinct and unusual pattern involving the consistent use of Zollo's book ([1991] 2003), *Songwriters on Songwriting*, which means that, at times, there are no "real" people involved whatsoever. Instead, such an analysis centers on celebrities discussing songwriting across genres, which means that in addition to conceptual confusion around "songwriters," "songs," "creativity," and "success" (all of which are equivocated to a rather nebulous "industry"), there is a considerable lack of dialogue about genre (i.e., cultural/historical/political context). The same can be said of researchers' strange alliance to "how-to" songwriting books that are used as examples of "process," as opposed to simply talking to songwriters and taking their perspectives seriously. Like others (Hatch and Watson 1974; Long and Barber 2015), I do not see these methodological avenues as analytically productive. At the very least, if one is interested in "process," one should combine these books with the accounts of songwriters who actually use them.

These issues are further complicated by the pervasive neglect of emotion, particularly how emotion is lived and embodied, and how this relates to musical experience (Bendix 2000; Morton 2005; Long and Barber 2015). This becomes particularly problematic when emotion is

fundamentally linked to music (Juslin and Slodoba 2012) and its relationships to authenticity (Ronström, Malm, and Lundberg 2001; Matheson 2008, Frith 2009), identity (Frith [1996] 2011; DeNora 1999; Ruud 2009), performance (Duffy 2005; Shelemay 2011; O'Grady 2013), creativity (Long and Barber 2015; Kuutma and Kästik 2014), and politics, protest, and resistance (Matheson 2008; Holman-Jones 2002; Roy 2010; Kinney 2012). While musicologists neglect emotion and meaning-making in favor of musical structure and language (DeNora 1986; Bendix 2000), sociologists tend to neglect emotion in favor of discourse, management, and culture writ large (Ellis 1991; Craib 1995; Harkin 2003).

Taken together then, much like work on songwriters and songwriting, there is a remarkable glossing over of "music" and "emotion" when writing about "music" and/or "emotion." The "academicization" (Frith [1996] 2011) of writing on music and/or emotion from both musicologists and sociologists looks more like an argument for sustaining one side of any given artificial binary, whether it be emotion vs. cognition (Lutz 1986; Long and Barber 2015), or music vs. language (DeNora 1986), or performing arts vs. fine arts (Frith [1996] 2011), and so on and so forth. As a result, and with few exceptions, we have almost entirely lost what both music and emotion *feel* like (Morton 2005), and with this comes the loss of understanding how people make sense of authenticity and identity in their everyday lives.

In this research, I argue that the study of how original folk music is produced and received is a productive platform on which to more specifically fill the gaps above. First, it represents a contemporary examination of how real people in the real world accomplish "authentic" American identity through folk music. Here the focus is on process, interaction, and practice, or how songwriters, musicians, and listeners create, shape, perpetuate, reflect, and attach meaning to issues of authenticity, personal and collective identity, emotional experience

and expression, and social justice. All of the above takes place within a specific cultural context (folk music culture) and is further nested within a specific social context (folk musicians' festivals). Thus, in addition to highlighting and contextualizing systems of shared meaning, I emphasize musical interaction, experience, and authenticity as they are actively accomplished and "felt" within an important, though largely neglected, setting.

Second, it reunites the study of music and emotion with the lived, embodied character of musical and emotional experience. I offer the concept of *songwriting as inquiry* to describe the process through which the evocative properties of music are synthesized with the general principles of "writing as inquiry" (Richardson 2001). In this way, songwriting allows for the "channeling" of lived emotional experience through song and through the body, providing an emotionally embodied vehicle through which to organize, interpret, and express lived emotional experience that is often difficult to understand and communicate. Musically induced emotional experiences are not exclusive to songwriters; instead, songs are intensely felt by listeners, who, like songwriters, have been largely neglected in music studies. Thus, in addition to the emotional process of producing songs, I also attend to the emotional process of receiving them.

Third, in keeping with the importance of people, emotion, and the question of 'how,' I offer the concept of *songwriting in action* to describe the process through which songwriters draw from a broad range of cultural "tools" and conventions that are then strategically deployed to ensure that songs resonate emotionally with large audiences. The work that goes into "crafting" a song that resonates has everything to do with the emphasis placed on the successful delivery of a message deemed important, one that often takes the form of social change, protest, and commentary. Conceived of this way, an examination of songwriting has much to do with systems of meaning in and around what is supposedly in need of change, why it is so, and how it

should be addressed. The "how" of social change in this regard moves beyond its relationship to music as a product, the common neglect of agency and practice, and the glossing over of how exactly songs came to be effective vehicles of change in the first place. Instead, *songwriting in action* emphasizes the relationship between social change and music as a process, one that involves the deliberate and tactful use of cultural conventions embedded within American and folk music culture to promote social justice.

Fourth, the above contributions have been built on a heretofore neglected analysis of the cultural "work" accomplished by the interrelationships among music and storytelling, and how these interrelationships shape and are shaped by emotional experience, authenticity, and identity. An analysis of "how" in this case is situated within the interpretive understanding that narratives, music, and emotion "do" things as powerful vehicles and products of culture. Thus, when I refer to cultural "work," I am referring to what narratives, music, and emotion "do," or what they accomplish as primary sense-making vehicles through which to navigate the complexities of social life. For example, emotion shapes (and is shaped by) culture and identity, and both music and stories inform and are informed by culture, identity, and emotional experience.

This means that when combined in a variety of forms—for example, stories in and around music, music about stories, emotion as part and parcel of storytelling, creativity, and musical experience—these combinations really get the cultural "job" done, so to speak, for songwriters, audience members, and sociologists alike. Songwriters tell stories in and around their creative processes and these stories inform how they make sense of who they are, who others are, their emotions, others' emotions, and the direction and purpose of songwriting as a vehicle for emotionality and social justice. Of course, privileging the complexity of such a process involves acknowledging that these cultural understandings shape (and are shaped) by

each other, so that to make sense of "emotion," for example, is also to make sense of how to promote justice through song.

This dissertation is organized as follows:

Chapter two represents my literature review, which first begins with my interpretive conceptualizations of culture and folk music. I then turn towards the cultural "work" of music and narrative as they relate to personal and collective identities and social change. Next, I review literature on emotion, its relationship to culture, identities, and narrative, and then highlight the widespread, sociological neglect of emotional embodiment and lived experience. Here I offer a social phenomenology of emotion as a productive theoretical vehicle through which to include this type of emotional experience. Following this, I examine the interrelationships among music and emotion, and then turn towards literature on songwriting. In this section, I argue that songwriting is an effective way to reunite the lived and embodied character of emotional experience with the sociology of emotions. Here I offer the concepts of *songwriting as inquiry* and *songwriting in action* as a platform on which to include these experiences, and to do so in ways that emphasize process, practice, and the cultural "work" of music and narrative. Lastly I conclude with a summary of the literature and then present my research questions.

Chapter three is dedicated to an examination of cultural context. In this chapter, I review empirical research related to music festivals and folk musicians' festivals, paying particular attention to the relationships between folk music culture, festivals, and issues of central importance: Collective and personal identity, emotion, performance, authenticity, social change, and their various interrelationships. Next, I examine literature regarding authenticity and music, specifically in relation to social structure, identity, and "feeling." Lastly, I describe the two

musicians' festivals that served as ethnographic sites for this research: The Walnut Valley Festival in Winfield, Kansas and the Kerrville Folk Festival in Kerrville, Texas.

In chapter four, I describe my interpretive methodology and the methods I employed in this research: ethnography, conversational interviews, sociological introspection, and autoethnography. Following this is a description of the data I collected and the ways in which I analyzed that data according to grounded theory practice and narrative analysis. Following this, I begin my analytic chapters, which broadly represent how the cultural "work" of music and narrative is accomplished *at* musicians' festivals (i.e., "in action"), *around* songwriting, and *in* songs.

In chapter five, I examine how one learns, enacts, and embodies the cultural knowledge necessary to accomplish authenticity as a member of folk and festival culture. In other words, this chapter centers on how authenticity is "done" (Force 2009) at folk musicians' festivals. The accomplishment of authenticity at both festivals has much to do with one's ability to intelligibly and appropriately participate in and around musical interactions in ways that are validated by other members. Here I examine the "interpretive rules" underpinning "songs circles" and "jams" (the principle forms of musical interaction at festivals), how they relate to folk music culture, particularly issues of tradition, originality, community, and performance, and how they are circulated and learned through breaches and stories. Throughout this chapter, I examine the "narrative work" (Force 2009) of authenticity, the interrelationships among folk and festival cultures, and how these interrelationships inform (and are informed by) personal and collective identities.

Chapter six is an examination of two predominant cultural narratives surrounding the songwriting process and the "work" they do for songwriters in terms of organizing lived

experience, emotional expression, and the promotion of social justice. The first story is that of the Channeling Artist, who is only a vehicle through which songs "come through." Here the main character is the Muse, the emotional, inspirational, and creative force guiding the songs "birth." The second story is that of the Master Craftsman, who toils laboriously over their songs, sometimes for years. In this story, the main character is the Editor, the "rational" and "analytical" voice that uses "tools" and "techniques" to "craft" songs in an effort to resonate emotionally with audience members. It is in this chapter that I present the concepts of *songwriting as inquiry* and *songwriting in action* to account for the cultural accomplishments of these narratives for songwriters, but also for the theoretical and empirical contributions they offer sociologists.

Chapter seven is an examination of "good songs" as a cultural category. While chapter six is more about how songs are written, this chapter is more about how songs are received. In this chapter, I first examine the cultural consensus around "good songs" before I "unpack" the unspoken assumptions and "interpretive rules" behind how that consensus was achieved. The process of "unpacking" first begins with an examination of how "good songs" must adhere to the basic cultural conventions of folk music. Next I turn to the importance of song structure, paying particular attention to the structure of "story songs," or those songs that align with a "narrative paradigm" (Neal 2007) that exponentially increases both the song and story's cultural and emotional efficacy. I argue that, given the interrelationships among stories, music, and emotion, storytelling through song facilitates other characteristics of "good songs," such that they are "emotionally true," "relatable," evoke "emotional," "embodied" responses in listeners, and thus accomplish the type of "good" promulgated within folk music culture: They help people heal, feel less alone, and circulate social messages that "speak to the culture" in ways that bolster social consciousness.

In chapter eight, I briefly summarize my key points, return and attend to my research questions, and examine their various interrelationships. Next, I turn to the limitations of this study and then offer empirical applications, specifically as they relate to veterans with PTSD and those suffering from other forms of mental illness. In concluding this chapter and dissertation, I suggest productive avenues for future research.

Permissions to Use Previously Published Materials

Certain chapters of this dissertation include material that is forthcoming in *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*. The bibliographic information and statement of permission for this article are as follows:

> Cobb, Maggie C. "'When I feel a Song in Me': Exploring Emotions through the Creative Songwriting Process." Accepted in spring 2015 for publication in *Studies in Symbolic Interaction: Symbolic Interactionist Takes on Music*, edited by Joseph A. Kotarba.

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Certain chapters of this dissertation include material that has been previously published in the *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*. The bibliographic information for this article is as follows:

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The email correspondence from both publishers that resulted in permissions to use these previously published works can be found in Appendix E.

CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE REVIEW

Culture and Folk Music

I approach culture, here conceptualized as "systems of shared meaning and the practices in which they are embedded" (Steinmetz 1999:7), from an interpretive perspective. Borrowing from both symbolic interactionism and social constructionism, I understand shared meaning to be a product of social interaction, where individuals act towards things based on the meanings that those things have for them (Blumer 1969:2). Following the pioneering work of Weber ([1949] 2011) and informed by the foundational writings of scholars such as Cooley (1902), Mead (1934), Blumer (1969), and Goffman (1959), interpretive scholars understand meaning as not rigidly fixed within any given object, but instead as highly contextual, complex, fluid, and socially constructed. This is a departure from the objective study of structural arrangements and the ways in which they determine behavior, turning instead towards a centralized focus on the process and result of meaning making (Loseke 2013). Following this approach, people are neither cultural dopes nor free agents, but instead are afforded some freedom and creativity in the selection of cultural resources that are made available by social structure (Swidler 1986).

Such an interpretive conceptualization of culture as restraint and resource is fitting for the study of "folk music," as it is truly a term riddled by debate. As Gruning (2006:xx) notes,

> Defining folk music is a task that is hopelessly entrenched in various and subjective perspectives. Scholars and lay people alike have been wrestling with that one for well over a hundred years. As time passes, it becomes increasingly difficult to settle on a definition that everyone involved can live with.

Indeed, I myself have trouble accepting any definition of "folk music," and as such, heed

Horsfall's ([2013] 2016:17) warning that academics should approach this term with caution. In

addition to this conceptual hesitancy, I am increasingly uncomfortable grouping "folk music

people" into any number of available terms that describe a musical collectivity, despite others

having done so. This difficulty ultimately lies in the difference between "doers" and "knowers"

(Ronström et al. 2001), or the divide between scholarly conceptualizations and the ways that

people who "do" folk music understand what it is they are doing.

For some examples, it is difficult for me to identify "folk music" as a "genre" (Lena and

Peterson 2008), when it encompasses other genres, such as blues, gospel, and bluegrass (Scully

2008). In addition to being dated, the term "music stream" (Ennis 1992) enjoys similar problems,

hence Lena and Peterson's (2008) updated review of "genres." Given that "folk music" has

historically been dominated by white (Roy 2002), heterosexual, men (Gruning 2006), which is

also mostly the case in my research, I find it hard to label it a "subculture" when this concept's

most popular definitions involve "subordinate" groups with specific "styles" (Hebdige [1979]

1988; Force 2009) that are often perceived as "deviant" (Peterson and Bennett 2004). While folk

music has always been understood as "resistant" to "mainstream" culture, it would be difficult to

point out who is "folk" in a line up based on style, and it seems a stretch to compare the

observable and ideological messiness of folk with say, the aesthetic consistency of "goths" or

"punks." Add to this an emphasis on "consumption habits," when "folk music" (somewhat

ironically) is often set in opposition to commercialism, the term "subculture," as it is most

commonly used, seems unsuitable.

In many ways, the term "counterculture" follows suit; sometimes it is used to

differentiate the "hippies" and "beatniks" from the folk revivalist (Lund and Denisoff 1971), and

sometimes it is used to describe the revivalists (Tachi 2004). Whatever the case, we are not talking "hippies" and no longer talking "revivalists." The term "scene" (Bennet and Peterson 2004), when not used to describe "virtual scenes," is too embedded within space and place to be applicable, and although folk music has typically been associated with the south, it can now be understood as existing as "world music" within a "global context" (Gruning 2006). The terms "field" (Bourdieu 1993) and "art world" (Becker 1982) are too focused on cultural production when folk musicians have maintained their "traditionalist," anti-industry stance through employing small, local record companies (Lena and Peterson 2008) or, thanks to advances in technology, their own recording software, and many increasingly prefer house concerts over stadiums and concert halls (Gruning 2006).

According to Shelemay (2011), terms like "subculture," "music scene," and "art worlds" are all variations on essentially the same phenomenon: "musical communities." Despite "location in time or space," a "musical community" is defined as

> [A] collectivity constructed through and sustained by musical processes and/or performances. A musical community can be socially and/or symbolically constituted; music making may give rise to real-time social relationships or may exist most fully in the realm of a virtual setting or in the imagination. A musical community does not require the presence of conventional structural elements nor must it be anchored in a single place, although both structural and local elements may assume importance at points in the process of community formation as well as in its ongoing existence. Rather, a musical community is a social entity, an outcome of a combination of social and musical processes, rendering those who participate in making or listening to music aware of a connection among themselves. (P. 364-365)

The term "musical community" is perhaps my favorite, as it encompasses the many rich processes and complexities that accompany "folk music," effectively resolving many of the concept-related issues mentioned above.

The point is that, while scholars have a considerable amount of trouble placing "folk music" due to the overwhelming "plasticity" of the term (Roy 2002, 2010: Gruning 2006;

Horsfall [2013] 2016), what ultimately matters is that the folk "musical community" is indeed

"aware of a connection among themselves." I do not see this connection as reducible to a "genre"

of music, but instead see it as a system of shared meanings in and around different types of

music that do certain things for certain reasons and is thus labeled "folk music." There are indeed

shared understandings in and around "folk music" that, while contested at times, appear to

remain relatively stable and are still articulated by participants in this research. For example, in

addition to being largely "acoustic" (Scully 2008) and set against the present (Roy 2002),

Thurmaier's (2006:13) succinct summary of widely shared "common thematic threads" is a

useful one:

> The lyrics often draw from experiences of everyday people, including those who may be
> subjugated in society (women, children, workers, the poor). Moreover, these lyrics can
> convey subtle – or not so subtle – political messages or thoughts on morality. To
> complete the songwriting process, these lyrics are combined with simple repetitive tunes
> and basic harmonic structures to allow the lyrics to be heard prominently.

This clear and descriptive passage would resonate with most, if not all, of my participants

and other folk music enthusiasts. Everyday people involved in the folk musical community do

not usually sit around and quietly reflect on, say, how folk music can be the voice of "the

people" given their largely homogenous and middle-class demographic, or how folk music can

maintain an anti-commercialism stance when it has clearly been commercialized in a variety of

ways (festivals, instruments, performances, etc.), or, given the demographic issue, the problem of

what "real" lyrics mean and to whom, or how such an "inclusive" and "socially conscious" group

of "folks" have effectively (though perhaps not purposefully) pushed out most all people of color

over time. And because of its "traditionalist" character (Lena and Peterson 2008), while people

in the folk musical community continue to do a tremendous amount of "authenticity work"

(Peterson 2005) around "folk music" and collective identity, such work does not typically come

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in the form of "this is not folk music because…." Instead, people simply "know" it when they hear it, and people claim it as "authentic" when they do, and discount it as "inauthentic" when they do not.

The shared understandings surrounding what "folk music" means and sounds like, as well as what and who should be or should not be involved, represent taken for granted cultural resources that arise from social interactions and musical experiences. Here "communities" (Shelemay 2011), "authenticity" (Force 2009), "identities" (Frith [1996] 2011), and "folk music" in general (Thurmaier 2006) are understood as "in action" or "in process." Researching such a process, then, means attending to the situations in which social interactions and musical experiences actually take place, where they are learned, breached, shaped, enacted, reflected, and perpetuated by members within the musical community. For my purposes, to study folk musical community as it is "in action" at folk musicians' festivals is to appreciate the nested layers of systems of meaning, or how shared meaning widely circulates around "folk music," and how that circulation informs and (is informed) by shared experiences and interactions at festivals, where "folk" is actually accomplished.

The interrelationships among music and narratives, as they exist together and separately, serve as the cultural mechanisms through which shared meaning is created, reflected, and perpetuated within this musical community. In the next section, I explore the cultural "work" of music and stories, specifically in relation to the creation and maintenance of personal and collective identity, and how this ties into issues of social change. Here both music and stories serve as social "tools" (Swidler 1986), or cultural resources, for making sense out of the self and others; "I" versus "you" and "us" versus "them." In so doing, they generate personal and social bonds that are essential to issues of social movements, protest, and change.

The Cultural "Work" of Music and Narrative: Identity and Social Change

Music and stories are important parts of our cultural worlds and share much in common. The way a story is organized and told, or the way a song is structured and performed, is entirely a result of cultural conventions surrounding these activities. In other words, culture is precisely what makes songs and stories recognizable and intelligible. It is my contention that, for the social scientist, the reverse is equally true.

I conceptualize "music" very broadly as anything that organizes sound via rhythm and melody. I understand music as both a social activity (Roy and Dowd 2010) and a social product (Becker 1982); culture is musical as much as music is cultural. As Clarke, DeNora, and Vuoskoski (2015:82-83) so eloquently write on the cultural importance of music:

> Music is a uniquely widespread, emotionally and physically engaging, social, participatory and fluidly communicative cultural achievement – a powerful cultural niche that affords extraordinary possibilities for participants and which both complements and in certain respects surpasses those other global cultural achievements in which human beings participate (language, religion, visual culture, craft).

In attending to their caution to appreciate the importance of music without necessarily placing it on a "uniquely high pedestal" (p. 83), I suggest that stories and storytelling serve equally important cultural functions, if not more so due to their pervasiveness in social life. Said differently, while the extent to which people involve themselves in music is quite variable, *everyone* necessarily tells stories.

"Narrative" is often defined less broadly than music, and for the purposes of this research, I understand narratives as stories people tell. Here stories are "distinguished by ordering and sequence;" they are organized temporally, spatially, thematically, or episodically, and typically contain plots and characters (Riessman 2002:698). Like music, stories are social and cultural, where culture itself has been conceptualized as "the stories we tell ourselves about

ourselves" (Geertz 1973:448; Price 2010:203). Because "'world making' is the principle function of mind," storytelling "should be viewed as a set of procedures for 'life-making'" (Bruner 1987:11-12), where people use stories to make sense out of their lives and the lives of others. In this way, storytelling can be understood as the "primary means by which individuals organize, process, and convey information" (Jones and McBeth 2010:330), and as such, stories represent a principle vehicle for culture. Similar to music, stories are cultural as much as culture is storied.

In short, music and narrative represent the ingredients and the products of culture. As "cultural objects" (Griswold 2013) and cultural processes (Roy and Dowd 2010), they are the "accomplishing" and what is "accomplished" (Garfinkel 1967). Both music and stories appeal to emotions (DeNora 2000; Loseke 2009), represent a vehicle for the creation and perpetuation of cultural meanings (Martin 2006; Jones and McBeth 2010), and have the propensity to result in profound political and social consequences (Padamsee 2009; Roy 2010). In what follows, I elaborate on this type of cultural "work" by first examining how music and narrative relate to the construction and maintenance of personal and collective identities, where "identity" is here conceptualized as "who people think they are, either individually or collectively, and the ways that this is culturally constructed" (Smith and Riley 2009:235).

Identity

Music

It is extensively documented that music plays a significant role in the creation and maintenance of both personal and collective identity (Taylor 2009). As Roy and Dowd (2010:189) succinctly summarize,

> Music and its meanings inform people, quite profoundly, about who they are. From aging punk fans (Bennett 2006) and passionate opera connoisseurs (Benzecry 2009) to youthful

dance club devotees (Thornton 1996) and bluegrass music enthusiasts (Gardner 2004b), music both signals and helps constitute the identity of individuals and collectivities.

To this list, one could also add work surrounding music and identity in relation to South Africans, migrant communities, Kurdish musicians (Akrofi, Smit, and Thorsen 2007), hip hop and rap artists (Bennett 2000), women bass players (Clawson 1999), drummers (Curran 1996), karaoke singers (Drew 2001), country musicians (Peterson 1997; Fox 2004), and folk music artists (Roy 2002), to name a few.

Music contributes to a deep sense of collective identity, understood here as "a shared sense of 'one-ness' or 'we-ness' anchored in real or imagined shared attributes and experiences" (Snow 2001:2). Because it is "semiotically tied to the 'moral needs' which link human beings to each other" (Thomas 1995:132), music constructs collective identity through promoting and reinforcing social interactions, group identity, and group morale (Clarke, Dibbens, and Pitts 2010). Similarly, music represents a "striking" case of boundary formation (Shelemay 2011), as it symbolizes social groupings in which people choose to belong, and thus erects symbolic boundaries around certain "types" of people who listen to certain types of music (Shankar, Elliott, and Fitchett 2009). Here, music has a "generative role in clearly differentiated social groupings," where music facilitates "social bonding and its collective outcomes" (Shelemay 2012:351), leading some to describe music as a "technology of the collective" (Roy 2002). As such, many have written on music's relationship to issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, and their various intersections (Forman 2000; Schippers 2000; Ramsey 2003; Whitely 2000a, 2000b; Magrini 2003; Arnett 2008).

Music also plays an important role in the development of personal identities, or "the attributes and meanings attributed to oneself by the actor" (Snow 2001:3). According to Clarke, Dibben, and Pitts (2010) music has the distinct capacity to construct, affirm, and maintain

individual identities, where music enables such identities to be, quite literally, "heard." Moreover, music "constructs our sense of identity through the experiences it offers of the body, time, and sociability, experiences which enable us to place ourselves in imaginative cultural narratives" (Frith 1996:275). Music enables emotion management, self-care (Shankar et al. 2009: DeNora 2012), and represents "a way of *performing* a sense of ourselves, our identity" (Ruud 2009:3, emphasis in original). Music is thus highly personal, as well as collective.

Narrative

Narratives have an equally important relationship with identity. The stories that create and shape culture organize cognition (DiMaggio 1997), emotion (Loseke 2011), and the experience and expression of the body (Foucault 1975), all of which contributes to a sense of who we think we are and who we think others are. As such, stories often serve as a sense making device for the creation and maintenance of personal and collective identity.

Individuals often draw on stories to construct a collective identity, a sense of distinctiveness that is always an ongoing and social endeavor. For example, in their study of the Karen people in Burma, Kuroiwa and Verkuyten (2008:408) found that Karen students draw from cultural narratives that emphasize their unique history, cultural artifacts, national symbols and political instruments to establish a distinct, coherent, and unified Karen identity. Another example can be found with Mattingly, Lawlor, and Jacobs-Huey (2002:744), who highlight the ongoing and complex construction of collective identity among low income African American women following 9/11. Here, it is a *resistance* to the pro-American, patriotic cultural narratives following the attacks that reinforced a sense of collective identity. Whether in relation to Navajo communities (Quintero 2002), nations (Coles 2002; Merskin 2004), or multicultural educators

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(Nelson-Rowe 2003), individuals often use narratives to construct a collective identity, a "we" that is quite distinct from "them."

Stories are also essential to a sense of self, as we create and maintain our personal identities through storytelling. As Rimmon-Kenan (2002:11) writes, "we lead our lives as stories, and our identity is constructed both by stories we tell ourselves and others about ourselves and by the master narratives that consciously or unconsciously serve as models for ours." For example, Wood (2001) suggests that women in abusive relationships draw on romantic narratives to make sense out of the violence in their lives. Another example can be found with Dubriwny (2009), who argues that public discourse surrounding breast cancer survivorship has a profoundly negative effect on how women understand their identities as patients. Additionally, others have examined how welfare recipients or parolees draw from cultural narratives to repair their stigmatized identities and reinvent themselves on their own terms (Seccombe, James, and Walters 1998; Opsal 2011).

Stories also provide the self with a sense of continuity by connecting the past, present, and the foreseeable future (Linde 1993), where individuals can create, shape, and claim their identities within a specific cultural context that is itself constituted through narratives. For Kirkman (2002:32), "the continuity of memory operates through narrative to construct a coherent identity," and as Bruner (1987:12) informs, "we seem to have no other way of describing lived time save in the form of narrative." Personal narratives have been explored in terms of how individuals reconstruct their life stories in relation to illness (Rimmon-Kenan 2002: Kirkman 2002), how they serve as a vehicle for self-assessment (Vinitzky-Seroussi 2000), and how they provide a medium for the re-creation of the past in light of present circumstances (Quintero 2002).

Given the cultural "work" accomplished by music and narrative as it relates to identity, particularly collective identity, it is not surprising that many scholars have attended to how they shape (and are shaped by) social change, movements, and protest. As Hall, Neitz, and Battani (2003:251) argue, culture "lie[s] at the heart of social movements," as it provides the context for how individuals frame (Snow et al. 1986) their ideology and practice (Hall 1978; Berger 1981) to affect social change. Because both music and narrative represent the process and outcome of meaning making, and because they are both highly related to collective identities, they are often deployed strategically to evoke significant social, cultural, and political change.

Social Change

Music

Music facilitates social change and political activism in various ways and for a variety of reasons. Carless and Douglas (2011:450) suggest that information has more impact when it is presented musically, engages audiences emotionally and physically, and encourages personal reflection, all which "trigger action" and promote "embodied forms of knowing." Additionally, music facilitates social change due to its relationship with collective identity. Eyerman (2002), for example, draws on research surrounding the Civil Rights movement to suggest that music facilitates social change by providing a forum for collective identity, collective memory, and collective action. Similarly, according to Danaher (2010:818), music is a cultural resource that "helps establish and maintain a collective identity, leads to vitalizing emotions, takes advantage of free space afforded by political opportunities, and helps establish and maintain social movement's culture."

Pennell (2012:341) suggests that music can reinforce or challenge shared meaning around issues such as "peace, freedom, nationalism, capitalism, and social justice," and as such,

it is often used for political purposes. Similarly, Cerulo (1995) explores the relationship between national anthems and musical structure, arguing that such songs take on political meaning as they are situated within a political environment and showcase political voices. Similarly, Stamatov (2002:345) uses Verdi's operas to illustrate how performances are "interpreted as symbolic representations of political idioms," where "audiences expressed their political stance by affiliating with, and disaffiliating from, these performances." Another example includes Garofalo (1999:2), who showcases a large body of literature that illuminates music's "political functions," specifically "survival/identity, resistance/opposition, consciousness raising/education, [and] agitation/mobilization" as they relate to race, class, and gender.

Many have documented the interrelationships between music, politics, and social change (Eyerman and Jamison 1998; Turino 2008; Roy 2010; Rosenthal and Flacks 2012; Street 2012), some focusing on specific musical genres. For example, Latin American music (Urquia 2004:96), "punks" (Glass 2012:701), the "archo-punks" (Gosling 2004:170), and the "Riot Grrrl" scene (Schilt 2004:116). Others have narrowed the lens to notorious songwriters who promoted political or social action, such as Steve Earl (Carless and Douglas 2011), Woody Guthrie (Klein 1980; Hampton 1986; Cray and Terkel 2004), John Lennon (Wiener 1984; Pennell 2012), Joe Hill, and Bob Dylan (Hampton 1986: Shelton and Thomas 2011), Rage Against the Machine (Devenish 2001), the Grateful Dead (Pearson 1987), and Whiteley (2000a) dedicated a whole volume to how individual women musicians throughout history have tremendously impacted our social and musical worlds.

Narrative

Narratives have an equally important relationship with social change, as they are often designed for specific audiences and used strategically to serve particular purposes (Ewick and

Silbey 1995; Thornborrow 2002). One of such purposes includes the justification and garnering of support for social movements (Condit 1990; Davis 2002; Bolger 2003; Polletta 2006). Drawing from Fine (1995), Nolan (2002:157) suggests that social movement stories take the form of "horror stories," "war stories," and "happy endings," and are told to justify, encourage, and reaffirm participation in social movements. Similarly, Nelson-Rowe (2003:84) suggests that social problems claimsmakers construct melodramas, or stories of victims, villains, and heroes to "persuade themselves and others about the moral competence of various collective actors with respect to controversial issues. This occurs through a process of collective identity bargaining in which individuals and groups impute identities to themselves and others."

Because narrative is essential to issues of identity, storytelling can be used for what Calhoun (1994:21) calls "identity politics," or political movements that "involve refusing, diminishing or displacing identities others wish to recognize in individuals." Here, personal stories can be used to resist widely circulating cultural narratives that impose a cultural identity on groups of people, often for political purposes. An example of this can be found with Kirkman, Harris, Hillier, and Pyett (2001) who found that teenage mothers rejected the cultural narratives surrounding "teenage motherhood," and instead presented autobiographical narratives that confidently defended their right to be mothers. Along these lines, and because social change is largely connected to policy outcomes, many have explored the relationship between narrative, social change, and policy decisions (Brush 1997; Seccombe et al. 1998; McComas and Shanahan 1999; VanderStay 1999; Padamsee 2009).

Some stories are purposefully told to challenge or disrupt the status quo by bringing to the forefront social issues that often go unnoticed. For example, Ewick and Silbey (1995:197) analyze "subversive stories," or "narratives that challenge the taken-for-granted hegemony by

making visible and explicit the connections between particular lives and social organization."

The very purpose of these narratives is to "defy and at times politically transform" (p. 217).

Another example of this can be found with Ramirez-Vallez (1999:97), who suggests that

"welfare state stories, like other ruling stories, can be contested and subverted," and explores

how women on welfare do so by rejecting narrative scripts and acting in "non-prescribed ways."

Summary

In sum, both music and narratives can be understood as cultural objects and cultural

processes; they are simultaneously the ingredients, the making, and the result of culture.

Concurrently, they are themselves social acts, but also the tools for, and the outcomes of, social

action. As cultural resources, they represent primary vehicles through which people make sense

out of their lives and the lives or others, personally and collectively. That music and narrative are

sense making devices and share a strong relationship with collective identity and boundary

formation means that they are often strategically deployed to justify or challenge politics,

movements, and social change. These myriad forms of cultural "work" accomplished by music

and narrative are possible because they are deeply intertwined with emotion, as are issues of

identity and social change. I now turn to literature surrounding the sociology of emotion,

specifically at it relates identity, narratives, music, and songwriting.

The Sociology of Emotions

Since the late 1970s, the sociology of emotions has burgeoned into a prolific and

established specialization within social psychology and sociology more generally (Thoits 1989;

Shilling 2002: Spencer, Walby, and Hunt 2012). Emotions are learned, lived, felt, experienced,

embodied, expressed, and shaped by and through culture, rendering the topic of emotion of great

interest and importance to sociologists (Shott 1979; Lutz 1986; Mills and Kleinman 1988;

McCarthy 1989; Leavitt 1996; Clark 1997; Tudor 2003; Denzin 2007; Loseke and Kusenbach 2007; Loseke 2009; Boiger and Mesquita 2012). Emotions are deeply cultural, historical, contextual, and *social* phenomena that represent primary vehicles through which individuals orient themselves to their selves and to their worlds. They help organize our perceptions, evaluations, and interpretations of objects and events, thus they are "part and parcel of every individual and social act" (Hewitt 2007:74). As Shott (1979:1317-1318) notes, the study of emotions is crucial to sociology:

> [E]motions pervade human affairs, including social ones, and *not* simply as epiphenomena…[C]ertain types of emotions are so central to social control that society as we know it could not exist without them. Hence, for a complete understanding of social behavior, sociologists must study the role of emotion in social life.

Similar to my previous conceptualizations of culture, music, and narratives, I approach the topic of emotions from an interpretive, constructionist perspective. In stark contrast to those who view emotions as driven by biology, psychology, physiology, evolution, and the like, constructionists understand emotion as "social phenomenon rooted in culture. Feelings are like other experiences in that they are social products based on beliefs, shaped by language, and therefore products of culture" (Loseke and Kusenbach 2007:4). The constructionist approach emphasizes that "our categories of thought (and thus the ideas we have), how we talk (and thus what we say), our experiences and feelings, and what we express and do are primarily determined by the culture in which we live" (Lyon 1995:244). As a sociologist of emotion, I remain interested in how culture shapes and is shaped by emotional experience, but also how that experience is subjectively felt, lived, and embodied. Thus, my perspective on emotion can be further conceptualized as one of "weak constructionism," in that I ask questions pertaining to the subjective experience of emotions (Loseke and Kusenbach 2007:5).

With an understanding that emotions are deeply cultural phenomena, and like music and narratives, embedded within systems of shared meaning, I now turn to the relationships between emotion and identity.

Emotions and Identity

There has been much work focused on the various interrelationships between emotion, interaction, and identities (Goffman 1967; Turner 1974; DeVault 1999; Katz 1999; Karp 2006; Berry 2007; Davidson and Smith 2012). As symbolic interactionists, Mead and Cooley understood emotion as part and parcel of social and relational processes that are refined, evaluated, interpreted, and given meaning through social interaction. Symbolic interactionism is a productive lens through which to explore issues of emotion and identity due to the great deal of importance placed on the relationship between emotion and the self. From this perspective, emotionality is identified as a self-feeling that arises out of "the self-interactions that individuals direct toward themselves and out of the reflected appraisals of others, both imagined and real" (Denzin 2007:54).

Both Mead and Cooley were among the first to recognize the importance of emotion in shaping our sense of self, as well as our individual and collective realities. For Cooley, emotion is at the very core of the self (Turner and Stets 2005). Cooley understood "emotion" as "sensual feelings" given shape and meaning through social interaction, reflection, and imagination; thus, they are intimately social as they involve the social evaluation and interpretation of relationships, forming the foundation of Cooley's "looking glass self." Here, sentiment is at the heart of the self's development as individuals imagine and reflect on the perceptions of others and thus feel accordingly (Cooley 2011). Like Cooley, Mead understands emotions to be emergent in social situations and given meaning through social interaction. Mead is among the first to strike a blow

for a *social* psychology of emotion by arguing that the self arises from social acts, and involves a continuous process of emergent change that both shapes (and is shaped by) the self; therefore, the mind and self *cannot* be reduced to the realm of the physical or material (McCarthy 1989).

On a more contemporary note, in her pioneering work that critiques Goffman's (1959) notion of self, Hochschild ([1983] 2003) develops a theory of an "authentic" self that becomes suppressed, distorted, and alienated through the process of deep acting in the workplace, as it involves a merging of desired emotions and the self. In contrast, Wolkomir and Powers (2007), examine how emotion management at an abortion clinic contributes to a rewarding and "authentic" sense of self and self-worth that arises through the regulation of emotional investments, tasks, and interactions. Similarly, Mears and Finlay (2003) suggest that professional models embrace emotional labor because it enables them to find meaning, value, and dignity in a profession that emphasizes bodily image and passivity. Another example is found with Karp (2006), who describes how patients on depression medication struggle with whether their emotions are authentic reflections of their true selves, or merely products of their medications. In this case, questions arise as to what it means to feel like oneself and whether one's "true" self is revealed or obscured by prescription drugs. Similarly, Turner (1974) argues that one most often recognizes their "real" self through "feelings" and "impulses," particularly those that relate to issues of morality or desire.

In addition to issues of personal identity, others describe how the organizational management of emotion contributes to a sense of collective identity. Martin (2008), for example, discusses how "appearance organizations" teach members how to deal with the shame they should or should not feel about their obese bodies, and also how to deal with that shame through bodily transformation or redefinition. Additionally, Wilkins (2008) explores how evangelical

Christian leaders manage members' emotions by emphasizing the "happiness" that separates them from non-Christians. In this case, Wilkins (2008) highlights the creation of symbolic boundaries constructed through the organizational management of emotion. In both cases, these organizations provide institutionalized narratives of identity (Loseke 2007) in an effort to teach members how to reinvent and understand themselves and others, as Christians or as obese individuals.

As shown in the above example, stories of personal and collective identity play an important role in how individuals understand their emotional experiences and the experiences of others. Although it is often difficult for individuals to express their emotions via language, as Katz (1999) notes, narratives serve as important resources in which people make sense out of their emotional experiences. It is to this relationship that I now turn.

Emotions and Narrative

Emotions are narrated and narratives are emotional. Whether used to garner support or resistance to a war (Coles 2002; Merskin 2004) or social policy (Schneider and Ingram 1993; Padamsee 2009; Jones and McBeth 2010), narratives are consequential precisely because of their persuasive and emotional character. As discussed in depth in the previous section, narratives, like emotion, shape (and are shaped by) culture and represent a primary means through which we make sense out of our lives and the lives of others. It is not surprising then that narratives are cultural resources through which we learn how to feel and express feeling, as well as how to make sense o f and evaluate our emotional experiences and the experiences of others.

In exploring the relationship between cultural meaning systems and narratives, Loseke and Kusenbach (2013:23) "define *cultural meaning systems* as more-or-less widely shared systems of ideas composed of symbolic and emotion codes. Within large, heterogeneous, mass-

mediated social orders these systems of ideas are often embedded in and spread through *socially circulating narratives*" (emphasis in original). For Loseke (2009:500), these emotion codes, or "cultural ways of feeling," are similar to Hochschild's ([1983] 2003) conceptualization of "feeling rules" in that they represent "cognitive models about what emotions are expected when, where, and toward whom or what, as well as about how emotion should be inwardly experienced, outwardly expressed, and morally evaluated." Put plainly, Hochschild's ([1983] 2003) "feeling rules" or Loseke's (2009) "emotion codes" are embedded within widely circulating cultural narratives that serve as resources for how individuals interpret and evaluate their emotions and the emotions of others.

Additionally, for Katz (1999:16), "social [and emotional] life is constituted by narrative structuring." Katz's (1999:5-6) model of emotional experience incorporates narrative cultural sociology, interactionism, and phenomenology to explore "situation-responsive" and "situation transcendent" narrative projects, interaction processes, and sensual metamorphoses. Katz (1999:5) uses the term "situation-responsive narratives" to describe how individuals make sense of their emotional experiences in the immediate situation, and "situation transcendent narratives" to describe the awareness that these emotional experiences extend beyond, or transcend, the immediate situation. Not only do these narrative projects work to assign meaning to emotional experience, the three part process of 1) structuring experience through narratives, 2) assigning meaning to the current situation through narratives, and 3) assigning transcendent meanings to the situation through narratives, actually gives rise to emotions.

While narratives are a principle means through which we make sense out of emotions, it is also the case that narratives are not emotions themselves. As a "weak constructionist," I am also interested in how emotions are lived, felt, subjectively experienced, and embodied. I do not

see this as a departure from cultural interpretations of emotions, but instead as a way of understanding how our cultural understandings of emotions become internalized in our subjective experiences and in our bodies. It is to the lived and embodied character of emotion that I know turn.

Emotions as Lived and Embodied

For constructionists, emotions are distinctly social (Boiger and Mesquita 2012); they are cultural constructs that arise and become meaningful through social interaction. But for "real" people in the "real" world (including the sociologists who study the social construction of emotions), emotions are as "real" as it gets; they overflow the senses, they confuse, liberate, elate, and frighten; they are embodied, they are deeply felt within our most "authentic" and "impulsive" selves (Turner 1974). Social constructionists have yet to provide a space for this powerful emotional experience (Denzin 2007). As Ellis (1991:23) notes, "Even now with the renewed emphasis on emotion, sociologists continue to ignore what emotion feels like and how it is experienced." Although Ellis (1991:25) made this argument 25 years ago, it remains true today that "few sociologists have examined lived emotional experience."

This neglect has much to do with the emphasis on language and discourse as it relates to cultural and cognitive understandings of emotion, as well as the interactionist tendency to emphasize the dramaturgical character of emotion. As a constructionist, I understand culture, language, discourse, and emotion management to be crucial to the sociology of emotions, but it must be joined with the lived and embodied aspects of emotion, or this approach will lose sight of actual people and their experiences with emotion. For Craib (1995:153), the danger of constructionist approaches is that "emotions will be reduced to ideas" (p. 153). Such approaches often provide an "endless description of cultural discourse which eventually takes us to a

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description of everything, and descriptions do not solve problems such as why people who believe that falling in love is an ideology manage themselves to fall in love" (p. 154). Similarly, Harkin (2003:266) argues that purely discursive analyses of emotion

> risk losing the essence of the subject, which is the emotions themselves…For unless we accept a completely nominalist perspective, there surely must be some feelings actually experienced by real people…[T]o stress the [discursive] dimension at the expense of more central aspects of emotions as experienced by individuals is to grossly distort their experience…[W]e have reached a point where we are not talking about emotion any longer but about a rather peculiar culturally situated discourse on emotion, which says more about its culture or origin than about the cultures it purports to study.

In short, constructionists have a tendency to "lose the feeling side of the phenomenon" (Leavitt 1996:522), which is how people actually experience and express emotion.

To be fair, it is also true that not all constructionists are interested in discourse. Interactionists such as Hochschild ([1983] 2003), Karp (1996, 2006), and Boiger and Mesquita (2012), for example, are far more interested in the cultural meanings and guidelines assigned to felt emotions based on the social situation. A great number of sociologists have focused on how individuals manage their emotions in the workplace and other settings, all of which has little to do with discourse or language. Although Hochschild ([1983] 2003) does attend to how people feel in her discussions of deep acting, much work in this vein has more to do with how people manipulate, "manage," and "do" emotions rather than how people actually feel, or how they are "done by" emotions (Katz 1999).

This neglect of lived experience within constructionist approaches is closely related to the neglect of the embodied experience of emotion, as lived experience cannot be separated from its corporality (Denzin 1990, 2007; Leavitt 1996; Katz 1999; Baerveldt and Voestermans 2005). When I refer to the neglect of the body within the sociology of emotions, I am not referring to the psychological, biological, physiological, neurological, or anatomical body (Kemper 1981;

Ekman 1984; Scherer 2005; Turner and Stets 2006). Instead, I am referring to the "social" body, or "lived bodily experience and the cultural meanings inscribed on [and in] the ….body that always mediates those experiences" (Conboy, Medina, and Stanbury 1997:1). From a sociological perspective, to explore the relationships between emotion and the social body, or that body that is "shaped, constrained, and even invented by society" (Shilling 2012:75) is not to reproduce positivistic tendencies that reduce human bodies to physiology. Instead, it is to appreciate that "the meanings attributed to bodies are social products" (Shilling 2012:75) and "that bodily feeling, too, is social in nature" (Leavitt 1996:522). Similarly, Loseke and Kusenbach (2007) suggest that, because bodies are socialized, constructionists can attend to bodily feeling without negating the social character of emotion.

This recognition has led some sociologists of emotion to social phenomenology, as it offers a useful platform for including the social body, or the vehicle and locus of our lived and embodied emotional experiences (Denzin 1990, 2007; Katz 1999; Baerveldt and Voestermans 2005). For social phenomenologists of emotion such as Katz (1999) and Denzin (1990; 2007), the body represents an extension of our selves, a corporeal vehicle for the reflective meaning-making process that renders our worlds real, meaningful, and emotional. The body exists as the locus for our experience of and in the world, and as such, represents the origin of our emotional experiences, expressions, and interpretations.

Like others, Katz (1999:334) laments the neglect of the social body in the sociology of emotions, where there has been no "examination of the travels that emotions make through the various regional depths of the body," or "how the person bodily lives" with emotion. For Katz (1999), one is always already in the world in a "tacitly embodied manner" (p. 143), as a "unique corporeal vehicle" for the experience and expression of emotion (p. 10), thus his work

consistently emphasizes the corporeality of emotions. In true phenomenological fashion, emergent emotional experience is given meaning through a sensual reflection on our bodies that brings them into conscious awareness. Katz (1999:335) makes it a point to emphasize that this reflection is sensual as opposed to thought-like, rational, or discursive, as these metaphors and dualisms for emotionality impede "the challenge of understanding the visceral nature of the experience."

For Katz (1999), "emotions are dialectical in nature, something we artfully produce and yet experience as forces that take us over independent of our will" (p. 7). Like other phenomenologists, Katz (1999:334) bridges mind/body, thought/rationality dualisms, where people must be seen as "embodying a moving comprehension of various depths and regions of self" (p. 334). The missing pieces in narrative cultural sociology and interactionism, he argues, is the concept of "metamorphosis," or "the turning of one's attention to regions of the body that, outside of one's own direct awareness, had been employed to construct behavior" (p. 335). Through the "sensual transformation" of metamorphosis, the body is felt as a vehicle for emotional experience (Katz 1999:10). In other words, emotional experiences represent moments when one sensually turns towards the body, "the corporeal foundations of the self," (p. 335) and renders both meaningful.

Social phenomenologists of emotion, particularly Katz (1999) and Denzin (1990; 2007), make important contributions to the sociology of emotions by providing a platform on which to examine lived emotions as they are experienced by integrated and embodied selves.

Summary

In this section I have argued that, like music and stories, emotion is deeply embedded within systems of shared meaning; it shapes and is shaped by culture. Like the symbiotic

relationships among culture, music, and narratives, I have explored the ways in which emotion informs (and is informed by) both personal and collective identity. I have also examined how narratives serve as the primary vehicle for the circulation of cultural guidelines surrounding emotion, such as "emotion codes" or "feeling rules," that serve as sense making devices used to understand and evaluate our emotional experiences as well as the experiences of others. That emotion and stories share such a relationship lends further insight into the joint cultural "work" of emotion and narratives when it comes to identity. Additionally, I have argued that sociologists of emotion often neglect lived and embodied emotional experience in favor of discourse or dramaturgy. Yet because bodies can be conceptualized as social, cultural, and historical, I have briefly offered a social phenomenology of emotion as a useful approach that incorporates lived and embodied experience of emotion.

Interestingly, according to Martin (2006), those who attend to the sociology of music, such as Sudnow (1978) and Becker (1982), are far more likely than sociologists of emotion to emphasize the importance of embodiment, embodied knowledge, and lived experience in relation to musical practice. It is to the interrelationships among emotion, music, and songwriting that I now turn.

Emotions and Music

Music and emotion share a mutually symbiotic relationship, where one provokes, shapes, and gives voice to the other (Juslin and Slodoba 2012). As Clarke, Dibben, and Pitts (2010) suggest, while music has positive psychological effects on emotions, which is one reason "music therapy" has become increasingly popular (Bunt and Pavlicevic 2001; Stewart and McAlpin 2015), it remains deeply social in the sense that people attach particular songs to specific events, meanings, and emotions, internalize the perceived emotions of performers, and use music to

influence, regulate, shape, and showcase certain moods and feelings, their own and those of others. Such a position is supported by DeNora (2012), who suggests that people purposefully and practically use music to manage their emotions. In addition to emotion management, music is a "vehicle for feelings which may not be possible to convey by other means" (Hargreaves and North 1999:73). Said differently, music facilitates the "spilling out" of emotion (Katz 1999: Dibben 2006) as much as it enables emotion management.

For DeNora (2012:160), one of the few sociologists to attend to music and emotion, the study of music from a sociological perspective serves as a productive lens through which to examine "how culture comes to inform emotional experience." Specifically, music provides a sociological window into how emotions are learned, embodied, managed, and distributed according to race, class, and gender. Also, it presents the opportunity to explore how the emotional character of music has the potential to traverse these social categories through its ability to generate feelings of "empathy" and cultural understanding (Clarke et al. 2015). For Dibben (2006), in addition to teaching us how to feel and how we "should" feel, music actually *constructs* emotion, emotional experience, subjectivities, and the discourses around these experiences.

Music is an emotionally expressive, evocative, instructive, and persuasive cultural resource; it is a form of "practical knowledge" (DeNora 2012) that "triggers action" (Carless and Douglas 2010), opens an "emotional space" for "resistance" (Jones 2002: Kinney 2012), and drives social movements (Eyerman and Jameson 1998: Roy 2010: Street 2012). Because music is a physically engaging form of emotional expression and communication for both individuals and groups (Hargreaves and North 1999; Carless and Douglas 2010), it constructs and fosters collective identity, group membership, and "belonging" within various musical communities,

which are themselves constructed through the emotional experiences afforded by music (Duffy 2005; Morton 2005; Shelemay 2011).

There is little doubt that music and emotion share an important relationship, and when approached from a sociological perspective, they have much to gain from one another. However, despite the claim that those who study music are more likely to attend to emotions, some still lament the overarching neglect of emotion, subjectivity, and the body in music research (Bendix 2000; Duffy 2005; Morton 2005; Matheson 2008; Long and Barber 2015). This is particularly perplexing when it seems quite obvious that music, like emotion, "inhabits" the body (Berish 2012:23) and is well known for offering emotionally embodied experiences (Frith [1996] 2011; Morton 2005; Matheson 2008; Clarke et al. 2015). One particularly insightful venue for including emotional experience through music study is the creative process of songwriting, which has largely been neglected as topic of inquiry in general (Collin 2013; Negus and Astor 2015), much less from a sociological perspective.

Songwriting

First, in an effort to avoid perpetuating the rampant conceptual confusion present in and around this literature, when I refer to "songwriters," I am simply referring to a writer of "songs." For the purposes of this research, I understand "songs" to represent a combination of both music and language in the form of lyrics; thus, "songwriting" is the process through which "songwriters" write "songs." Moreover, when I refer to "language" as it relates to music, I am decidedly not interested in ongoing debates about how music without words somehow symbolically represents or reflects language (Feld and Fox 1994), but instead simply "language" as it exists in everyday vernacular as words that we use to convey meaning.

Following this, when I refer to narratives in songs, or "story songs," I am not referring to the "narrativity" of music without words (Howey 2012; Klein 2013), but literally I am describing a song that consists of a story as it has been conceptualized in this research. Because this study is not built on an attempt to discover a psychological or sociological "reality" behind "creativity," or to do much theorizing on creativity in general, I understand terms such as "creative" and "creativity" to be derivative of the term "create," which simply means to make something, or to have the propensity to make things. In this case, people are making "songs." It is also worth noting that I do not relate any of these terms, or the "success" of songwriters or songs, using the popular yardstick of the music industry, because not everything music-related is about cultural production (Benzecry 2009), and there is little evidence of the music industry's importance to participants in this research.

I would argue that the relatively unsatisfactory state of research on songwriting has to do with both a failure to clearly conceptualize the aforementioned terms and the distinct lack of a sociological perspective. Obviously, and to be fair, different disciplines have different projects and different goals. As previously mentioned, the vast majority of this work comes first from music therapists (Stewart and McAlpin 2015), followed by those who argue that songwriting is an important form of "literacy" and could productively be incorporated into course curricula in a variety of educational settings (Cockburn 1991; Kinney 2012). Unfortunately, with few exceptions (Collin 2013; Long and Barber 2014; Stewart and McAlpin 2015), those who do attend to songwriting and songwriters continue to ignore the role of emotion before, during, and after this creative process.

That being said, the exceptions offer important contributions. For example, Stewart and McAlpin (2015:1), suggest that, in short, the goal of music therapy is to elicit the "externalizing

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and expression of emotions and feelings." In their review, they report that the writing of lyrics was the most effective element in achieving this goal, and when lyrics were combined with music, patients had a way of examining and communicating their emotional experiences in ways that provided a comfortable and desirable amount of distance from their therapist. They go on to note that the import of lyrics for emotional expression through songwriting is not altogether surprising given that verbal communication is the predominant way in which we express emotionality. Matheson (2008) similarly argues for the import of lyrics as a fundamental element for emotional expression.

Similarly, in her study of songwriting at a community center, Kinney (2012) examines how one young man used songwriting as a "site of resilience," which assisted him in coping with the "lived experiences" of being an "at-risk" youth. For this young man, songwriting was a therapeutic way of working through, and making sense of, difficult circumstances and complicated emotions, and songs represented a forum for expressing the outcomes of this process in ways that were otherwise unavailable. In this way, songwriting serves as a sense-making device, a form of emotion management and emotional expression, a way of "talking back" for troubled and silenced voices, and as such, a vehicle for "critique" and "resistance."

For another example, Long and Barber's (2015) analysis of pod-cast interviews with "successful" songwriters parallels this research in interesting ways, particularly their claim that emotion "appears to be an inevitable aspect of any discussion of songwriting" (p. 148). In an attempt to repair some of the problematics posed by the lack of attention paid to "process," a scholarly reliance on "how to" songwriting books, and an overabundance of musicological and production perspectives, Long and Barber (2015) suggest that, despite their potentially "formulaic" or even clichéd character, "good" songs are "authentic" songs, which are precisely

those that resonate emotionally with audiences. This has much to do with the listener's ability to subjectively situate themselves within the song, a point made by many interested in music and emotion (Jones 2002; Fox 2004; Duffy 2005; Dibben 2006; Frith 1996 [2011]; Clarke et al. 2015), and one that is not lost on songwriters. Even when their creative process is shaped by "practicalities," such as making a living, songwriters, who are very much aware of listeners, judge the value of their songs based on its capacity to elicit emotion for all involved. In this case, songs are "good" and "authentic" if they effectively connect the feelings of songwriter and listener in ways that feel "real" to listeners, at least in as much as they find themselves in the song and feel accordingly. As Frith (2009) similarly notes, bridging public and private experience through musical performance is entirely dependent on emotion.

These aforementioned articles are certainly important to the extent that they effectively link songwriting with emotion and lived experience, however, they also fall short in a number of ways. While Long and Barber (2015) seem to argue for "process" and not "production," I find more evidence of "production" than "process" in that their work focuses on "successful," professional, and hired songwriters as opposed to a broader spectrum of performers. Although "success" in the "industry" is equated with authenticity and emotion, we are more or less back to the industry, and it remains unclear to me, despite being useful, what role "process" plays in this research. Similarly, there is no "process" in the research of both Kinney (2012) or Stewart and McAlpin (2015), but instead, a focus on lyrics in a case study of one person, or a psychological review of the most common musical elements that elicit emotional expression.

There are others who have written on songwriting, but I find such work to be more problematic in that it neglects emotions, process, and at times, people. This is not to say that certain aspects of this research are not useful, but I admit finding certain parts of it somewhat

confusing. For some examples, in an analysis of case studies involving infamous songwriters, Marade, Gibbons, and Brinthaupt (2007) argue that songwriters must take risks to be successful; the more risks they take, the more their work will be regarded as "creative," leading to success in the industry. In short, the most successful songwriters (The Beatles, Bob Dylan, Johnny Cash, among others) have been creative (i.e., "risky" but not too "risky"). Yet it is mostly unclear as to whether any other factors outside of "creativity" and the "industry" had anything to do with such legendary success.

Additionally, Negus and Astor (2015) rightfully argue for the importance of research on songwriting, songwriters, and process, but again, "process" seems obscured by multiple pages on whether "how-to" authors and infamous songwriters (much like the ones above) think lyrics are poetry, or whether they write lyrics or music first, or whether they think "repetition" in songs is a good idea. While some good points are made, what I gain from this research is that songwriting is "work," or to use their language, a form of "architecture." Scholars interested in creativity, it is argued, should dispense with "romanticized" notions of creativity and instead use metaphors related to "building." A similar and rather cynical argument is made in a variety of articles written by McIntyre (2008a, 2008b, 2010), who, in his attempt to reveal the "truth" behind creativity, argues that we need more "rational" theories that dispense with "myths" and "quasineurotic" individuals.

Using Bourdieu's notions of habitus and field, McIntyre, in all articles, examines how creativity is not a result of "the muse," but instead requires a considerable amount of thought, work, and networking. When approached from a production of culture perspective, and when attending to award winning songwriters who have "made it," one can see that songwriters are "rational" and critical producers of songs. Similarly, Rideout (2014) uses Zollo's ([1991] 2003)

Songwriters on Songwriting, combined with a personal songwriting "experiment," to argue that "creativity" and songwriting can be learned and improved with a great deal of practice. Given the lack of audience reception in this case is difficult to surmise what "improvement" and "betterment" means, outside of how the process and songs appeared closer to what is presented in Zollo ([1991] 2003). What I take away from this work is that creativity is not only social (which is a welcome argument), but it also requires a considerable amount of thought and effort, which closely resembles an argument against emotionality, or "myths" about "romanticism." It seems odd to divorce creativity from emotion, much less from music and songwriting, as "the creative experience is something which is intensely felt" (Negus and Pickering 2004).

Theories of creativity and emotionality appear mostly embedded within psychology, but such work provides some useful insight into their relationships. For Averill, Chon, and Hahn (2002:165), "emotions can facilitate…creative endeavors, and conversely, creative endeavors can have profound emotional consequences….[E]motions and creativity not only interact (e.g., as antecedents and consequents), but…emotions themselves can be products of creative change." Similarly, Isen (1999:6) suggests that emotions often lead to creative responses, and Lubart and Getz (2010:285) argue that certain "moods" and emotional challenges operate as motivations that lead to creative problem solving, creative transformation, and creative work. Such is the case in this research, where the creative songwriting process consistently hinges on emotion, whether through the "spilling" out of emotion from the body and into the song (creative transformation), or through the strategic use of certain techniques and structures that lead to a similar "spilling" out for listeners (creative problem solving). In both cases, songs are indeed creative and emotional "works."

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Along these lines, the relationship between creativity and emotion is most often conceptualized within a framework that emphasizes the arts. Lubart and Getz (2010:295) argue that "art originates in emotions," where different kinds of artists represent their emotions in various creative ways. For example, "poets traditionally point to metaphors and to various metric, rhythmic, and sound means as two ways the emotions are expressed… [I]n the visual arts, emotions are expressed through images that function as visual metaphors, and through pictoral means, such as colors, lines and textures." Songwriters often use a variety of devices to feel and convey emotion, such as imagery (Helsel 2007), metaphor (Collins 2013), narratives (Neal 2007: Howey 2012), song structure (Neal 2007), and melody (Rideout 2014), to name a few.

In contrast to the aforementioned research on songwriting, my principle concern is not to debunk the "common place myths" that are "at odds with the reality of [songwriters'] situation" (McIntyre 2008a:41), or to conceptualize "songwriters as architects rather than romantically inspired expressive artists" (Negus and Astor 2015:226), but instead to attend to the cultural narratives that songwriters use in and around their songs to make sense out of their creative process, to organize and interpret lived emotional experience, and to effectively convey that experience to listeners. For the purposes of this research, and returning to the interrelationships among music and narrative, I am concerned with two forms of cultural "work" accomplished by the stories in and around songs that participants use to explain their songwriting process, and thus how they understand the expression and evocation of emotion.

Songwriting as Inquiry and Action

The first form of "work" is what I term *songwriting as inquiry*. Here the deeply evocative and emotional properties of music can be synthesized with the general principles of writing as

inquiry, where one writes to "find something out," or to learn something that was unknown until written into existence and understanding (Richardson 2001:35). As Poulos (2012:178) explains of his experiences with joy, "It took writing about it to see it." In this way, writing through song offers an alternative, emotionally embodied "way of knowing" or "coming to know" (Carless and Douglas 2009), a form of "knowledge constitution" (Webber 2009:267), where songwriters are afforded a creative and emotional way to explore parts of themselves that were once beyond their conscious grasp and routinized understanding (Knight 2009). As Langer (1951:199) writes, "the forms of human feeling are much more congruent with musical forms than with the forms of language, music can reveal the nature of feelings with a detail and truth that language cannot approach." Writing through song, then, is a vehicle for "revealing" one's "true" self and "real" emotions, particularly those that are overwhelming or difficult to understand and articulate. Thus, *songwriting as inquiry* serves as a process of interpreting, ordering, and understanding lived emotional experience as it "pours" from the self and "spills" through the song.

For Patti (2009:65), "songs and words unearth specific memories, retrieving and displaying the treasures of my experience. My art takes me back to places, times, and emotions. I look back through this archive and new meanings emerge as I contrast my current and former selves." As Katz (1999:198) explains of crying and music, "it is something unspeakable, something responsive to the 'different keys' in which art communicates….Music surrounds one with a continuous pressure to become a vehicle for a perspective that goes beyond language." In this way, the performance of songs serves as an embodied form of "emotional expression" (Patti 2009; Carless and Douglas 2010), a vehicle for emotional communication that is otherwise unavailable.

While *songwriting as inquiry* revolves around the emotional journeys of the songwriter, the second form, what I term *songwriting in action*, centers on how songwriters purposefully deploy "tools" to effectively convey that emotion and evoke it within listeners. Here I borrow and metaphorically reinvent Swidler's (1986) notion of "culture in action," where culture can be understood as a "tool-kit" in which people practically and creatively select cultural recourses, or "tools," made available via social structure. To be sure, *songwriting in action* typically represents a more conscious endeavor on the part of songwriters, where they are actively aware of cultural conventions that are necessary to get audiences to feel. I suppose it could be said that *songwriting as inquiry* represents the lamented "romanticism" of creativity, whereas *songwriting in action* involves the celebrated "work" aspect. In this case, songwriters do indeed spend a great deal of time and energy to ensure that they have selected and employed the correct "tools" to get their emotional point across.

An interesting and perhaps coincidental parallel between Swidler's (1986:284) work and my own is the establishment of new "strategies of action," or the selection of cultural elements that serve to organize experiences and evaluate realities during "unsettled" times, which is perhaps why music plays an ever more important role during times of uncertainty and crisis (Vambe 2004; Garrett et al. 2011; Berish 2012; Kuutma and Kästik 2014). Given the historical and contemporary character of folk music as socially conscious and political (Tachi 2004; Thurmaier 2006; Roy 2010; Shelemay 2011; Street 2012), and given that songwriters know how to produce "successful songs," which is to say "emotional" and thus "authentic" songs (Long and Barber 2015; Neal 2007), it is not altogether surprising that folk songwriters creatively and strategically employ specific "tools" to effectively promote a message.

"Messages" must be interpreted by audiences as "believable" (Neal 2007), "real" (Crutchfield 2009), "honest," "true," and "universal" (Cockburn 1991; Long and Barber 2015), and such variations on "authenticity" (Peterson 2005) are built on emotion (Ronström et al. 2001; Frith 2009; Matheson 2008; Long and Barber 2015). This means that songwriter's must be purposeful in building their strategies of action through the careful selection of symbolic and emotion codes (Loseke 2009) in an attempt to persuade audiences to get on board. As previously mentioned, music, narratives, and emotion are all intertwined with both collective identity and social change, rendering this particular form of songwriting a productive avenue for examining the widely circulating yet taken for granted cultural understandings of what is in need of change, how to go about changing it, and what exactly a "truer America" (Crutchfield 2009) might look like. While remotely similar, this process should not be confused with "framing theory," as I find such a theory to neglect agency, meaning making (Collin 2013), and, not surprisingly, emotion.

Much like the notion of songwriting as "resistance" (Kinney 2012), Collin's (2013) research on the use of songwriting by an activist environmentalist group is perhaps the most germane in terms of *songwriting in action*. Collin (2013:452) suggests that instead of focusing on "framing," we should turn our attention to discourse, or the ways in which groups understand and represent the world, and how these discourses are connected to genre, lived experience, and collective identity. For Collin (2013:449), songs provide "creative construction[s] of a world," allow for the performance of a movement identity, validate movement discourses, promote social bonding and social action, and provide a lens through which to understand how cultural resources, particularly discourse in and around songs and genre, inform and are informed by social movements and collective movement identities. This research, however useful, can be filed under the heading of another study that neglects emotion in terms of social movements,

music, identity, and discourse, and because discourse analysis was the method used, it focuses on the researcher's analysis of lyrics to the neglect of music, the songwriter, and process. Although the argument is made for songwriting and process, this seems to be about "songs," which is rather a different project altogether.

In place of "discourse" writ large, and as I have shown, I would substitute narrative as the primary sense making device for Collin's (2013) terms: collective identity, movement identity, genre, lived experience, and songs. When it comes to *songwriting in action*, I argue that when narratives become theoretically synthesized with the cultural, emotional, and communicative efficacy of music, particularly as it relates to generating collective identities, we are presented with a unique platform on which to examine a specific type of American identity that has been, and continues to be, purposefully and emotionally constructed and received through song. I would go on to argue that something similar can be said of *songwriting as inquiry*, in that the "pouring out" of embodied and emotional "ways of knowing" that are captured and relayed through song has much to contribute to social psychological understandings of how culture becomes internalized (Conboy et al. 1997; Kuutma and Kästik 2014; Clark et al. 2015). In other words, there is something to be said about where songs "pour" from, in addition to what, why, and how, and what that tells us about culture, emotion, and identity as they shape and are shaped, as well as convey and conveyed, by narrative and music.

Summary

In sum, music presents an important opportunity to explore emotion from a sociological perspective. Although the general relationship between music and emotion has been well documented by musicologists and psychologists (Juslin and Slodoba 2012), little research has explored this relationship from a sociological perspective, less has included the import of

subjectivity, lived experience, and emotional embodiment, and even less examined these relationships as they relate to songwriting. I have argued that there are two aspects of songwriting that serve as vehicles through which to fill these gaps: *songwriting as inquiry* and *songwriting in action*. In both cases, the creative process of songwriting provides a sociological window into the cultural "work" of music, emotion, and stories in relation to the construction and maintenance of identities, the lived and embodied character of emotional experience, expression, and communication, and the ways in which people make meaning around their identities and emotional experiences, as well as those of others.

Chapter Summary

As I have shown throughout this chapter, music, narratives, and emotion share important cultural functions and relationships that have yet to be explored. Following an interpretive conceptualization of culture, as well a brief discussion on the conceptual quagmire that is "folk music," I have argued that music and narratives are deeply embedded within, and contribute to, systems of shared meaning. In outlining the cultural "work" of music and narratives, I have argued that they share similar cultural functions in regards to the construction and maintenance of personal and collective identities, and the facilitation of social change. Following this, and from a "weak" constructionist perspective, I examined how emotions are essential to issues of identity, and how they share important relationships with both music and narratives. I then offered a social phenomenology of emotion as a theoretical platform on which to explore the largely neglected character of emotions as lived and embodied. Lastly, I have argued that exploring the relationships between music and emotion, as well as the narratives in and around these relationships, is a productive, yet currently neglected, venue for sociological research. When conceived of separately, music, narratives, and emotion are important cultural resources,

but it is my contention that, when combined in a variety of ways, they represent important and entirely ignored avenues for sociological inquiry.

Research Questions

The creative process of songwriting and performance, particularly when situated within a specific cultural context, is a useful theoretical and empirical platform for the study of how the synthesis of music, narrative, and emotion does much cultural "work," specifically in terms of identities, but also how those identities relate to notions of "authenticity," emotionality, and social change. I have chosen musicians' festivals, such as the Walnut Valley Festival and the Kerrville Folk Festival, as unique and neglected research sites in which to explore the "work" that these interrelationships accomplish. To reiterate, my principle concern is how the practices and stories surrounding original folk music shape the (re)production and reception of folk and festival culture, participants' emotional experiences, the construction and maintenance of participants' personal and collective identities, and the purposeful evocation of social change. Due to the interrelated character of music, narratives, and emotion as they relate to my interests, my research questions are similarly intertwined.

For this reason, each question does not neatly correspond with the specific chapter in which it is answered. Instead, all three research questions are related to all three analytic chapters. For example, questions pertaining to personal and collective identity are answered in accordance with the chapter's topic: festival and musical participation (chapter five), narratives around the songwriting process (chapter six), and cultural understandings of "good" songs (chapter seven). The same can be said of questions regarding cultural (re)production and emotional experience. These chapters could also be listed as "performance," "production," and "reception," although all three appear in each chapter at times.

1) What are "folk music" and festival cultures and how are new members initiated? How are folk and festival cultures (re)produced through festival participation, narratives around the songwriting process, and cultural understandings of "good" songs? More specifically, what are the cultural norms and standards surrounding the production, performance, and reception of original folk music?

2) How do participants' personal and collective identities inform the (re)production of folk and festival culture, narratives around the songwriting process, and cultural understandings of "good" songs? Conversely, how do such cultures, narratives, and understandings inform participants' personal and collective identities?

3) How do participants *feel* in relation to producing, performing, and receiving (i.e., listening) to music, and how do these feelings relate to, and (re)produce, folk and festival cultures, narratives around the songwriting process, and cultural understandings of "good" songs? How do these emotional experiences shape participants' personal and collective identities?

It is worth noting that built into all three research questions are additional points of interest. For example, one cannot examine folk music culture, or how that relates to issues of identity and emotion, without attending to questions of authenticity and social justice. Because they inform (and are informed by) folk music culture, the same can be said of narratives around the songwriting process and shared meaning in and around "good" songs.

In an effort to emphasize the importance of cultural context as it pertains to systems of shared meaning in around folk music and festival life, I now turn towards research on music festivals, folk music festivals, and musicians' festivals, particularly as they relate to issues of identity, emotion, authenticity, and social change. Following this, I describe the specific festival

contexts that served as ethnographic settings for this research. In chapter four, I outline my

methodology and the methods I employed within these settings.

CHAPTER THREE:

CULTURAL CONTEXTS: FESTIVALS AND SETTINGS

As briefly discussed in the last chapter, the social context in which shared meaning is circulated is a fundamental point of departure for the study of culture, especially if one is concerned with how cultural elements and understandings are circulated, learned, enacted, and embodied. For this research, the cultural "work" of music and narrative as it relates to identity and emotion, and how people use them together and separately as cultural resources and processes, only makes sense when situated within a specific cultural context. In what follows, I first briefly review literature regarding music festivals and folk music festivals, particularly as they relate to key issues within the folk musical community: collective and personal identity, emotion, performance, authenticity, social change, and their various interrelationships. Throughout, I also borrow from those who attend to some of these issues, although not necessarily in relation to festivals.

I then build on these themes and literatures in turning to the few and most germane studies of "folk musicians' festivals," which are significantly different from "folk music festivals," though key themes of identity, emotion, performance, authenticity, and social change remain salient. At "folk musicians' festivals," musician attendees, as opposed to professionals who are hired to perform, produce the vast majority of music heard, which means that the character of musical interaction, as well as the character of the musical community, is quite distinct from that of folk music festivals. The rest of this chapter is dedicated to a description of

the two folk musicians' festivals that served as ethnographic settings for this research: The Walnut Valley Festival and The Kerrville Folk Festival.

Music Festivals

It is worth noting that "folk festival culture" is far easier to conceptualize than "folk music" writ large. For example, it could easily be defined as a "music scene," or "the contexts in which clusters of producers, musicians, and fans collectively share their common musical tastes and collectively distinguish themselves from others" (Peterson and Bennett 2004:1). Or, for Ronström et al. (2001), we should not think of music as simply "sound" or "text," but instead as a "situated performance," which includes all the behaviors in and around music production and the places in which this occurs. To study music and the activities, people, and meaning in and around it is to study "music events," or the places in which these situated performances take place.

For Ronström et al. (2001:50), one of the most important music events is the music festival. So much so, they continue, that the many changes in the ways that we use and understand music has more to do with changes in such "music events" than in the music itself. It appears that the importance of "festivals" in general has not been lost on many scholars across the disciplinary board, as evidenced by Tsai and Whittall's (2012) comprehensive bibliography that showcases 93 scholarly publications concerning festival, 19 of which fall under the heading of "North American Folk Revival/Contemporary Roots Festivals." However, as of 2013, O'Grady noted that there has been scant research or theorizing on music festivals, and what little has been done is often situated within tourism studies (Bendix 1989; Matheson 2008) and event management (Abfalter, Stadler, and Muller 2012). I find such a claim to be consistent with the

character of the aforementioned 93 publications, many of which are quite dated (e.g., mostly 1970s—1990s).

In addition to these publications, and for my purposes, the few who attend to festivals that represent a radical and drug induced utopian counterculture comprised of "Rainbow People" or "anarchists," such as "The Rainbow Gathering" or "Burning Man" (Gilmore and Van Proyen 2005; Doherty 2006; McKinzie and Bradley 2013) are rather a far cry from the cultural context of the festivals that are of principle interest here. Others share similar, though less drastic, issues, many of which revolve around the problematic of cultural comparisons between festivals in the US with, for example, those in Estonia (Kuutma and Kästik 2014) and Sweden (Ronström et al. 2001), or between different types of shared meaning around different types of music, such as Celtic music (Matheson 2008) and "popular music" (O'Grady 2013). This is compounded by the problem of comparisons made between different types of music festivals that serve different types of purposes, such as community festivals focused on multiculturalism (Duffy 2005) or those with explicit political agendas (Sharpe 2008).

While there is useful writing on the extensive history of folk music festivals (Cohen 2008), strictly speaking, it would seem that we need more contemporary work on music festivals in general and folk music festivals in particular. This is certainly the case if we take several claims seriously. First, the study of "music events" is essential to the ways in which we understand the relationships between music and people, and all of the complexities those relationships entail (Ronström et al. 2001). Second, the number of folk music festivals in the US (450 as of 2006) has increased exponentially over the last 15 years (Gruning 2006), which means that there are actually more today than there were during the great "boom" of the revival (Scully 2008). Third, as Scully (2008:19) argues, the study of folk musical communities "reveals a great

deal about Americans' eternal fascination with their past, their continuing desire for a sense of community, and their fierce – if not sometimes hidden – resistance to cultural standardization."

Indeed, there are consistent and meaningful threads that run throughout folk music for those who share that "community" and collective identity, and they represent an opportunity to explore an "America" that "continues to struggle against perceived loss in the face of social upheaval" (Scully 2008:17). Such themes largely revolve around notions of "authenticity," particularly the interrelationships among how authenticity is "felt" via music and "emotional truth," how it is set in direct contrast to mass consumption and commercialization, how it pertains to activism, protest, and social change, and how it, at times, relates to the past, or at least set in opposition to the contemporary state of things. Whatever one chooses to term the nebulous collectivity that is "folk music," it is clear that "festivals" have been and continue to be essential to its history (Tachi 2004), social movements (Sharpe 2008), "continuity" (Lena and Peterson 2008), "community" (Shelemay 2011), and "cultural heritage" (Kuutma and Kästik 2014), principally because they represent a primary forum for the production and circulation of its cultural understandings (Ronström et al. 2001). Thus, festivals are perhaps the ideal venue for the study of the relevant themes and shared understandings that comprise "folk music," as well as the cultural "work" it accomplishes.

Despite some of the problems with "music festival" and "folk music festival" research, such work is not without important contributions that resonate with my principle concerns, particularly when synthesized with work outside of purely "festival" literature. Given that music and emotion, together and separately, share important relationships with collective and personal identity, it is not surprising that music festivals shape (and are shaped by) such identities. Turino (2008:187), for example, suggests that festivals can be understood as "expressive cultural

practices" that represent a "primary way that people articulate the collective identities that are fundamental to forming and sustaining social groups, which are, in turn, basic to survival." For Frith ([1996] 2011), it is through such cultural practices that groups come to understand themselves as groups, thereby constructing a collective identity that is necessary to understanding music and performance.

Additionally, others argue that festivals provide a platform for the experience and expression of cultural identity. Matheson (2008) suggests that the extent to which performances are emotional to audiences at Celtic music festivals has much to do with their ability to resonate with "authentic," and at times, essentialist, cultural identities. Similarly, Kuutma and Kästik (2014:281) argue that folk music festivals in Estonia provide opportunities for "demonstrating and experiencing intangible heritage and presenting manifestations of symbolic Estonian cultural identity." In the same article, they also note that "the projection of self through artistic expression occurs through performance" (p. 278); thus, while festival performances lend insight into collective and cultural identities, it also informs (and is informed by) personal identities.

In her study that examines the construction of identity at multicultural music festivals, Duffy (2005) argues that, because music orders reality, "place," and taps into our "emotional and intuitive selves," musical performances give rise to meaning and identities. In addition to generating feelings of "belonging" and "oneness," performances at festivals provide an arena to assign meaning to the self, which has much to do with the emotion engendered through subjectively positioning oneself in the music. In an innovative theoretical turn that borrows from the work of Kristeva, Duffy (2005:678) writes,

> In the music festival, the performance of and engagement with music enables participants to be a part of an active articulation of the self and its identity, one that expresses the multiple and overlapping positions of the subject because of the plurality of meaning that arises as the performance occurs.

In other words, and as previously mentioned, music provides the self with imaginative and emotional possibilities by offering a variety of subject positions, or a "plurality of meaning," in which to place, and thus make sense of, oneself. As Duffy (2005) argues, when individuals and groups interact with music and its interpretive character at festivals, meaning and emotion is assigned to the self and to others.

"Events such as musical performance," writes Morton (2005:670), "can make us feel alive, feel part of a community for a duration of time." These experiences afforded by music have much to do with its emotional character. For Morton (2005:671), musical performances and practices represent "highly emotional" ways of knowing "that are impossible to express in words [and] can make bodies ache with expression." Indeed, much of what goes on at festivals, or much of what festivals accomplish in terms of identities, community, and meaning-making has most everything to do with emotion. Said differently, to speak of "authenticity" or "social change" at festivals is also to speak of emotion.

In an interesting parallel to this research, Matheson (2008) explores the relationships between authenticity and consumption at Celtic music festivals, arguing that terms such a "commodification," "authenticity," and even "Celtic," are not monolithic categories, but instead complex processes. Much like folk music festivals and folk music in general, the questions arises as to how a deeply rooted form of centuries-old, traditional music could be interpreted by audiences as "authentic" when it is inevitably and necessarily embedded within a context defined by commodification and consumption. For Matheson (2008), the answer is quite simple: audiences define music and performances as "authentic" based on their emotional responses to the music, their embodied reactions to the music, and how these experiences resonate with their personal and cultural identities. Authenticity, in this case, is defined by emotion, and as long as

performances continue to resonate emotionally with audiences, they simply do not care that the festival is a commercial venture. A similar argument was made by Long and Barber (2015), who argued that songwriters and audiences alike know that music is an economic endeavor, it is bought, packaged, and sold, but it remains "authentic" as long as it remains "emotional."

In her study of popular music festivals in the UK, O'Grady (2013:140) notes a similar contradiction, particularly how festivals that sit "within a context of unbridled consumerism and consumption" can continue to offer extraordinary experiences for attendees. While indeed paradoxical, festivals can be understood as "relational performances," or experiences that are co-created and brought into existence by audiences, providing opportunities to experience liminality and collective effervescence, both of which pertain to emotion and embodiment. For O'Grady, relational performance physically engages audiences, and through liminal experiences, "the festival body is somewhat unharnessed from convention and primed for embodied experiences that lift them above quotidian existence." Others have noted that festivals provide emotional and liminal experiences that are far removed from daily life (Turner 1969, 1982; Gardner 2004a; Sharpe 2008; Holyfield, Cobb, Murray, and McKinzie 2013; Cobb 2014), and much like notions of "authenticity," these heightened emotional experiences are largely responsible for the negation of paradox and contradiction.

As O'Grady notes (2013:140), these extraordinary experiences afforded by festivals also serve as "an expression of resistance" against "hegemonic discourses," where performances at festivals "operate as a covert space for the politics of possibility." Despite being lighthearted, liminal, and cheerful, Sharpe (2008:219) similarly notes that music festivals have been and continue to be associated with social protest and resistance. "Folk festivals," she continues, "played a central role in the socialist and counterculture movements," as they provided an

important "cultural event for a generation of youth to demonstrate their rebellion against the dominant 'parent' culture.'" In her examination of a music festival with political aims, Sharpe (2008:217) argues that all leisure events are inherently political and ideological events, offering a type of pleasure-politics that have the ability to overturn "dominant patterns of power in ways that contribute to human emancipation and social justice."

For Sharpe (2008:218), festivals provide a cultural medium in which participants engage in civic and political life, where they are provided a space in which to challenge their social positions and "resist and re-write the dominant cultural narratives that shape their lives." While there are questions posited about the ability of festivals to promote social change due to their hyper-commercialized character, Sharpe (2008) suggests this does not negate their political potential, particularly when there is intentional effort on the part of organizers and attendees. Similarly, in their study of folk music festivals in Sweden, Ronström et al. (2001:50) argue that "folk musical traditions" are in and of themselves "reproducible commodified objects," but this does not hinder their capacity to evoke change and/or serve as control mechanisms. In addition to controlling cultural resources, such as the "aesthetics, ethics, values, symbols, representations, etc. of presented musics," festivals "reflect ideas, but also produce, distribute and dramatise ideas….As instruments of social and cultural change, festivals transmit and transfer knowledge, technology, [and] mediate between individuals, groups, and cultures" (p. 62).

In sum, while not without some theoretical and empirical contrasts, literature on music and folk music festivals sheds light on a variety of key themes that are of interest to this research and that run throughout the folk musical community, most notably the interrelationships among personal and collective identity, emotion, performance, authenticity and social change. I have argued that studying folk music festivals is a productive, if not ideal, approach to the study of the

systems of shared meaning that run throughout the folk musical community, and what that shared meaning is capable of accomplishing. Next, I turn to how this is perhaps even more the case when moving from folk music festivals to folk musicians' festivals, where the lines between audience and performers become blurred and the character of musical interaction takes a different shape.

Folk Musicians' Festivals

With few exceptions, "musicians' festivals" have been largely ignored by scholars from all disciplines. While they do at times receive a brief mentioning (Scully 2005, 2008; Stimeling 2007), there is very little research that approaches such festivals themselves as topics for inquiry. The few that have studied folk musicians' festivals, however, offer interesting insights and contributions, most often in relation to notions of "folk music" writ large, community, and authenticity.

In "the first scholarly study of the Kerrville Folk Festival," Barefield (2011:25) draws upon oral histories and a variety of sources, such as newspaper articles, festival programs, and financial documents, in an examination of the festival's "long-term historical significance." Indeed, Barefield (2011) offers an impressive and extensive history of the festival that begins with its origins in 1971, continues through 2006, and offers future projections that extend into 2010. The article largely revolves around the now late Rod Kennedy (whose biography is also included), as he was the founder and organizer of the festival and thus played a central role in all aspects of its creation and duration. Throughout this comprehensive history, Barefield (2011) traces the ways in which the festival came to be what it is today, including the key players involved, the hired performers, sponsorship and funding, and other pragmatic concerns

surrounding the festival's general operation, such as the responsibilities of volunteers, and how

the festival has managed to survive abysmal weather conditions.

Barefield's (2011) research is helpful to the extent that it thoroughly outlines the

festival's unique biography and provides an interesting historical backdrop to this research.

However, it also exists rather far outside the boundaries of my principle interests, which are

clearly more sociological than they are historical. That being said, in the beginning of her article,

she does dedicate a few short paragraphs to some main "themes" that are of relevance here. For

example, she notes that there is "a genuine and abiding sense of 'community' among those who

regularly attend the Kerrville Folk Festival," although she attributes this to "Rod Kennedy's

commitment to provide an 'organic' environment" (Barefield 2011:25), as opposed to the

attendees who are actively creating that environment. She does, however, mention that there is a

sense of "camaraderie" among musicians in the campground, many of whom attend the festival

to play with others as opposed to attending mainstage performances. Those who do attend

mainstage performances, she suggests, are quite different from the casual music listener in

"nightclubs" in that they genuinely and actively listen to the music performed.

Lastly, drawing on the work of ethnomusicologist Manual Pena, Barefield (2011:26)

makes an interesting distinction between "organic" and "super-organic" music, whereas the

former is defined as

> music which is part of a culturally meaningful experience shared by a community without
> regard for the music's commercial potential or mass appeal. Organic music is intended to
> be part of a communal cultural exchange between artists and their audience. By contrast,
> "super-organic" music is created for commercial purposes with the primary goal of
> generating as much revenue as possible for the artists, producers, venues, and record
> companies.

Following this, she goes on to say that the festival is an exceptional example of how the lines

between "organic" and "super-organic" become blurred, as there is a great deal of "communal

cultural exchange" among audiences and performers, but clearly the festival is organized in ways to generate profit. Although Barefield (2011), like many others, points out this common paradox at the festival, she does little to examine it or to describe how participants grapple with it.

I argue that the type of "organic" music heard at Kerrville is not heard on mainstages by (hired) professional musicians but instead in the campgrounds where musicians and songwriters are playing music together, some for up to a month at a time. I go on to argue that this type of extended musical interaction and the relationships it forges is what generates and maintains the ongoing sense of community at the festival. While she does briefly mention that many enjoy playing music in the campground, it seems quite clear that Barefield (2011) is more interested in the history of the festival and the mechanics behind its production than she is in the people who are making music and meaning therein.

It would appear that Barefield (2011) is not technically the "first" to publish on the Kerrville Folk Festival, although she may have been the first to do so from a historical perspective. Gruning (2006) dedicates an entire chapter of his book to the import of festivals, offering a rich ethnographic and interview-based description of the Kerrville Folk Festival, as well as a brief nod to the appearance of a younger crowd at the Falcon Ridge Festival, which is also a musicians' festival. In this chapter, Gruning (2006) thoroughly describes his experiences at the Kerrville Folk Festival, outlining the layout of the "ranch," where the festival takes place, as well as the amenities, activities, and attractions available in the campgrounds. He describes the importance of the festival to attendees (some of whom actually quit their jobs to attend), festival "families" that exist in various camps, the blending identities of researcher vs. musician and songwriter, and explores the character of mainstage performers and performances.

In noting that "folk music" is eternally complex and often contradictory, he details the ways in which mainstage performances revealed a synthesis of both "folk" and "pop," how most performers that were interviewed were more influenced by "pop," how audiences seemed distinctly unconcerned about the "inauthenticity" of this genre merger, and how they were instead far more concerned with engaging and experiencing the festival community. Despite this seemingly obvious musical blend, Gruning (2006) argues that "folk idealism," the valorization of the "traditional" over the "popular," still plays an important role at the festival, albeit in complex ways.

He goes on to say that the focus on the "traditional" has more to do with "vague notions of musical authenticity" and "experiential 'truths'" than it does with artifacts and "clearly defined crafts." For Gruning (2006), these shared understandings, or what I have outlined as "threads" within folk music culture, are both subjective and objective, where "mass public acceptance for stylistic conventions promulgate self-perpetuating boundaries of style: 'less is more,' simplicity over complexity, and, more explicitly, the folk over the popular." What is "folk" and what is "pop," however, becomes complicated when a distinction between the two is difficult to make, particularly when, for example, The Beatles represent a total synthesis of the two and are still beloved by many aging folk enthusiasts. What is defined as "traditional," he argues, is interpretive and fluid, much like the notion of "folk music" itself.

Additionally, as Gruning (2006:119) notes, the "folk community" itself represents a paradox, as it is a community "which is for the most part at once educationally privileged but retains the fiction of the common man." For him, this discourse that circulates at the festival and in folk music culture is partially responsible for some of the stigma he received as an "academic," one that diminished over time as he became part of the community. Another

contradiction of relevance here, one also noted in Barefield's master's thesis (2010), is the exclusionary character of some camps when such camps are situated within a supposedly inclusive ideological environment. Experiences in such camps are perceived as either repugnant or rewarding by participants, depending on whether they are welcome or not welcome in such camps, as well as how much they care about maintaining a "subjective level of musical quality" (p.122). As Gruning (2006:122) puts it, "The attraction/revulsion dialectic in evidence speaks to a more generalized and conflicted notion of folk's discourse of egalitarianism versus its multilayered discourses of power."

Gruning's (2006) writing on the Kerrville Folk Festival resonates tremendously with my experiences at the festival, some of which I attend to in Chapter Five when I discuss the process of "becoming a member" of the festival and folk community. I am not quite as interested in mainstage performances, and his exceptionally written portrayal about the import of the festival to attendees, the exclusive/inclusive character of camps, attending the festival as both a researcher and songwriter, the late nights, and the tired mornings made me nostalgic more than it contributed to the research at hand. The depth of description offered in this chapter is paramount, but the little offered analytically falls short of my goals. Taken together, Gruning's (2006) research appears to be largely dedicated to complicating, and at times, critiquing the contemporary notion of "folk music" and "folk community," and this particular chapter is evidence of that overarching goal. While I am indeed interested in how festival attendees negotiate paradox, I am not altogether concerned with offering a broad critique of how very little about "folk music" makes much sense when approached from an ethnomusicological perspective.

In total, Gruning's (2006) work is perhaps the most useful when it comes to the contemporary and contradictory state of folk music culture, but he does not attend to the vast majority of my concerns, particularly as they relate to musicians' festivals. Outside of noting that the festival is a "songwriting" festival that is attended by many songwriters, there is no mentioning of any process as it relates to the cultural construction of identity or festival culture, much less in relation to the cultural "work" of music, narrative, and emotion.

Perhaps the most thorough exploration of musicians' festivals, referred to here as "bluegrass festivals," was conducted by Gardner (2004a, 2004b), who asserts that the newly revived interest in bluegrass music is associated with traditional American "roots" reminiscent of Old Appalachia. Gardner's (2004a) dissertation thoroughly explores the growth of bluegrass music and festival life, as well as how participants within bluegrass festivals perform place, identity, and community. By focusing on the vocabulary of motives for attendance at bluegrass festivals, Gardner (2004a) explores the ways that attendees utilize the festival site as a way to express a perceivably more "authentic" identity in a rapidly modernizing society.

In a later publication, Gardner (2004b) focuses specifically on the creation of "portable communities," or "temporary forms of mobile gemeinschaft community," where participation is "driven by a quest for intimate community, open and equal social relations, and simple living, elements [participants] found in short supply in their everyday lives" (p. 155). Gardner (2004a, 2004b) concludes that festivals provide a retreat for those who need a break from the modern working world, while also providing participants with an inclusive, intimate, and simple form of community, or sense of "place," that ties participants together, confirming identity, and providing a sense of nostalgia surrounding values lost in modernization. According to Gardner (2004), this "nostalgia" is produced through the creation of traditional value systems associated

with Appalachian life, such as authenticity, simplicity, stability, intimacy, kinship, and family. The collective adherence to these values is the social glue that helps maintain such a tightly knit community found at bluegrass festivals.

Indeed, these ideas are prevalent and remain important in both my past research (Cobb 2011; Holyfield et al. 2013; Cobb 2014) and current research, as well as research surrounding the history and revival of folk and bluegrass music in general (Rosenberg 1993). For Gardner's (2004a) participants, "authenticity" largely refers to a way of life far removed from an emphasis on all things "postmodern," such as technologically mediated communication, mass consumption, "modern urban living," and a "mass cultural world… perceived as increasingly devoid of meaning" (p. 232). My master's thesis (Cobb 2011) extended Gardner's (2004a, 2004b) work by conceptualizing the Walnut Valley Festival as a site for cultural performance, where the emotional dimension of festivals serves to create and maintain the festival community through repeated ritual and shared experience. I argued that, although useful and important, Gardner's (2004a, 2004b) work neglects the significance of rituals and heightened emotionality in favor of an emphasis on the "decline of community."

In another publication (Cobb 2014), I expanded this argument to include how the heightened emotionality engendered through collaborative musical ritual generates feelings of liminality and communitas, which are then assigned to the festival site as a meaningful, remembered, and emotional place. It is here where the character of musical interaction takes on a different form than that of folk music festivals, where it is not the interactions between hired performers and audience members that fosters identity and community, but instead the active and collective production of music with other musician attendees in the campgrounds. In this study, I argued that participants at the Walnut Valley Festival, in many ways, re-create the modern

world through creative campsite construction, which involves many of the luxuries that modern life provides, such as furniture, air conditioning, showers, and kitchens. Said differently, it is hard to view authenticity as an escape from modernity, or a nostalgic recollection of a forgotten past, when some attendees gather to watch football games on couches and armchairs.

The notion of "authenticity" in scholarly literature is tricky, contested, and worth attending to here. Authenticity is a social construct that requires effort, or "authenticity work," to claim, reject, reinvent, produce, and commodify, all of which are most prominent when claims to authenticity are disputed (Peterson 1997, 2005). This is perhaps why the cultural, political, and commercial history of folk music for scholars and enthusiasts alike is riddled with debate about what constitutes authentic "folk music" (Tachi 2004; Crutchfield 2009). When it comes to its relationship with music, authenticity typically revolves around the interrelated notions of class, race, an idealized past, and a resistance to (or denial of) commercialism.

Race and class are particularly salient categories when it comes to issues of authenticity, where musical practices, styles, songs, and sounds represent a way of performing racial and class-based differences that are often built on stereotypes. For example, jazz and blues are "black" (Hatch and Watson 1974; Grazian 2003; Peterson 2005; Berish 2012), folk, country, and bluegrass are "white" (Roy 2002; Fox 2004; Gruning 2006; Lena and Peterson 2008), and the latter three are consistently understood to be performed and enjoyed by blue-collar workers (Rosenberg 1998; Fox 2004; Ingram 2008; Frith 2009). These social categories often inform the degree to which music and performances are seen to be "real." For example, as Grazian (2003, 2004) notes, audiences understand "authentic blues" in Chicago to be performed by black musicians, preferably in dilapidated black neighborhoods, and thus actively seek out these "authentic" experiences.

Similarly, Fox (2004), suggests that "real country" is a "trope of social identity and cultural style" (p. 29), one that is built on the language, ideology, art, morality, and aesthetics of "ordinary," working class people. In this case, authenticity is additionally linked to a valorization of a past that was not altogether warped by capitalism and consumption. Like Fox (2004), in his study of underground country musicians, Eastman (2010) found that "authenticity" meant staying true to oneself and the music, as opposed to "selling out" to commercialized record companies, a definition of "authenticity" prevalent among Texas, red dirt musicians (Holyfield et al. 2013) and the folk musical community as well.

While there has been some debate on who has the "right" to sing it (Lund and Denisoff 1971; Richardson 2005), when it comes to folk music, I am inclined to agree with others who suggest that authenticity has more to do with "certifiable knowledge, skill, and experience" (Peterson 2005:1094), or the "interpretive rules" and shared experiences that comprise "competent hearership" (Hatch and Watson 1974), than it does with exclusive social boundaries around rigid social categories. That is not to say that folk music culture has not been rather exclusive in these regards, leading to the rather homogenous groups of "folks" that we have today, but it is to say that I am cautious of relating this to what is now perceived as "authentic" folk music. In my eight years of experience and research at folk musicians' festivals, I have yet to encounter a scenario where the authenticity of the music played was contested based on race, class, gender, or sexuality.

To be sure, the demographics at these festivals are extraordinarily white, but I do not see "whiteness" as a defining characteristic of "authenticity," but instead as a byproduct of the significant amount of time and expense these festivals require, particularly when there is extensive travel involved and one wishes to stay for weeks at a time. Given that such festivals are

populated by people who can afford to go and stay there, who have jobs or circumstances that enable them to get and stay there, and who have the resources required to ensure that their homes, pets, and/or children are taken care of while they are gone, it is not entirely shocking that folk musicians' festivals are very white, masculine places populated by older people. Combine this with the historical "white-washing" of folk music that resulted from racial segregation in the 1960s (Roy 2002), and the outrageous expense of "good" instruments, such as notorious folk music guitars (e.g., Martins, Guilds, and Taylors), and we have ourselves a scenario that is set in deep contrast to "the common people." Interestingly however, beloved mainstage headliners and contest winners have included a great number of women, including black and lesbian women. Such performers are a tribute to celebrated folk musicians, but their ability to get and stay at the festival is due to the fact that they are hired or win tickets and camping fees, and as such, they do not represent the vast majority of people in the campgrounds.

The messy character of what constitutes contemporary "folk music" and how it relates to "authenticity" is more a matter of musical style and emotion than it is a matter of "who" is playing it. The closest argument in this regard comes with Fox (2004:155) who suggests that "'feeling' is an inchoate quality of authenticity," or in other words, if you have to ask, "you'll never know, and that's the point." He goes on to write that "feeling" revolves around two subdomains: "verbal acuity, cleverness, structural complexity, or beauty, and second, infectious, compelling embodied movement." The degree to which songs are "authentic" (i.e., felt) has much to do with audience's personal relationships with the music, or their ability to "relate" to the music, which is understood to be the process through which "meaning is encountered as 'feeling.'" (p. 172).

Of course, that songs are relatable and induce feeling has everything to do with what is supposedly "relatable" in the first place, which is matter of shared meaning among those who share an understanding of "real country," or "ordinary," working class Texans. Much of Fox's (2004) work in this regard resonates with my own, where "authentic" songs are those that "come from the heart" and invoke "feeling" in listeners due to shared meaning around music, or music's ability to resonate and recall participants' shared experience. Moreover, Fox (2004) contends that storytelling in and around songs increases their relatability and thus their "feeling," a point I more thoroughly examine in Chapter Seven. Though similar to my own work, Fox (2004) only briefly mentions songwriters who consistently evoke feeling in listeners, as opposed to the process through which songwriters actively draw on the cultural conventions that enable them to do so. In other words, while there is much process in Fox's (2004) work, particularly as it relates to authenticity and identity, it is not in relation to the creative process, but again in relation to the efficacy of the product.

Summary

In sum, there is scant research on music festivals from a sociological perspective, less on folk music festivals, and far less on musicians' festivals. I have argued that given the importance of music events like festivals, their prevalence in the folk musical community, and the importance of that community to the study of perceivably "authentic" American identities, there should be significantly more research on folk music festivals in an effort to attend to those identities. Additionally, festivals serve as insightful windows through which to explore the interrelationships among such identities and other key issues within the folk musical community, particularly emotion, performance, authenticity, social protest and change. Following this I argued that the little research on musicians' festivals, through useful, falls short of my principle

goals. Taken together, I am not particularly interested in a historical analysis of the Kerrville Folk Festival, or presenting a broad critique of folk music through the lens of that festival, or a theoretical perspective on musicians' festivals that does not resonate with much of my previous or current research, particularly as it relates to notions of community, authenticity, and nostalgia.

I understand the narrow definitions of "authenticity" as they are presented in the literature to be limiting when it comes to the folk musical community. The complexity of "folk music," both as a collective of people and a type of music, means that it is difficult to define authenticity based on race, class, gender, and sexuality. I have made it a point to emphasize that this does not mean that attendees at folk musicians' festivals are not somewhat homogenous, because they are, but it is to say that I do not see these categories as indicative of contemporary understandings of "authenticity."

On a similar note, it is worth briefly mentioning that when it comes to "nostalgia," I am not altogether convinced that the folk musical community is entirely caught up in an idealized and romanticized past that never existed. Instead, I have argued with others that "nostalgia" can be said to exist on a continuum, where it can be forward looking as much as backward looking, and both forms of looking, so to speak, are "real" to the extent that members see it that way (Holyfield et al. 2013). By now it seems a bit redundant to argue for the constructedness of terms like "nostalgia" and "authenticity" in relatively cynical fashion, and more interesting to examine how participants create and attach meaning to their experiences and thus construct the realities in which they live and deem authentic.

Much research on music and folk music festivals, and all research on musicians' festivals, continues the ongoing trend of neglecting emotion, and with the exception of Fox (2004), this remains the case in relation to "authenticity." Though closely related and important

to my own work, there are significant differences between "country" and "folk" music, and there is an even bigger difference between country bars in Texas and folk musicians' festivals as settings. It seems odd to me that when music and musicians' festivals are principally and obviously about music, that scholars are still neglecting the role of emotion when it plays such an important role in terms of how people use and relate to music. When it comes to musicians' festivals in particular, this is ever more the case given that hundreds of musicians and songwriters are gathering for weeks at a time and playing music together. Surely, emotion must play some role in all aspects of those communities. Following this, to research a songwriter's festival, such as the Kerrville Folk Festival, and neglect songwriters, songwriting, musical interaction, performance, *and* emotion seems to rather miss the mark altogether, though I do appreciate that different goals were in place.

In short, my research fills these gaps through ethnographic research at two folk musicians' festivals that serve as sites in which to explore the myriad forms of cultural "work" accomplished by the interrelationship among music and narrative within folk music and festival culture. I take seriously the notion that the "when" and "where" of cultural performance is important (Ronström et al. 2001), that the accomplishment of meaning, identity, and authenticity should be studied and understood as "in process" and "in action" (Force 2009), and that the lived and embodied experience of emotion through musical interaction and performance can and should be studied where those interactions and performances take place (Morton 2005). It is now that I turn to a description of the two musicians' festivals that served as ethnographic sites for this research.

Research Settings

The Walnut Valley Festival ("Winfield")

According to the first program, the initial Walnut Valley Festival was held in 1967 when an ambitious group of self-proclaimed "bluegrass nuts" attending Southwestern University in Kansas "begged" the college for 3,200 dollars to create the festival. The festival planning committee was "by no means a group of expert folklorists but rather a group of highly interested students who wanted to know more about the rich and oftentimes neglected culture in which we live" (Walnut Valley Festival program). After the initial festival, which was little more than a large group of students camping in a park, the festival has grown exponentially each year for over 42 years to be the enormous and much anticipated musicians' festival that it is today.

The festival, which is located about an hour from Wichita, in a small, rural Kansas town named Winfield, takes place the third week of September (Wednesday through Sunday) of each year. The "official" festival setting includes the Winfield Rodeo Grounds where thousands of attendees watch performances by popular bluegrass and folk musicians on one of three large stages. Many of these attendees who attend the stage performances are "weekenders" or "town" people who do not camp for extended periods of time in the campground, but instead come and go at their leisure to enjoy the "official" festival that takes place from Thursday to Sunday each year. The "official" festival also includes numerous booths with arts and crafts, music, clothing, and instruments, and is home to a great variety of musical contests and workshops. Attendees may also enjoy a wide variety of food and memorabilia, such as guitar picks and bumper stickers.

The "official" festival that takes place in the rodeo grounds is located between two camp ground communities, known as the Walnut Grove and the Pecan Grove (See Figure 1, Map of

the Festival Grounds). In both groves, numerous winding dirt roads offer participants on foot, bicycles, and golf carts a way to navigate the campgrounds, and huge trees scatter across the flat Kansas landscape, graciously offering shade during the heat of the day. But the two groves are remarkably different; in fact, there is actually a large geographic separation between groves, where the main, paved road that leads out of the fairgrounds and onto Main Street separates the two campgrounds completely, meaning that traveling from one campground to the other is quite the hike. One veteran Pecan Grover jokes, "you need a passport to go over there!"

CAMPGROUND MAP

MAP KEY

1. Stage I	13. Motorcycle Parking	25. Contest Trailer
2. Stage IV	14. Walnut Valley Mercantile	26. Portable Showers &
3. Stage III	15. Security	Firewood
4. Main Entrance (Tickets)	16. Crafter's Parking	27. Go Cart Track
5. Re Entry & Exit Gate	17. Entertainer's Parking	28. Handicap Parking
6. Camping (850+ Plug Ins)	18. Handicapped Restrooms	29. ——
7. Camping	19. Stage V	30. Brick Walk
8. Information Booth	20. Stage VI	31. Barn 10 / Massage
9. Food Area	21. WVA Worker Parking	32. RV Dump Station
10. First Aid	22. Restrooms	
11. Stage II	23. Concession Parking	
12. Day Parking	24. Crafts	

Figure 1. Map of the Festival Grounds (https://wvfest.com/maps/grounds)

The "musicians' festival" takes place within these large campgrounds where members set

up their camp "homes" for their stay at the festival. Smaller camps within the Pecan Grove and

Walnut Grove have names such as "Crab Camp," "Rat Camp," "La La Land," "Comfortable

Shoes," "Oz Tin City Limits," and "Our Grass is Blue," and are established at the festival with

playful props and creative make shift signs. These unique camps are set up in the same geographic location from one year to the next as part of a festival tradition that hinges upon member's early arrival for "Land Rush," a ritual that marks official entry into the campgrounds that takes place the last week in August.

Musicians can be found wandering from camp to camp to participate in "jams" or "pickin' circles" with other musicians, and huge groups of musicians can be seen jamming under large billowing parachutes hung from trees, or make-shift porches made out of tarps and pieces of wood. Oftentimes musicians will start spontaneous jams in the middle of the dirt roads within the campgrounds, or march down the winding paths in groups playing music. Indeed, the term "musicians' festival" refers not to the performances by professional musicians, but rather, the music produced by participants camping within these two campgrounds. Many participants I spoke with rarely attend performances on the mainstages, preferring instead to play music with fellow campers in the Groves.

Gaining entry into this research setting proved relatively simple. As a musician myself (a pianist at the time), I developed an interest in the world of folk music after being invited to my first "pickin' party," where musicians gather at a friend's home to play music and enjoy each other's company. Shortly after my introduction to pickin' parties, I was invited to attend the Walnut Valley Festival and stay with a ready-made community to call "home," which I did in September of 2009 as a wide-eyed "virgin." After being offered a place to stay within an established camp, getting into the festival was as easy as buying a ticket, packing up the car, and making the five hour pilgrimage through the monotonous Kansas landscape.

The Kerrville Folk Festival ("Kerrville")

According to the official Kerrville Folk Festival website,

> Founded by Rod Kennedy, the Kerrville Folk Festival has run annually since 1972. It is the longest continuously running music festival of its kind in North America. For 18 straight days and nights each May and June, over 30,000 guests come from all over the world to experience the magic of what we simply call "Kerrville." The Festival is known internationally as a Mecca for singer songwriters of varying musical style. It's a place where those just developing their skills have the opportunity to play their music alongside master craftsmen. (http://www.kerrville-music.com/about_festivals.htm)

Each year, "Kerrville" takes place on the Quiet Valley Ranch (see Figure 2, Map of the Ranch) nestled "deep in the heart of beautiful Texas Hill Country," approximately nine miles away from the small Texas town of Kerrville (http://www.kerrville-music.com/about_festivals.htm). In contrast to Winfield, which is located directly in the middle of a quaint little Kansas town, Kerrville certainly has a different *feel* to it, much of which is owed to its Texas location and heritage. Because I had attended Winfield twice before first attending Kerrville, I was immediately struck by how different these two settings feel; Kerrville is more rustic, removed, and open, yet enclosed by enormous, rocky hills, which makes for deep feelings of seclusion and isolation from the world that surrounds. As shown in the following excerpt written upon my first experiences with Kerrville:

> It immediately feels different from Winfield. The setting itself makes the entire festival feel different. The Quiet Valley Ranch is nestled between beautiful, green Texas mountains (or "hills," as I am told), and the grass is rich and green, as are the trees that stoically cover the hills. I am reminded of what it feels like to be in New Mexico; there is a part of me that feels as if we would be better suited riding horses while herding anxious cattle with guitars strapped to our saddles and a can of unopened beans in our saddle bags. The hills themselves, like the trees and the very rocky, uneven terrain of the ranch, are a stark contrast from the flatness of Winfield.

Figure 2. Map of the Ranch (http://owentemple.com/news/show/This-Week-at-WhiteWater-Old-

Quarter-Kerrville-Folk-Festival)
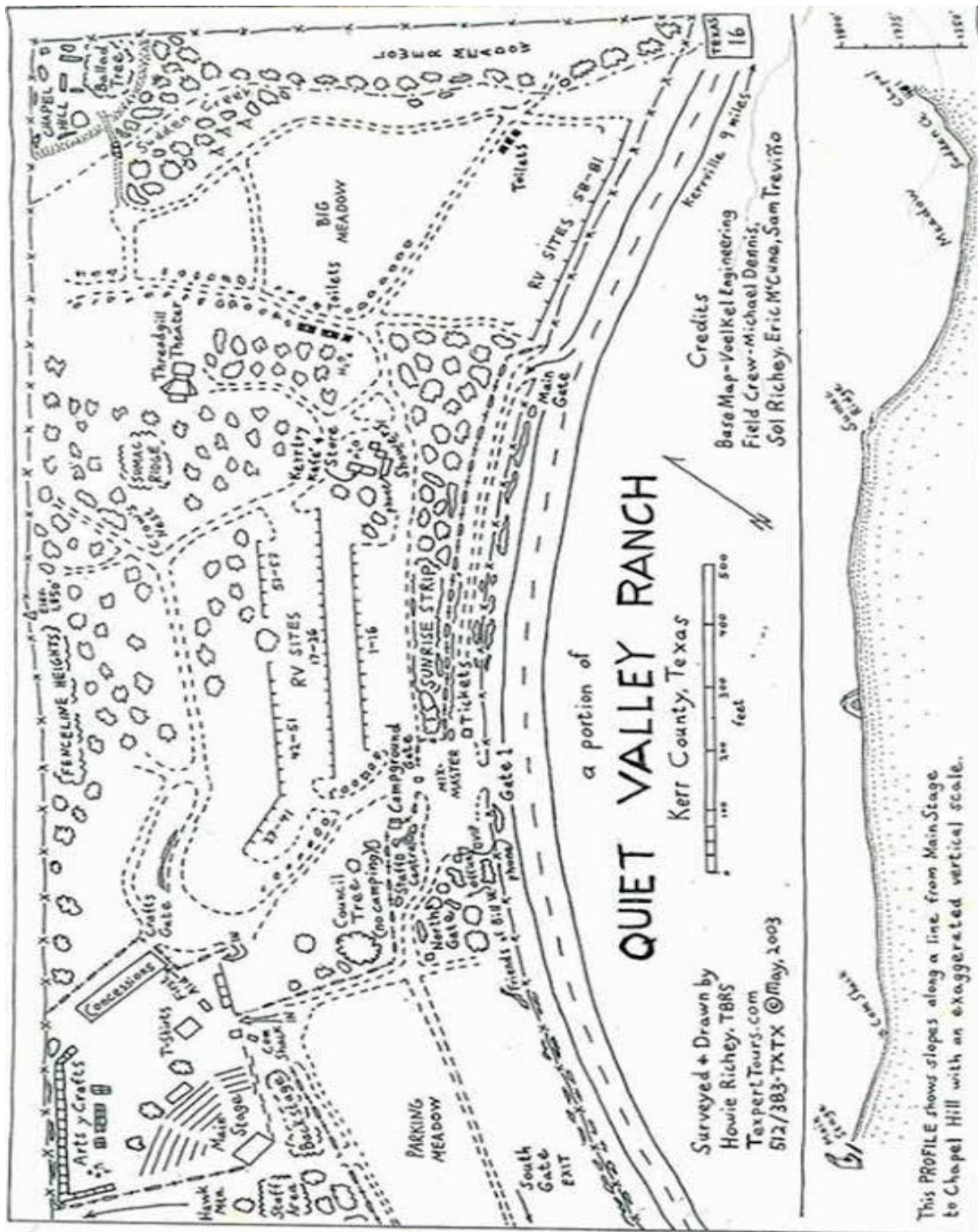
As distinctive settings, Kerrville and Winfield feel significantly different, but they also share much in common. Like Winfield, Kerrville includes the "Kennedy Outdoor Theater" that hosts big names in folk music that perform on the mainstage. Mainstage performances take place Thursday through Sunday of each week during the 18-day festival, and many participants (more so than at Winfield) enjoy watching the performances in addition to perusing the great variety of food and drinks, crafts, jewelry, clothing, instruments, Kerrville memorabilia (CDs, t-shirts, hats, bumper stickers, picks, mugs, buttons), or enjoying the services provided by massage therapists or tarot card readers. This part of the festival, like the "official festival" at Winfield, draws many "weekenders" or "town kids," people from the town of Kerrville and surrounding areas, who come to enjoy this part of the festival, but do not camp or stay for extended periods of time. Throughout all 18 days of the festival, numerous activities and workshops are available to participants on the ranch, such as children's concerts, instrument workshops, and voice workshops, to name a few.

However, most importantly, like Winfield,

the heart and soul of the festival is in the campgrounds. This is where you can truly experience and appreciate the abundance of talent we are blessed to have in our midst each year. Impromptu jam sessions can pop up at any time around a campfire or anywhere there are people willing to listen. A 24-hour a day treat for musicians and music enthusiasts alike. (http://www.kerrville-music.com/about_festivals.htm)

Many participants at Kerrville arrive a week before the official festival begins for "Resettlement," the equivalent of Winfield's Land Rush, where participants enter the ranch and set up their "festival homes" with and for their "festival family" for the duration of the festival. Campsite construction is very much similar to that of Winfield, where participants go to great lengths setting up kitchens, tarps, tapestries, furniture, decorations, and the like. Day and night, participants, known as "Kerr-verts," happily roam around the ranch on bike, foot, and golf carts,

playing music together and chatting, or lazily lounging in fold-out chairs, sharing music, meals, and stories. Unlike Winfield, the ranch is not segregated into two distinctly different areas that offer different festival experiences, but instead the rocky, uneven roads on the ranch connect all camping areas, such as the Big Meadow, the Lower Meadow, and Crow's Nest.

Despite important similarities with Winfield, what renders Kerrville a unique and perhaps more productive setting for my dissertation research, is the direct focus on songwriters and songwriting. Kerrville's emblem, "Celebrating Songwriters' since 1972," is an apt description of what takes place at the festival; a celebration of all things about songwriting. Whereas Winfield does host a songwriting contest ("NewSong Showcase"), draws songwriting participants, includes stages in the campgrounds where participants can perform, and, as of 2013, includes a "Songwriters' Stage" for songwriting participants, the focus at Winfield is more about the collaborative production of music in the form of jamming, where musicians play songs together, many of which are traditional folk music covers.

At Winfield, "jamming" is the predominant form of "musicking" (Small 1998; Roy and Dowd 2010) that takes place, which involves multiple musicians sitting or standing in a circle and simultaneously playing music together. The predominant form of musicking at Kerrville, on the contrary, takes place in the form of "song circles," where participants sit in circles and take turns playing their original songs for one another, offering support, encouragement, and sometimes critique. This is certainly not to say that there are not "jams" and covers at Kerrville, or "song circles" and originals at Winfield, but it is to say that there are two distinctly different emphases on the type of musicking that takes place at these festivals, where Kerrville is dedicated to songwriters and original music, and Winfield to musicians and jamming on traditional folk and festival favorites.

In addition to song circles, Kerrville hosts the annual "New Folk Competition" (aka, "New Folk") a competition for songwriters that, in 2013, included 32 finalists and six winners from "700 outstanding submissions…received from around the world" (42nd Annual Kerrville Festival Program, 2013). I was told by a participant heavily involved in the competition that, in 2014, the number of submissions rose to 1,077, including a late submission. Finalists and winners receive prizes such as capos (a popular device used on the neck of the guitar to change the key of a song without changing finger positions), tuners, magazine subscriptions, the opportunity to win a scholarship to attend the Southwest Regional Folk Alliance Conference, and the opportunity to play their songs at the Threadgill Theatre, a large stage nestled within the campground that hosts performances from well-known artists throughout the 18 day festival. The six winners of the contest receive a cash prize and an additional opportunity to perform at the Threadgill Theatre. Most importantly, winners receive the notoriety that comes with being a New Folk winner, a prestigious title among participants.

In addition to the infamous New Folk Competition, for the last 35 years Kerrville has hosted the annual "Songwriters' School," which "allows students to learn from masters of the craft [and to] work side by side with tried and true songwriters…Students receive both large and small group instruction using hands-on-teaching methods" (42nd Annual Kerrville Folk Festival Program, 2013). Participants interested in the Songwriting School must pay a fee ($250 or $310 depending on date of purchase), and because there is limited seating and space, they must register months in advance to secure a spot. Additionally, throughout the 18 day festival, from three to five each Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, participants can share their original songs at "Ballad Tree," which is much like an "open mic" for festival participants. Also, each day at around 5:00 pm, songwriters can participate in a free opportunity to sit in a song circle with other

songwriters and "work" through their songs with a highly respected songwriter who has not only written hit songs for other famous musicians, but has himself frequented mainstage and is highly involved in songwriting school and a variety other festival operations and activities. Of course, in the midst of all of these opportunities and activities, participants within the campgrounds are busy playing their songs for one another, and for many, that seems to be enough.

In the summer of 2012, my entry into Kerrville was much like my entry into Winfield; I bought an 18 day ticket and made the pilgrimage to attend the festival for the full 25 days allotted to campers on the ranch. I knew someone from Winfield who happened to know a handful of people who camp together at Kerrville, and they were gracious enough to welcome me into their well-established festival home.

CHAPTER FOUR:

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

In this chapter, I describe the methodology and methods that I employed to attend to my research questions, first beginning with my position as an interpretive researcher and grounded theorist. Second, I turn towards a description of methods, which include ethnography, conversation-style interviews, sociological introspection, and autoethnography. Third, I present the data that was collected and, fourth, the ways in which it was analyzed according to grounded theory practice and narrative analysis.

It is first important to note that this research has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of South Florida (see approval letter for this study, IRB#: Pro00008294, in Appendix A.) At both festivals, I was entirely transparent about my position as a sociologist and researcher, and was granted access to conduct this research by festival officials or organizers who were fully aware of the character of my research, its purposes, and its potential for publication. I attained informed consent from all participants, who have been granted confidentiality and anonymity, and all were provided pseudonyms. All participants have been provided with my contact information, all are fully aware that they can withdraw from this research at any time, and all have been afforded the opportunity to read my work if they so choose. I have received no complaints or withdraws, nor have I encountered challenges that conflict with my ethical responsibilities as a researcher. All data collected for the purposes of this research has been de-identified and secured on a password protected computer.

Methodology

As an interpretive researcher, I am primarily interested in how people construct, maintain, interpret, and assign meaning to their selves and their social worlds (Loseke 2013). As such, a variety of qualitative methods are best suited to attend to my general interest in how participants' "life world[s] – that is, the experiential world every person *takes for granted* – is produced and experienced *by members*" (Holstein and Gubrium 1994:263, my emphasis). For Holstein and Gubrium (1994:263),

> interpretive practice provides a way of addressing reality-constituting processes without blindly reifying, nor needlessly ignoring, the contexts, conditions, and resources of the construction process. Centered on communicative action *in context*, it is an analytic framework eminently suited to understanding the practice of everyday life. (Emphasis in original)

My research revolves around the general question of "how," particularly how people assign meaning to social phenomena (Lois 2003:25). Following the work of Lofland et al. 2006:166), I am interested in questions such as, "'How do things get done?' 'How do people go about doing what they are doing?'" and attend to such questions by focusing "on the strategies actors use to do whatever it is they are trying to accomplish." The answers to these questions depend entirely on how festival participants interpret and make sense of their experiences and their realities (Lois 2003:25). My role as an interpretive researcher is to recognize the importance of participants' experiences while maintaining an openness towards how those experiences are expressed and interpreted (Davidson and Smith 2012:265).

I root my interpretive approach to data collection and analysis within the framework of grounded theory (Charmaz 2006). I borrow from Charmaz (2006:23) to elaborate upon the utility of an emergent theoretical framework:

> Grounded theory methods move ethnographic research toward theoretical development by raising description to abstract categories and theoretical interpretation. Grounded

theory methods preserve an open-ended approach to studying the empirical world yet add rigor to ethnographic research by building systematic checks into both data collection and analysis.

My theoretical framework and sociological interest at these festivals has been informed by my ethnographic immersion into the cultural worlds of Kerrville and Winfield, where my participants served as my guide. As Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw ([1995] 2011:3) argue, "immersion gives the field worker access to the fluidity of others' lives and enhances [her] sensitivity to interaction and process."

I began my dissertation research and entered these festivals (or re-entered, as is the case with Winfield) with a general interest in songwriting and narratives. After returning from my first trip to Kerrville, which was a particularly liminal and emotional event for me, I became more and more interested in issues of emotion, thus the research developed a narrower focus. Following a grounded theory approach, it was through my experiences at both festivals—my relationships with participants, their stories, and their experiences, my analysis of fieldnotes, interviews, and memos, and the inductive promise to be open to change and contradiction—that allowed me to slowly piece together the very questions I strive to answer here.

Methods of Data Collection

My methods are largely informed by Katz's (1999) methodological techniques for exploring emotions, such as observations in natural settings, where emotions are "enacted in face-to-face social situations" (p. 8), and conversational interviews supplemented with the observations of others present (p. 9). These suggestions resonate with Loseke's (2013:83) general premise: "Empirical evidence for how people think [and] feel comes from asking them; empirical evidence for how people act comes from watching them." For my dissertation, a combination of asking, watching, and participating are required. Following these suggestions, as

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well as Charmaz's (2006:15) assertion, "Let your research problem shape the methods you choose…Choose methods that help you answer your questions with ingenuity and incisiveness," I employed a combination of ethnography, conversation-style interviews, sociological introspection, and autoethnography in my research.

Ethnography

As Lois (2003:25) writes,

> One way to understand behavior…is to investigate how people assign meaning to social phenomena. This is best accomplished through ethnographic research: observing and participating in people's lives in a natural setting, as well as talking to them in depth about their experiences…[I]t provides a deep and intricate understanding of how and why social processes happen because it captures the nuanced meanings people give to social phenomena; it uncovers the reality they create.

Furthermore, conducting ethnographic research enabled me to attend to my interests in the social body, as "fieldwork is necessarily an embodied activity" (Coffey 1999:59). For Coffey (1999:59),

> the body is negotiated in everyday life, serving as an agent of cultural reproduction and as a site of cultural representation….In the same way as fieldwork is dependent on the relational, it is also reliant upon the analyses of bodies and body work.

The ethnographic benefits of addressing the social body are closely related to the experience and expression of emotion in and through the body, as fieldwork allows for researchers to "feel" in "real, bodily ways…[O]ur emotional feelings about fieldwork are often connected to our physical state. As well as a distinctively physical activity, fieldwork is about emotions" (p. 158).

Indeed, my ethnographic experiences at both festivals over the years was a physical and emotional journey in a variety of ways. For example, like other attendees, participating in song circles and jams all night rendered me exhausted, as did hiking all over the festival grounds for weeks at a time. Similarly, being around music so consistently found me weeping unabashedly with others following a "good song," or feeling intimidated when playing an original. All of

these experiences, combined with countless others, lent insight into participants' experiences, particularly because we experienced and shared them together in the moment, but also into lived and embodied emotional moments that were ineffable but understood, such as what "good songs" feel like, what "vulnerability" feels like, what "festival life" feels like.

In addition to attending to the body and embodied emotionality, ethnographic research highlights the grounded theory premise of "starting where you are." Fueled by my master's thesis, my love of music and musicians' festivals led me to continue an exploration into the various different dynamics and facets of festival life. For Lofland et al. (2006:9), fieldwork builds upon "researchers' personal connections to the world(s) around them, seeing those connections as avenues for potential research." They add:

> The naturalistic or fieldwork approach to social research fosters a pronounced willingness, even commitment, on the part of the investigator to orient to these kinds of personal concerns…Starting where you are can ease your access to certain research sites and informants. It can also increase the odds that you will be able to maintain the engagement and commitment that field research requires. (P. 9)

This has certainly been the case in my experience. "Starting where I am" as a sociologist, musician, songwriter, and "veteran" festival participant has allowed me ample access to fellow festival participants, songwriters, and musicians, and to jams, and song circles. Additionally, my love of music and festival life has kept me curious, probing, and passionate about my work.

Following a grounded theory approach and "starting where I am," it was my experiences as a participant observer, the fieldnotes that arose from those experiences, and conversation-style interviewing that allowed me to begin sensing the relevance of certain reoccurring themes that were emerging from my data. Similarly, it allowed me to stay open to the actual salience of such initially relevant themes throughout the research process.

In regards to participant observation, Atkinson, Coffey, and Delmont (2003:116) write,

The practices of everyday life, the performance of social selves, or the conduct of social encounters will not be documented through the collection of interview data. If we wish to understand the forms of life and the types of social action in a given social setting, then we surely cannot escape the kind of engagement that is implied by participant observation.

Participant observation allows the field researcher to see "firsthand and up close how people grapple with uncertainty and ambiguity, how meanings emerge through talk and collective action, how understandings and interpretations change over time, and how these changes shape subsequent actions" (Emerson et al. [1995] 2011:5). My position as a musician and songwriter has allowed me to fully participate in festival life, such as song circles and jams, but also to observe, accidentally breach, and learn about the taken for granted assumptions underlying songwriting, performance, and musicians' festival culture; to deeply feel and observe others' expressions of emotional experiences; to talk with others about those experiences; to hear, tell, and share stories about festival life, about good and bad songs and songwriters, about wonderful song circles and incredible moments.

Such experiences were always first recorded as jottings and then elaborated into fieldnotes while I was in the field, and both "help the field researcher to understand what [s]he has been observing in the first place and, thus, enables [her] to participate in new ways, to hear with greater acuteness, and to observe with a new lens" (Emerson et al. [1995] 2011:19). Moreover, equipped with the understanding that ethnographic research must be "reflexive" and "self-conscious," I wrote a great amount of both "observational" and "reflexive" fieldnotes, or fieldnotes that represent "ongoing conversations about [my]experience" with myself and others "while simultaneously living in the moment" (Coffey 1999:132). In these fieldnotes, I was less concerned with capturing "the *facts* of what happened to [me] accurately…but instead to convey

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the *meanings* [I] attached to the experience" in hopes of later creating a story that allowed readers to "experience [my] experience as if it were happening to them" (Ellis 2004:116, emphasis in original).

In this way, and with an appreciation that writing, even in the field, is a form of analysis (Richardson 2001), my fieldnotes often took the form of sociological introspection, which was later expanded into autoethnography, where I purposefully and analytically examined the relationships between my positionality, my experiences, my embodiment, and my emotionality from a sociological perspective.

Sociological Introspection and Autoethnography

My experiences as a "virgin" and "veteran" at Winfield, and a "Kerr-virgin" and "Kerr-vert" at Kerrville, as well as my experiences as a sociologist, musician, songwriter, and a white, heterosexual, middle-class woman in her late twenties, have played, an important role throughout the research process. Throughout the course of this research, I have employed sociological introspection to explore these experiences, but also to probe deeper into my own lived, embodied, and subjective experiences with emotions, how they relate to music, and the ways in which I communicate them through both music and storytelling during festivals and afterwards.

In offering a method that reunites the lived and embodied character of emotional experience with the study of emotion, Ellis (1991:23) writes,

> [S]ociologists can and should study how private and social experience are fused in felt emotions. Resurrecting introspection (conscious awareness of awareness or self-examination) as a systematic sociological technique will allow sociologists to examine emotion as a product of the individual processing of meaning as well as socially shared cognitions.

From a phenomenological perspective, sociological introspection is much like a form of intentional reflection on reflection, an active and purposeful "metamorphosis" (Katz 1999),

where we are able to explore, from a sociological perspective, our lived and embodied emotional experiences by bringing them into a sensual awareness, but also a conscious, analytic awareness. Throughout the research process, sociological introspection has been a productive analytic tool for probing and exploring my lived and embodied emotionality in ways that allow me to examine the processes, complexities, and difficulties that often accompany emotional experience (Ellis 1991).

As a result of my extensive use of sociological introspection, many of my fieldnotes, as well as my personal narratives presented in the following analytic chapters, take the form of autoethnography, or an "autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness" (Ellis 2004:37). Through autoethnography, researchers conduct and write research from both a personal and cultural perspective (Ellis 2004), again providing the tools for exploring the taken for granted aspects of one's own emotional experience through a sociological lens. Autoethnography opens an alternative methodological space for researchers to move "forward and backward, inward and outward, [where] distinctions between the personal and cultural become blurred, sometimes beyond distinct recognition" (Ellis 2004:38). Researchers who employ such methods take seriously the power of narratives to order and convey lived experience, as well as the notion that one's personal, emotional, and embodied realities, as well as one's interpretations of those realities, are always informed by how one is situated within broader systems of meaning.

Following this, and as a social psychologist, I fully recognize that the "inside" itself comes from the "outside;" thus, both sociological introspection and autoethnography have been insightful venues for examining the interrelationships among my experiences and those of my participants. Using these methods and writing through my experiences has brought about many

epiphanies throughout the course of this research. For example, extensively writing about the misery I initially experienced during my first year at Kerrville, and the joy and contentment I experienced during my second year, lent insight into how and why participants so fervently stressed the importance of community and "family" at the festival. Similarly, it took writing an autoethnography of my songwriting process, which took place in 2013, and analyzing the stories that others' told about their songwriting process, which took place in 2014 and 2015, to finally understand that I was telling, and had always told, one of two existing cultural narratives about songwriting. (I have included my autoethnography in Appendix B, "Take it Away: Autoethnographic Reflections on Songwriting," as well as my reflections on my story from both 2013 and 2016.)

Both methods and forms of writing shape, and have been shaped by, my relationships and interactions with my participants. In many ways, my introspections, personal narratives, and experiences were informed by interviews and conversations in the field, as much as those interviews and conversations involved an interactive dialogue surrounding the growth and depth of my reflections. In this way, conversational interviews were fundamental to the development of this research in myriad ways.

Conversation-Style Interviews

For Fetterman (2010:40), "the interview is the ethnographer's most important data-gathering technique." Conversation-style interviews allow for "an in-depth exploration of a particular topic or experience…The interviewer seeks to understand the topic and the interview participant has the relevant experiences to shed light on it (Charmaz 2006:25). Interviews represent an important method for "capturing shared cultural understandings and enactments of the social world" (Atkinson et al. 2004:108), where the "ethnographer quickly learns to savor the

informant's every word for its cultural or subcultural connotations" (Fetterman 2010:4).

Following the work of Wooffitt and Widdicomb (2006:31), I understand interviews to be

collaborative, a type of conversation, wherein

> respondents participation is not constrained and may be extensive: they may offer lengthy accounts, narratives, anecdotes and stories to illustrate experiences or opinions…[B]y encouraging respondents to reflect on and relate their experiences at length, the researcher is more likely to obtain rich data which will yield greater insight into the personal experiences of the respondents.

In the beginning, the "topic" was simply festival experience and songwriting, and my

interviewees were (and still are) the experts. As I collected more interviews, continued to explore

my participants' experiences, and continued to reflect on my own experiences, our conversations

grew more specific and more focused, although I still allowed room for open discussion. During

our interviews, participants were encouraged to tell their stories; stories of their songwriting

process, stories of festivals past, stories about who they are, stories of their favorite musical

memories, and stories they simply felt compelled to tell me. Most needed very little

encouragement but were instead excited to tell me all about their experiences with songwriting

and festivals. I did indeed have an interview guide (which is included in Appendix D), a list of

questions for which I sought answers, but most often we continued talking long after their

responses to those questions, which continued to give rise to new questions and new answers in

the unfolding course of conversation.

As I gained more experience as a festival participant and songwriter, my interviews grew

more collaborative in the sense that I had my own stories to tell, my own experiences to share;

thus many of my interviews represent what Ellis (2004:61-62) refers to as "reflexive dyadic

interviews," or interviews that take

> a conversational form in which the interviewer tries to tune in to the interactively produced meanings and emotional dynamics within the interview itself. Though the focus

is on the interviewee and the interviewee's story, the words, thoughts, and feelings of the researcher are also included.

These interviews are interactive to the extent that all parties bring stories to the conversation as both researchers and participants, and it is the story that unfolds in the interaction, as well as the stories each brings with them, that take central focus (Ellis 2004:64).

Throughout the process of conducting and reviewing these interviews, I developed a broader understanding of my own process and experiences, as well as my participants, because on many occasions we would create and reflect meaning together in the moment. It was not at all unusual, typically towards the conclusion of the interview, for participants to ask me similar questions, almost as if I was expected to return the favor. As the novice songwriter in all interviews, most often participants would ask me about my process, compliment or critique a song of mine they had heard, and sometimes, following my asking them to play a song, they would ask me to play one in return. In hindsight, their probing, opinions, and advice on my own work as a songwriter was a surprising and productive opportunity to explore both of our experiences in greater depth. These conversations and shared experiences were mostly responsible for many of the close relationships I forged in the field. They provided the groundwork for mutual feelings of trust, comfort, and openness, important parts of sharing stories, songs, and highly emotional experiences together.

In sum, all of the methods I employed in this research were built on the foundation of grounded theory practice, which allowed me to slowly piece together how participants create, shape, perpetuate, and attach meaning in and around their experiences as members of folk music culture, as festival attendees, as songwriters, as musicians, and as listeners. This "piecing together" process, of course, did not stop at methodology and methods, but instead continued to take place throughout analysis and writing (and writing about analysis and writing). In the next

section, I describe the data I collected before turning towards a description of my analytic process.

The Data Collected

The following table represents a summary of data collected at both festivals, with the exception of secondary sources:

Table 1. Summary of Data Collected

	WINFIELD	KERRVILLE	TOTAL
Days in Field	50	75	125
Fieldnotes (pgs)	103	90	193
Interviews	25	29	54
Participants	32	29	61
Women	13	8	21
Men	19	21	40
Musicians	25	27	52
Non-Musicians	7	2	9
Songwriters	6	28	34

I now turn towards a fuller description of this data, beginning first with Winfield.

"Winfield"

Between 2010 and 2014, I have attended Winfield four times to conduct research, once for my master's thesis and three times for my dissertation. After four years of ethnographic research at the festival (approximately 50 days total), I have collected 103 pages of fieldnotes, most of which revolve around my day-to-day experience of festival life. For the purposes of my dissertation research, during my last two years at the festival (2013-2014), my fieldnotes began to focus on performances by "NewSong Showcase" winners on one of the mainstages, performances of original music on campground stages, performances on the new "Songwriters' Stage," a recent campground addition meant specifically for showcasing participants' original

music, and song circles that take place in the campground, though arguably less prevalent than jams.

I also conducted 25 interviews with 32 festival participants total (five interviews include two participants and one included three). Due to their extensive knowledge and experience at the festival, the vast majority of interviews took place with "veterans," although I did interview two "virgins" and provided autoethnographic reflections on my own "virgin" status. I interviewed participants staying within both campgrounds (Walnut Grove and Pecan Grove), however, the majority of interviews and observations took place in the Pecan Grove. Thirteen participants were members of my own established camp, one included three attendees who camped in the Walnut Grove, and the rest of my interviewees were located in various camps throughout the Pecan Grove.

All of my interviewees appear exclusively white, 13 are women, 19 are men, and all of them are from the United States, with the exception of one. The age of participants ranged from early/mid-thirties to late sixties and early seventies, the majority falling somewhere around fifty. As mentioned in previous chapters, the demographic of my interviewees is consistent with the demographic at Winfield, where older white males tend to be overrepresented at the festival, particularly in "jams." Moreover, after four years of attendance, I can count the number of all non-white participants I have seen on one hand. Finally, because the festival is composed of not only musicians (who play an instrument) but also non-musicians who still participate in the collaborative production of music in a variety of ways (singing/harmonizing, dancing, clapping, requesting songs), 25 participants were musicians who played regularly in the campgrounds and seven were attendees who simply enjoy listening or otherwise participating without an instrument. Additionally, two participants were extensively involved in behind the scenes

festival operations and five were creators and hosts of long-standing Winfield traditions, some of which span decades.

When it comes to songwriting and performance, out of 32 interviews, six are songwriters (three women, three men) and an informal conversation with an additional male songwriter was extensively documented in my fieldnotes. All are working musicians, meaning they regularly play music for money, four have won the "NewSong Showcase" more than once (the annual songwriting competition at Winfield), three have won other songwriting contests elsewhere, four are recording artists that have CDs for sale, and all have extensive experience playing original music in the campgrounds. Many others in my particular "festival family" have experience songwriting, recording, and performing, and while not interviewed formally or informally, have provided ample opportunities for other campers to enjoy their originals, some of which have become beloved Winfield traditions in and around my camp. Interviews were conversation-style, open-ended, audio-taped, consisted of approximately 30 questions, and typically lasted an hour, although some lasted two to three hours. Additionally, the number of informal conversations I have had throughout the years are countless, but, when particularly relevant, they were quickly noted as jottings and later expanded in fieldnotes.

Lastly, for supplementary data, I examined sources such as Walnut Valley Festival programs, the daily "newspaper" entitled the "WVF Voice," the official Walnut Valley Festival website, several websites dedicated to established camps, attendees' personal video footage from festivals past, photographs taken by myself as well as other attendees, and internet videos of the festival.

"Kerrville"

Between 2012 and 2014, I have attended Kerrville three times, spending approximately 75 days at the festival in total. Primary data includes 90 pages of fieldnotes, most of which involve my day to day experience at the festival, the cultural norms and standards of song circles, my experience attending contests and critiques, instances of heightened emotionality, and introspection surrounding my own emotions and performance. In my final year, I attended Songwriters' School, multiple performances surrounding the New Folk Competition (which I describe later in this section), song critiques, and Ballad Tree, much like Kerrville's version of an open mic. All of these venues allowed me to observe the performance and reception of original folk music, and song critiques allowed me to observe, and participate in, how songwriters "work" through songs based on commentary provided by a well-known and respected songwriter. Based on these experiences and observations, my fieldnotes began to focus on what it means to have a "good," "bad," "authentic," or "contrived" song, what it means to "work" on songs in an effort to "become" a "good" songwriter, how this compares or contrasts with stories of songs "arriving," how these two narratives co-exist with one another, how participants make sense of these co-existing narratives and tensions, and how all of the above relates to shared meaning around "authenticity" within folk and festival culture.

In addition to writing fieldnotes, I conducted 29 interviews with festival participants, 28 of whom are songwriters, 27 of whom are musicians, four of whom have extensive experience attending both festivals, and five of whom are heavily involved in the festival's general operation and maintenance. Nineteen participants are working musicians, 16 are recording artists, five have won the New Folk Competition, two have been finalists, two have been "screeners" (or those who narrow down the submissions to the 32 finalists who will be judged at the festival), and two

have served as judges of that contest. Additionally, interviews included three Songwriters'

School instructors, five students, seven mainstage performers, two authors of songwriting books,

nine songwriters who had won other contests around the country, and eleven who have attended

a variety of other song schools and workshops.

Out of 29 participants, all appeared white, all are from the United States, 21 are men,

eight are women, and ages ranged from early twenties to early sixties, the majority of whom

were in their forties and fifties. Much like Winfield, the demographic of my participants is

largely consistent with the older, male dominated character of such festivals and the folk musical

community writ large. While both places are similar in that they are almost exclusively white,

there do appear to be more women actively participating musically than at Winfield. All

interviews were conversation style, consisted of approximately 30 questions, generally lasted an

hour, although some lasted up to three hours, and with the exception of three interviews, all were

audio recorded and transcribed. Those that were not audio-recorded were a result of the

spontaneity of our interactions and my not having my recorder at the time, thus they were

described in my fieldnotes within hours following the conclusion of the interview.

Interviews were conducted wherever participants felt most comfortable, typically in or

around their camps, and unlike the segregated character of the Groves at Winfield, were scattered

about the ranch. Again, the number of informal conversations that took place over the years are

countless, but when relevant, they were recorded in my fieldnotes. For example, while many

members of my own "festival family" were not interviewed, they remain important characters in

my daily writings and my own festival story. Conversations about our experiences and my

research were never ending and absolutely priceless for many reasons, not the least of which was

support, encouragement, and a great deal of information on a variety of topics pertinent to festival, songwriting, and performance.

In addition to observation, participation, interviews, and autoethnography, secondary sources include Kerrville programs, emails from Kerrville's list-serve, Songwriters' School handouts, schedules, and instructor information, Kerrville's official website, participants' photos and video footage taken myself and by other participants, and several books written by participants surrounding songwriting or Kerrville itself.

Data Analysis

Following my inductive approach to data collection, I use a grounded theory (Charmaz 2006) approach to data analysis, as well as narrative analysis.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory analysis begins with coding as an important first step. For Charmaz (2006:43-45),

> Qualitative coding, the process of defining what the data are about, is our first analytic step…Grounded theory coding generates the bones of your analysis. Theoretical integration will assemble these bones into a working skeleton. Thus, coding is more than beginning; it shapes an analytic frame from which you guide the analysis.

For Lofland, Snow, Anderson, and Lofland (2006:200), "the essence of coding is the process of sorting your data into various categories that organize it and render it meaningful." According to a grounded theory approach, data analysis begins with initial or open coding, where the researcher goes through the data line by line, condensing and organizing it by lines, phrases, and segments (Lofland et al. 2006:201; Charmaz 2006). During initial coding, the researcher attempts to remain as theoretically open as possible. In other words, one does not impose theory on the data, but instead allows the data to guide the direction of one's theory. Here, researchers are equipped with the understanding that "in the process of carrying out empirical work it is

almost certainly the case that new ideas emerge and old ideas have to be reworked" (Pinch 2009:187).

Taken together, my research at both Kerrville and Winfield led to 1, 051 pages of transcripts and fieldnotes to analyze. In addition to the interviews themselves (and while it pains to me to actually admit it), transcribing all of my interviews was invaluable in terms of getting close to the data even before coding. The interview process, transcription, and writing fieldnotes had already prepared me, in some ways, to imagine what "codes" would be important. However, throughout initial coding and intimately reuniting myself with the data, I realized that, over time, I had become attached to certain narratives that I found to be most prevalent and interesting, leading me to be dismissive of others. Early in the analysis, I made judgment calls based on the believability of certain narratives, personally and academically, long before having talked to other songwriters with different narratives. I remembered conversations wrong, over or underemphasized themes, certainly forgot as much as I remembered, and many times, what I remembered was even wrong.

In this way, initial coding was a process of humbling discovery. While I followed Katz's (1999) recommendation to pay particular attention to participants' language, specifically metaphor, for me, initial coding did not occur "line by line," but instead in blocks of broader ideas: "personal identity," "creativity," "culture of folk genre," and "import of listener," for example. I coded my interviews and fieldnotes using the "review" function in Microsoft Word, but in a separate document, I kept an ongoing list of all codes used, putting together an outline of where I imagined it would all lead. By the time I had finished coding the final interview, I realized that so much had changed; some codes were irrelevant, others were new and not applied to earlier data. I threw away my 15 page outline and started over. Keeping my original codes, I

went back through the data and reapplied my list of codes again, at times expanding on previous codes or adding new ones. In many ways, initial coding happened twice for me, representing an important reminder that knowing the answers to questions before you ask them is not a productive (or inductive) endeavor. Upon having a list of codes I thought were repeatedly relevant and evenly applied throughout, I turned to focused coding.

During focused coding, the second and more selective phase of coding, the researcher applies codes in order to "pinpoint and develop the most salient categories in large batches of data" (Charmaz 2006:46). Focused coding builds on initial coding "by using a selected number of the expanding or more analytically interesting initial codes to knit together larger chunks of data; and by using these expanding materials as the basis for asking more focused and analytic questions" (Lofland et al. 2006:201). This phase, for me, meant identifying the most frequently used codes and expanding them into a variety of sub-codes. For example, the code that eventually became "songwriting as inquiry," was used over 200 times during the second phase of initial coding, and was broken down into various parts, such as "songs as independent," "making sense," "songs from dreams," "import of recorder," and "metaphor," such as "channeling," "arriving," and "happening," to name only a few.

Throughout this process, analytic memo-writing is another important strategy that allowed me to capture ideas and, quite literally, converse with myself about important or interesting topics, themes, and relationships that I thought of at any given moment (Charmaz 2006). While I had gained experience with this process during my thesis research, I cannot overstate the value of memo-writing for the purposes of this research. I have pages upon pages of hand-written and typed dialogue with myself about my thoughts, confusions, contradictions, frustrations, and epiphanies. I had a journal on my nightstand, in my purse, notes scattered about

the house, and often talked to myself on my phone's voice recorder application, if something struck me in the car. I even had a memo on a bar napkin that read, "You really need to reflect on why you are so hateful about Taylor Swift and how that relates to genre." Memo-writing provided a record of my thought process and, in many ways, was as productive as the coding process itself. In many ways, it was through coding and memo-writing that I came to understand how participants' songwriting process could be understood as a cultural narrative, which led me towards narrative analysis.

Narrative Analysis

In conducting a narrative analysis as it relates to stories around participants' songwriting process, I followed Loseke's (2011:253) guidelines for the empirical analysis of formula stories, or stories that involve "plots, characters, and morals [that] are recognizable and predictable to audience members" (Loseke 2011:253, emphasis in original). Such an analysis includes "establishing the story context, close reading, collecting and categorizing explicit descriptions, and unpacking symbolic/emotion codes." I paid particular interest to recurring "patterns *across*…passages that would be evidence of shared, stable understandings" (Quinn 2005:39, emphasis in original), and as Loseke (2011:256) suggests, "the more a trait occurs across stories, the more it reasonably can be read as an attribute of the prototypical character."

Throughout the narrative analysis, I examined the social context of the story (which has, in many ways, been presented in full in previous chapters), as well as what type of story is being told, by what author, and for what audience (Loseke 2011). I also paid close attention to story elements, such as plot line, main characters, setting, and the moral evaluations that arise and are attached to others who tell different "types" of stories. While not all analytic chapters involve the

results of a narrative analysis, chapter six most certainly does, and in chapter seven, I examine how storytelling through song is a predominant characteristic of "good" songs.

Analysis as Emotion and Dialectic

I also relied heavily on my emotions as "clues," "insights," "ways of seeing" (Bennett 2004), and essential "filters of perception" (Kusenbach 2003) that help in deciphering the social worlds of those we study (Bennett 2004:416). Because it is rigorous and systematic, and not in spite of it, and because emotion shapes and is shaped by culture, I find that analysis often comes in the form of an emotionally embodied response to what works and what does not, what fits and what is a stretch. In this way, because I am emotionally connected to my research in so many ways, my emotional responses also come with a willingness to reshape ideas and directions until it "feels" right throughout the research process. I am in complete agreement with Coffey's (1999:158) assertion that

> emotional connectedness to the processes and practices of fieldwork, analysis and writing is normal and appropriate. It should not be denied, nor stifled. It should be acknowledged, reflected upon, and seen as a fundamental feature of well-executed research. Having no emotional connection to the research endeavor, setting or people is indicative of a poorly executed project.

While it is important to me to appreciate and reflect on my own emotions, it is also important that my research "feels" right to my participants, who share an emotional connection to the festival, to songwriting, and to one another. Thus, I have also employed participant validation and member checks throughout the process. In 2011 (the one year I missed Winfield due to moving), a friend brought a hard copy of my thesis, which was then circulated around camp and signed by many members of my festival family, much like a year book. Different stages of my article on songwriting (forthcoming) has been read by Kerrville participants, and I have maintained ongoing dialogue about my research outside of the festival setting. Each year at

both festivals, there is always much talk about my research and progress, and one year at Kerrville, I took my dissertation proposal, although (understandably) only one participant read it. As of yet, I have not encountered a single complaint, revision, or issue, but instead only support, encouragement, congratulations, and agreement, which leads me to believe that I have done my part in honoring members meanings, emotions, stories, processes, and perspectives.

Lastly, it is also worth mentioning that although I have outlined my data collection and analysis strategies as if they exist in discreet, separate phases, I find these to be artificial separations. On the contrary, I understand data collection and analysis to represent a circular and dialectical process, where even writing fieldnotes is a process of inquiry and analysis (Richardson 2001) that reveals more questions and more answers, leading to more specific types of questions and more specific types of answers. In my experience, I find it equally true that even writing results themselves is an equally important form of analysis that often leads to much deleting and starting over. Following Atkinson (2013:62), I understand ethnography to represent a creative and innovative craft:

> [Ethnography] is creative work, dependent on improvisation that is in turn dependent on repetitive, disciplined work. The creative processes are dependent on that work: on careful, methodical, and repetitive activities. But, such work is never mechanical. It does not depend just on the precise replication of formulaic procedures. It depends on a creative, improvisatory engagement with several things. Like the craft worker, the ethnographer engages directly with her or his materials, physically and imaginatively. Embodied skills and educated eyes – the gaze of the craft – interact. Aesthetic and intellectual imaginations, traditions, and innovations interact in the craft of ethnography, just as they do in the ethnography of the craft.

My experience of coding, analyzing, interpreting, and writing about my data has been as frustrating and confusing as it has been rewarding. I do not think any attempt on my part to write as if it has been breezy is particularly productive or even believable, as it is the messy, contradictory, and taken for granted character of culture, emotion, and social life in general that

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drew me to sociology in the first place. Over the years of conducting this research, I have been wrong far more than I have been right, and I have returned to the drawing board many, many times. My experience with this research has not been simple or straightforward, but such is the pain and beauty of interpretive work and of simply making sense out of the "great blooming, buzzing confusion" (James 1890:462).

I do not think that it is a coincidence that research, from start to finish, is much like writing a "good" song. Sometimes it flows from some faucet within, while at other times it is like pulling teeth. Both are creative forms that serve similar functions in terms of organizing and making sense of experience, sharing information and getting a message across, and in some cases, attempts to "heal" or "change the world" in some way. Both can be frustrating and rewarding, memorable and emotional, directed towards specific audiences or directed towards the self. For me, it has been all of the above. The following chapters represent the results of such an experience, beginning with the process through which one becomes an "authentic" member of folk and festival culture.

CHAPTER FIVE

"GETTING IT": AUTHENTIC MEMBERSHIP IN FOLK AND FESTIVAL

CULTURE

"You *see* it. You're *getting* it. I can tell you *know*," smiles Brandon, Kerrville attendee (aka "Kerr-vert") of 35 years, as if I were traveling in the right direction on the winding road to "Got it!" Interestingly, similar to Brandon, comments such as "you either get it or you don't" and "some people just don't get it" are scattered about my transcripts. Embedded within these cultural assumptions, the folk and festival truisms that everyone already "gets," is an important question about "being" and "becoming" an authentic member of folk and festival culture: What, exactly, does it mean to "get it?"

In this chapter, I examine the attainment and enactment of the cultural knowledge necessary to successfully accomplish authenticity as a member of folk and festival culture. I first briefly describe the difference in emotional atmospheres at Kerrville and Winfield, which is largely a result of the type of musical interaction that is emphasized therein: the solo performance of original songs at Kerrville and the collaborative production of traditional folk music covers (songs written by others) at Winfield. Authenticity in both cases revolves around the knowledge and experience one needs to have in order to intelligibly and appropriately participate in these activities in ways that are validated by other members and thus true to the self. In other words, it requires knowing the interpretive rules of musical participation.

Second, in an effort to attend to the process of becoming an "authentic" member, I trace my experience transitioning from "outsider" to "insider" at both festivals, but with a specific emphasis on Kerrville due to my originally extreme "outsider" status. Third, I trace the shared meaning specific to the festival context itself that is a requirement for the enactment of authentic membership in the broader folk musical community.

Throughout this chapter, I attend to two overarching points: The first involves the "narrative work" of authenticity (Force 2009), which most often takes the form of stories about others who have breached the interpretive rules underpinning appropriate cultural membership in the folk and festival community. The cultural competency and shared experience necessary to tell and understand such stories, and thus (re)produce folk and festival culture, plays an important role in becoming a member, particularly when it comes to ensuring that new members are on the right path to "getting it." Secondly, if "authenticity" represents the attainment, enactment, and embodiment ("feeling") of shared knowledge and experience, then the process of becoming a member of the broader folk musical community, or the process through which one develops a personal identity embedded and confirmed within the larger collective, is also a process of learning what it means to be "authentic" within the specific cultural context of festival life.

Musical Interaction: Performance vs. Collaboration

The differences in musical experience and interaction at Winfield and Kerrville offer interesting comparisons between two points of interest: the "doing" of folk music as solo performance vs. the "doing" of folk music as collaborative musical interaction. Authenticity, as it relates to the former, has much to do with shared understandings regarding what folk songwriters do, the quality of original songs, and what it means to be an active and emotional listener,

whereas in the latter case, it is more focused on knowledge and experience pertaining to traditional folk music covers (familiar songs that were written by others) that invite collective participation. These musical experiences are not diametrically opposed, but instead represent two aspects of folk music culture more broadly, lending insight into how authenticity, identities, and emotionality are understood and experienced based on shared notions of originality, tradition, and their various intersections.

The question, "What keeps you coming back each year," is almost *always* met with a combination of "the music," "the people," "family," and "to recharge my batteries," at both Winfield and Kerrville. However, members often describe "full immersion in the Kerrville experience" as "sacred," "spiritual," "magical," "primal," "divine," and brimming with "inspiration" and "creative energy." Participants at Winfield, on the other hand, may "recharge their batteries," build their whole year around the festival, be inspired by amazing musicians, enjoy a "family reunion," and have tremendous musical and emotional experiences, but they are unlikely to use words like "primal" and "spiritual" when describing this experience.

Elsewhere I have written on the emotional character of musicians' festivals (Cobb 2011; Holyfield et al. 2013), how this emotionality is produced through musical ritual, and how it is then assigned to the festival site (Winfield) as a "place" (Cobb 2014). The same can be said of Kerrville, where heightened emotionality engendered through shared musical experience leads to feelings of liminality and communitas, both of which represent draws of the festival in their own right (Cobb 2104). The ways in which participants create and share that musical experience, however, represents an important distinction between festivals, one that largely accounts for the contrast in atmospheres, as well as the ways participants experience and express the emotion that characterizes those atmospheres.

"Winfield and this festival have a lot of similarities but then they're very different," says Roger, Kerr-vert of 20 years and occasional Winfield attendee since 1989. As he succinctly puts it, "Kerrville is a festival of singer/songwriters and a lot more around a theme of solo artists." Fernando, Kerr-vert of 36 years and two year veteran of Winfield, simply states, "There's a lot more jamming at Winfield." Despite attending other festivals, Lola, New Folk winner and Kerr-vert of seven years, describes Kerrville as the "Mecca" for songwriters. What makes Kerrville particularly "unique," "magical," and "spiritual," in addition to its dramatic setting and long duration, is its focus on songwriting and songwriters, or "solo artists," meaning one spends a lot less time "jamming out" on traditional folk music covers and a lot more time playing and listening to original songs, often in quiet attentive circles. As a result, the overall *feel* of the festival is significantly different, along with the ways participants express that feeling. In many ways, if Winfield were a bar, Kerrville would be the coffee shop: less party and less talking, more listening and more "feeling."

For Lucas, Kerr-vert of 29 years, the festival is a "spiritual experience" and "not a rowdy party at all… I go to other festivals and there's a different atmosphere even at other festivals." Maxwell, Kerr-vert of 27 years and Winfield veteran of 31 years, makes the following comparison:

> Winfield's a bluegrass jam with a bunch of kinda drunk kids banging into each other all night long. This is seemingly more conscious folks. I'm not saying that bluegrass pickers aren't conscious, but maybe I am. There's a difference between learning a song and playing the same little chord progression and run over and over until you have it, and it sounding really good. There's a difference between that and writing a song or being able to - Yea, I don't know. I mean really good bluegrass pickers impress me, but *this* [Kerrville] - there's not very many songwriter's circles [at Winfield].

In this excerpt, Maxwell identifies an interesting duality: songwriters vs. bluegrass musicians. In so doing, he effectively outlines the character of authentic folk music as

"conscious" and creative, as opposed to traditional and redundant, despite the large amount of skill it might entail.

Here the notion of "originality," of writing one's own songs, becomes an indicator of "real" folk music, as opposed to the type of folk-idealism (Gruning 2006) promulgated at Winfield. A similar point has been made by fans of the Beatles who wrote "real" (i.e., original) songs (Richardson 2005), as well as those who enjoy the "risky" creativity of songwriters such as Johnny Cash and Bob Dylan (Marade et al. 2007). Maxwell also touches on other shared understandings, for example, the importance of remaining sober enough so as not to "bang" into people all night and, most notably, the dearth of "songwriter's circles" at Winfield.

Maxwell's extensive experience at both festivals serves as a good example of the type of knowledge one must acquire and deploy to effectively enact authenticity at both festivals, thereby ensuring an authentic and validated "folk music" identity in both cases. When participants at Kerrville are asked to describe their favorite songwriters, Maxwell's name comes up more often than not. At Kerrville, he is a respected, accomplished, and award winning songwriter, one who is well known for writing "great" songs that move people deeply with insightful lyrics and beautiful melodies. At Winfield, on the other hand, Maxwell was recently, and only somewhat jokingly, described as "The Crusher," or in other words, as one who literally "kills" the mood with his songs. Killing the "mood," as I discuss at length in a later section, is a trait of those who lack the embodied knowledge surrounding music and emotion that is a requirement for authenticity at both festivals. However, as a result, Maxwell is far more likely to play mandolin at Winfield so that he can "jam" with others, or, upon request, play his more upbeat humorous tunes, all tunes that invite other musicians to jam with ease and recreate the festive hilarity that is Winfield.

Furthermore, although he adamantly identifies himself as a "songwriter," as a skilled guitar, piano, and mandolin player with much experience in the folk musical community, he has a great deal of the cultural capital necessary to deploy a vast number of traditional folk music covers and further secure his authentic membership at Winfield as well as Kerrville. Moreover, Maxwell's vast experience in the musical community renders him intimately familiar with the "interpretive rules" behind jam and song circle participation, an essential requirement for the enactment of folk and festival authenticity for both musicians and listeners.

In their study of authentic membership in the blues community, Hatch and Watson (1974:162), describe the "interpretive rules" of musical communities as "the socialized competences that must potentially be employed and displayed if a person is to warrantably claim *bona fide* membership of 'the community of blues enthusiasts' to other members in that circle" (emphasis in original). Given this definition, the interpretive rules that guide the operation of jams and song circles, and the ways in which participants engage in these activities, lends much insight into shared understandings embedded within folk music culture, as well as how they are embodied and deployed in ways that characterize authenticity and collective identity.

The Interpretive Rules of Jams: Playing Together

At Winfield, one's ability to musically engage the community and enact authenticity is dependent on the extent to which one knows the interpretive rules of jams. The collaborative, "do it yourself" character of folk music (Tachi 2004), the blurred lines between performer and audience (Lena and Peterson 2008; O'Grady 2013), and the traditional covers that members "know" and enjoy (Holyfield et al. 2013; Cobb 2014), all invite collective participation. Jams involve a group of musicians who sit or stand in a circle and actively play music together. While it technically takes at least two people to jam, there is seemingly no limit beyond this

requirement as long as members can maintain the jam. Participating musicians select songs one by one around the circle, either clockwise or counterclockwise depending on the ongoing rotation, and all musicians in the circle play along.

During the jam, the musician who selected the song will give out a number of "leads," or instrumental solos, to other participants in the circle. In most cases, everyone who can play a lead is offered the opportunity to do so, but one can pass on that opportunity if one so chooses. Playing a lead involves a high level of instrumental skill, so while many talented musicians choose to take them, there are also those who choose to play rhythm and back up the leads. A great variety of instruments are welcome, including guitars, mandolins, standup basses, fiddles, cellos, washboards, cajóns (a box-shaped percussion instrument), shakers, accordions, flutes, clarinets, trumpets, banjos, ukuleles, spoons ("bones"), and harmonicas ("harps"), all of which are instruments largely indicative of folk music culture writ large (Scully 2008).

Jams bring with them a host of shared understandings that are meant to ensure that everyone maintains their collaborative character while upholding a certain degree of musical quality. One night at Winfield, longtime veteran and Shoes camper Monty shares with me the "Ten Jammandments," a playful (yet true) list of guidelines for appropriate jam conduct. As he reads them aloud, we all have a hearty laugh and talk about how accurate they are despite their comic value, and he lets me borrow them so I can copy them in my fieldnotes:

THE TEN JAMMANDMENTS BY CHARLIE HALL AND ROBERT ROSENBERG: FROM THE FOLKNIK JAN/FEB 2002

1. THOU SHALT TUNE THY INSTRUMENT -There are too many good cheap tuners around not to do this.
2. THOU SHALT LISTEN- If you can't hear the lead instrument or vocalist, then consider yourself too loud.
3. THOUGH SHALT PASS- When handing off an instrumental solo, try to follow a pattern either clockwise or counterclockwise. If you want to skip the next solo or pass it on to the

next picker, be sure that the next person is aware of the handoff. No one wants to start his or her solo in the middle of a song.

4. THOUGH SHALT WELCOME OTHERS – Open up the circle if others want to join. The jam can't be too big if people are polite.
5. THOU SHALT SHARE IN THE SELECTION – Open up the choices of songs to the pickers around the circle. Don't monopolize the jam.
6. THOU SHALT TRY NEW STUFF – Once in a while a participant may suggest original material or one that is out of character with the jam. This is A-OK (refer to Jammandments #2 and #4)
7. THOU SHALT LET OTHERS KNOW WHEN YOU ARE NOT JAMMING – Bands may sometimes be rehearsing and may need to exclude non band members from jamming. If so, an explanation would be nice for the would be jammers.
8. THOU SHALT NOT RAID – Don't interrupt an active jam by calling musicians away to begin another jam. (Bob's note: Also, don't raid and take over a jam by having your full band suddenly decide to sit in on a jam and end up playing all your own songs.)
9. THOU SHALT KEEPTH THEY RHYTHM STEADYTH – Errors in rhythm are most difficult to overcome. Avoid adding or dropping beats. Play quietly if you can't keep up and pay attention (refer to Jammandment #2.)
10. THOU SHALT NOT SPEED – Do not start a song too fast for the others to play. Once everyone has had a turn to lead, then one may announce that the tempo is about to increase.

What makes the "Ten Jammandments" so funny to participants is that every "Jammandment" represents an unspoken truth that has, at one time or another, been breached by other participants. Failure to comply with the "Jammandments" simply makes one undesirable to play with, and these individuals are thus awarded the title of "jam buster," "jam hog," "circle jerk," or "circle jack," among other creative nicknames. Most importantly, all but three of them entail making sure that jams are collaborative and participatory, as well as doable, thoughtful, aesthetically enjoyable, and fun.

The fieldnote excerpt below, written in my fourth year of attendance at Winfield, provides a good example of breaching the Jammandments and "busting" the jam. In this excerpt, in the middle of a large and high-energy jam, a Winfield "virgin" misunderstands the definition of the situation around collective musical interaction.

Sitting next to Robert was a lovely young lady named Kora who could play the guitar well and had a delightful singing voice. However, she continued to play songs that

nobody knew and that most of us had trouble following: the chords were odd, they moved too quickly, the rhythm changed too suddenly. Sometimes she would forget the words and really stall the jam, or at least prevent others from working to keep it alive. Later, Celine [another virgin] told me that she didn't care for Kora's tunes, despite their delightful sound at times, because they broke up a really good jam, one that we were all so enjoying. In other words, Kora seemed less concerned with others' ability to follow along than she was with her own performance, and everyone, myself and Celine included, grew tired and bored. Every time she went to play a song, the jam would slowly begin to fall apart. No one said anything, it was just something you could sense, something you could feel in the jam as it slowly dismantled. After a while, people quit trying to play along altogether and instead chose to take the time for a smoke break, a bathroom break, a chance to grab a beer, and in that period, it just became the Kora show. Even Robert, who was arguably the best guitar player in that circle, eventually quit playing. After having tried and failed to save the jam, most of us wandered off in search of another.

This excerpt highlights a many important points when it comes to the shared meaning around "jams" as collaborative musical ritual, how this is a remarkably different form of musical interaction than solo performance (Kora would be better suited at Kerrville), and how it requires a specific type of knowledge to effectively accomplish this primary form of musicking. Such cultural knowledge is an important part of membership, particularly when this musical accomplishment is the principle indicator of authenticity for musicians and listeners alike.

At Winfield, cultural capital exists in the form of having a certain stock of knowledge that includes traditional folk music covers that all viable members of the folk musical community know. If one selects a song that is not familiar to other participants in the jam, which, as long as one does not "raid" and "monopolize" the jam with "originals" is permissible given Jammandment Six ("try new stuff"), one must at least play a song that entails traditional folk music chords, structures, and styles so that others can pick it up and play along. It is also worth noting that Kora did not "keepth her rhythm steadyth," further occluding others from the possibility of saving the jam. Listeners, too, were prevented from participating because no one knew any of the words (including Kora at times).

Along these lines, the below example from my fieldnotes took place during the same jam that Kora continuously, though inadvertently, "busted":

> I noticed that it was Brett's turn to play a song, and as soon as he started I realized that he was playing [his original] and began enthusiastically playing along with Lonnie and Paul. Although Shoes campers were totally familiar with this beloved and traditional camp song, others in the jam were certainly not. It is an original song, so it's not surprising that not everyone in the circle had heard it before or knew how to play along right off the bat. But the song is in in the holy trinity of chords - G, C, and D - and after a very short minute, everyone picked it up seamlessly. It's also rather repetitive and the chorus is a singalong, so even listeners [those not actively playing music] could participate easily (including Celine, who sang every chorus despite never having heard it before). It's fun, it's about Winfield, it's upbeat. Although it's an original, it had all of the things that make it a perfect jam song. Brett, per usual, pulled it off beautifully and the song was a huge hit.

Directly following this, yet another Shoes camper played an original song that followed the same chord progression and style, including a singalong chorus, and, like Brett, provided a solid platform on which all involved could participate with great ease and enjoyment. In other words, both players understood and adhered to the definition of the situation pertaining to collaborative musical participation.

These examples illustrate the importance of having the cultural knowledge necessary to ensure that one actively creates a musical experience that is first and foremost collaborative. Playing an unfamiliar song using unfamiliar chords and structures will prevent even the most skilled musicians from playing along, and quite effectively ruin the whole point of the festival: playing music together. The same holds true for non-musicians who simply enjoy listening, or those whom veterans refer to as "grinners" as opposed to "pickers." Grinners are just as embedded within folk music culture as pickers, and equally enjoy listening, dancing, and singing along to traditional folk music covers. Communal singing, in particular, is an important aspect of musical participation at Winfield, one that has played an important role in the development of a shared identity among members in the folk musical community (Ingram 2008). It is perfectly

fine for songs to be unfamiliar to some listeners, as long as such songs do not render the jam a painful failure, which depends on one's ability to confront others, listeners and musicians alike, with a sense of overarching familiarity pertaining to folk music culture.

The examples of Brett and Kora importantly highlight two additional points: that of "feeling" and that of storytelling. The ability to "sense" when things are falling apart, and more importantly, the role you have played in its falling apart, is another important aspect of membership, one that comes in the embodied form of "feeling" authenticity (Fox 2004). The leisurely conviviality of festivals (Sharpe 2008; O'Grady 2013), combined with the collaborative characters of jams, prevents participants from being rude or demeaning to others, which means that no one will openly remark about how another person is ruining the jam. Instead, it simply requires that one "senses" they are the problem and either quit playing, or, if one is aware of the breaches, quickly work to repair them. In contrast to Kora's lack of this type of cultural intuition, Brett certainly sensed that the jam was falling apart, and a result, selected songs that successfully, though momentarily, pulled it back together.

Kora's example also showcases the importance of both experience and storytelling when it comes to learning how to become an authentic member of folk and festival culture. For example, conversations following Kora's breaches were important learning experiences for Celine, as much as they served to reinforce and solidify members' meanings for Lonnie and me. The following day, I heard others in that particular jam politely joke about the experience via narrative recollections, most often in relation to where they wound up jamming afterwards. One's ability to tell these stories and have them understood by others is indicative of authentic membership to the extent that participants must necessarily "know" and "sense" that the unspoken rules of musical interaction have been breached in ways that compel storytelling.

In this way, stories such as these are claims to authentic membership, as much as they are pedagogical devices, or teachable moments, for newcomers. While they highlight and confirm festival membership, they also showcase underlying assumptions embedded within the folk musical community writ large: for example, the import of folk music covers deemed traditional, the character of folk music culture as collaborative and participatory, and the musical structure (chords, picking and strumming patterns, rhythm, etc.) of intelligible "folk music" (Hatch and Watson 1974; Neal 2007; McIntyre 2008a, 2010). Other stories, for instance, about the ghastly presence of electric instruments (which are prohibited at both festivals), or participants who are too inebriated to interact and play, or those who do not participate in the pragmatics of camp life, such as washing dishes, helping with dinner, and picking up trash, or those who are demeaning and rude to others, lend much insight into cultural narratives of "folk music" more broadly: it is played on acoustic instruments (unless one is Bob Dylan), and it is "polite" (Jammandment Four), dignified, and community oriented.

Because it is situated within the same overarching musical community, much of the same can be said of Kerrville. Becoming a member then, at both festivals, means "getting" that. However, the type of specific knowledge and experience required for authentic membership at Kerrville takes a drastically different shape. Instead of hinging on the type of participatory folk-idealism valorized at Winfield, where authenticity centers on reproducing or "sounding" like the original source (Peterson 2005), Kerrville is less about reproduction and more about originality through solo performance. Here authenticity is not only about one's ability to appropriately participate in song circles, but also about one's ability to actively listen, and thus genuinely appreciate original songs, quality songwriters, and the honesty and emotionality demonstrated by both.

In this case, while songs and songwriters are still necessarily housed within folk music culture and tradition, the emphasis here is not centered on repeating tradition, but instead on a culturally limited type of creativity necessary to reinvent it in ways that resonate with other members in the community. In order for this to be accomplished, one must know the interpretive rules in and around songs circles, or the mechanics behind musical interaction as solo performance. Like musical participation at Winfield, and as Morton (2005) noted in relation to traditional Irish jams, one's ability to intelligibly engage this musical activity in emotionally embodied ways, or ways that feel intuitive and "off the cuff," is a primary requirement for membership and belonging within folk and festival community.

The Interpretive Rules of Song Circles: Playing Alone

In rather stark contrast to the frenetic energy that circulates around jams, song circles are typically quiet places, although not always. Even if it is not a quiet circle, participants are expected to be quiet when someone is playing. Aside from the familiar "stink-eye" that taught me a thing or two about the rule of quietness, I have seen other participants be "shushed" or nudged. The traditional announcement around my own festival "family" is "Song on the floor!" which quite literally means "Shut-up now, someone is about to play." While there is much standing while "jamming out" at Winfield, song circles usually involve sitting, presumably because it is more intimate, unless the size of a circle grows to the point where there are no longer enough chairs to accommodate everyone, in which case one will stand to play. Some attendees travel around the campgrounds with small folding chairs, and most camps, particularly the larger ones, have plenty of extra chairs so that many musicians can sit in the circle. Much like jams, song circles vary dramatically in size, but the "rules" remain the same despite the number of musicians and listeners.

While the vast majority of circle participants accompany themselves on their own instruments, most usually guitars, there are relatively unusual occasions when songwriters who are not instrumentalists sing without accompaniment, or have practiced with others who can accompany them. Guitars are by far the most prevalent, as it is difficult to play a song on an instrument that is typically reserved for musical embellishments and leads (i.e., "jams"), such as mandolins, fiddles, and basses, for example. Each participant plays one original song at a time, unless they are asked to play another, before the turn is passed to their neighbor, and this proceeds in an orderly fashion around the circle. Depending on the type of circle, the instruments involved, and the skill of those who populate it, other musicians might take a lead if asked, and some, if familiar with the song, will sing harmonies along with the performer. More often than not, however, it is a solo performance, as there is a certain degree of danger involved in trying to participate and doing so badly.

As Sigmund, songwriting instructor and Kerr-vert of 16 years, proclaims, "Don't overstep anybody who's playing, you know. It's their song. If you can add to it, great, but don't overstep them so the person that's playing gets a chance to be heard." As with the rule of quietness, the point here is to create an acoustic environment in which one can hear what's being performed. When one is finished performing, others in the circle acknowledge the performance in a variety of ways, such as clapping to varying degrees or remarking on the song, and after a bit of chatter, and depending on the rotation (clockwise or counterclockwise), the next participant will play a song. Like during jam participation at Winfield, there are no terribly dire consequences for breaching the rules of circle decorum. Instead, those who repeatedly break the rules by being too loud or by playing multiple songs in a row, for example, are simply

undesirable musical companions. Worst case scenario, one might find oneself suddenly alone after others have left to find a circle populated by those who "get it."

Unlike "jams," the "rules" surrounding circle etiquette are not meant to invite and maintain collective participation, but instead purposefully enacted to ensure that songs are respected and heard. This is why it is so important not to "step" on songs, be loud, disruptive, and/or kill the emotionality of the circle, a byproduct of performance that is only created through an audiences' ability to subjectively apprehend the song. Thus, all aspects of circle participation for both songwriters and listeners are founded on the importance of active and purposeful listening. Perhaps Sigmund summarizes it best by saying,

> That's why I like this festival so much, because I could pull out a song and people will listen to it and say, "hey, that's a good song," and not have to worry about whether it's pleasing the pop culture people who might—"Well, I'm just an old fart with a guitar. He's just an old fart with a guitar." And that's one of the things that makes this place so magical is that it gives a place for people like me, great singer songwriters, to share the songs they write for themselves, to share with everybody else, and they're gonna dig it because we get it.

Sigmund reveals an analytical mouthful in this excerpt. Like Maxwell's commentary on songwriters vs. bluegrass musicians as they relate to the "authenticity" scale, Sigmund remarks on the dismissive character of "pop culture people" who do not "get it," which is set in direct contrast to those at Kerrville (i.e., members of the folk musical community) who do. "Getting it" in this case represents a specific brand of authenticity embedded within folk music culture writ large, which is here related to the character of festival participants as good listeners who "get" good songs. Interestingly, the opposition between the "popular" and the "traditional," where pop says nothing (inauthentic) and folk says everything (authentic), is rather an important theme that runs throughout much literature on music and authenticity in general (Etzkorn 1963; Tachi 2004; Crutchfield 2009; Frith 2009). Such a theme is clearly articulated above, where it makes sense

that "pop culture people" do not "listen," because when it comes to pop music, there is nothing to actually "listen" to in the first place.

For Sigmund, this type of authentic membership, or what Hatch and Watson (1974) refers to as "competent hearership," is highly related to the "magical" emotional atmosphere of the festival, an example of the type of cultural work accomplished by musical communities that encouragement the public display of emotion (Clarke et al. 2015). A similar point is made by Lucas, who says of participants at Kerrville, "Well, nobody really cares if you can dance to it or not. It's that you *listen* to it, so it's - that part of it is magical" (his emphasis). Interestingly, like Lucas and Sigmund, Barefield (2011) makes a similar point about the import of active listening, a trait of folk music listeners that distinguishes them from typical night club attendees ("pop" people). Perhaps Cooper, recording artist and Kerr-vert of 19 years, summarizes it best when he says,

> That's why we go through all that we go through, the chigger bites the everything, because it's a very unique experience here—and it's just a very—this is where they get born, this is where they get received, this is where you get to see what you're saying to other people….People are like *listening* with a capital "L." And it's not easy to listen to somebody go through that [particularly emotional experience] where it's like—you know? It's a brave thing, and the listeners, the people that don't play along and they are here to crouch down in the dirt and dust listening, you can't give them enough credit or stress enough how important they are, because they're pure, because they're not—they're not thinking about licks or chords you play, they're not thinking about the song. They are there to *totally* receive it. It's *huge*! We should have a concert just for the listeners! (His emphasis)

The overwhelming majority of songs heard at Kerrville involve both music and words, which means that what participants are actively listening to are lyrics, which are buttressed by music and thus further endowed with emotion (Howey 2012). Hence, they are listening in ways that enable them to "totally receive it," and not merely focus on "licks" and "chords," as the case might be at Winfield. As shown here, lyrics, listening, and resultant emotionality are of the

utmost importance to participants at Kerrville, all of which represent themes embedded within folk music culture. "Listening," it has been said, plays a crucial role in issues of identity (Bendix 2001), in the construction of subjectivities (Dibben 2006), and in the socialization of songwriters, many of whom "listened" so ardently in their youth that songwriting became an intuitive way of knowing and feeling (Long and Barber 2015). This is way jams are particularly rare at Kerrville; one cannot give songs their due attention when focused on playing music oneself.

Attendees at Winfield experience heightened emotionality through the collaborative ritual of jamming as cultural performance (Cobb 2014), but participants at Kerrville, on the other hand, are a prime example of the emotionality experienced and expressed due to a song's ability to resonate with their experience, or the intangible yet intimately experienced component of authenticity that takes the form of "feeling" (Fox 2004). For Clarke et al. (2015), this could perhaps best be described as the difference between the "merged subjectivity" accomplished by collaborative musical participation, and the "intersubjectivity" that results from a shared focus on a musical performance. As Cooper noted earlier, participants at Kerrville are "pure" (which could arguably be read as "authentic") to the extent that they are there to "totally receive," a notable quality of listening that he defines as "brave" and "not easy" as a result of the intersubjective and thus hyperemotional character of musical experience. One does not have to be a songwriter to participate in song circles or to become a member of folk and festival culture, but, at Kerrville, one does need to be an active, caring listener who takes others' songs seriously, hence the importance of knowing of and complying with the "rules" of song circles.

The importance placed on listening leads most members to describe the festival as composed of an altogether different "type" of person than they would normally encounter in their everyday lives. "Everyone pretty much is under a spell, a heavy spell, and we're asleep,"

laments Elizabeth, recording artist, working musician, and Kerr-vert of four years. "And then the people at this place are a little more awake. You know, present. You know, that's what breaks the spell is getting present." Similarly, Lola says, "We're engaged, and we're present, and we're here for each other," which is perhaps the reason why Maxwell earlier described participants as "conscious folks." Sentiments such as these have much to say about broader threads within the folk musical community and how they become enacted as signifiers of authenticity at the festival, particularly as they relate to widely circulating notions of folk music as "socially conscious." Said differently, folk music people are "paying attention." This character of folk music is highly represented in songs, in the mechanics underlying song circles, and as shown here, in the ways that participants understand themselves. (As a side note, it is also clearly represented at the festival when, for example, participants bring trees to plant or march against Monsanto.)

People who attend festivals typically already share certain identities and values that brought them there in the first place (Sharpe 2008). At Kerrville, participants understand each other as "conscious," "engaged," "present," and "awake," all of which point to important and qualifying themes embedded within folk music culture that, when shared as they are here, generate a sense of collective identity, a type of authentic membership that is set in direct contrast to others who do not "get it." The ability to "get it" in this sense entails one's ability to intelligibly participate in and around song circles, to be the type of person who sincerely listens to songs, feels openly and accordingly, and thus represents the overarching type of person who contributes to the "spiritual" and "magical" (read hyperemotional) character of the festival atmosphere.

Both song circles and jams necessitate the embodiment and enactment of cultural knowledge, or one's ability to "feel" and "know" in ways indicative of authentic folk and festival membership. Taken together, the interpretive rules around song circle and jam participation shed light on broader threads within folk music culture, such as the importance of community, musical interaction, originality and traditionalism, social consciousness, emotionality, and the significant emphasis placed on lyrics and listening, to name a few. That being said, in addition to knowledgeable participation in musical interactions, the ability to embody and engage these shared understandings, or to demonstrate authenticity in ways that are "true" to one's personal identity and validated by the collective, also depends on understanding the general pragmatics of festival life.

Said differently, one cannot accomplish authenticity more broadly as a member of the folk musical community without understanding the cultural mechanics behind the when, where, what, who, and how that makes such an accomplishment possible within the specific festival context. This is not to contradict previous claims that folk and festival membership are both mirrors and windows of an overarching type of authentic membership, but it is to say that there is a specifically situational component to how one understands and navigates both festival settings in ways that enable the confirmation of both.

To illustrate, I now turn towards an autoethnographic account of my transition from outsider to insider at Kerrville, although I do briefly acknowledge that process in relation to Winfield. Following this, I describe what "one needs to know" in order to accomplish authenticity at the festival and thus in the broader folk musical community.

From Outsider to Insider: The Rocky Road to Authenticity

Having already gone to Winfield and a great many "pickin' parties" before attending

Kerrville, I had an extremely difficult time with song circles and the overall festival experience

during my first year there. I had been initiated into folk musicians' festival culture, and had long

been a member of the folk musical community, but, in both cases, I still felt as if my claim to

authentic membership was questionable based on my inability to participate musically in this

setting. Interestingly, I had completely forgotten the feelings of isolation, intimidation,

frustration, and frankly, sheer boredom that I experienced during the first rocky beginnings of

my Kerrville experience. It was not until I began reviewing my fieldnotes that I remembered

there was indeed a time when I was not a member and did not "get it," and honestly, I found it a

bit shocking and somehow unsettling to recall those feelings. This led to a great deal of analytic

reflection about the process behind my membership, or the acquirement and embodiment of

shared meaning that (finally) rendered me authentic in the eyes of others, and thus within my

own.

Becoming a Member and Festival Family

To begin, I fell in love with Winfield in 2009 and it is been a love affair ever since.

Becoming a member of that community was also a process which essentially involved

developing relationships and learning how to play guitar. I came back my second year knowing

many folks and playing some guitar, and the rest is mostly history. In that respect, my first year

at Winfield is not an altogether different story, but there are some principle differences that

shaped my initial experiences. I had already learned of jams due to "pickin' parties" and I had

met others who attended Winfield, so I was not altogether lost at the festival and had somewhat

of a grip on what to expect (which, as a side note, further speaks to the relationship between folk music and festival membership).

My first year at Winfield was colored by my largest frustration, which was not yet being skilled enough on the guitar to participate in jams. As an accomplished pianist without a piano, I felt like a viable yet empty handed addition, one that was consistently left out of the fun despite being a musician. It was not until my third year that I was proficient and confident enough as a guitarist to participate in most jams, and after that, I felt like a welcome and valued member of the community. I did not have to learn to jam—I had much experience as a participant and ethnographer watching others succeed and fail—I just had to learn to play guitar and learn some covers. So, I did. My ability to effectively engage in this type of musical interaction meant that I quickly developed new relationships and continued to strengthen the old, which led to more playing and a more solidified authentic identity as a member of the folk and festival community.

However, while one might be lucky enough to scare up a jam at Kerrville, the ability to collaboratively engage others musically with traditional folk music covers does not an authentic "Kerr-vert" make. As previously mentioned, Kora, for example, would perhaps be significantly better received at Kerrville. Participating in song circles as a musician requires that one be a songwriter, which was my first problem. I had very few songs I had written at the time, none of which I was prepared to play in front of an audience, much less by myself in a touchy-feely environment. Not only was I uncomfortable playing my few, shaky originals alone in front of an audience, it was an audience composed of people I did not know who were infinitely better songwriters and musicians than I was. Some even go so far as to say that Kerrville is composed of "the best songwriters in the world." I wanted nothing more than to play, to jam, to participate

in some way, but not only did I not have the songs, but I was terrified of song circles. Initially, I grew tired of sitting there listening to song after song after song; I grew bored.

Aside from these issues, there were a variety of other factors that contributed to my utter discontent my first year at Kerrville. I did not have my beloved guitar with me because it was under repair, which meant that I had to borrow from others, and as a result, felt disruptive, uncomfortable, and empty handed as a so-called "musician." Also, Kerrville is a very dark place at night, far darker than Winfield, so the few times I did play in the evening (the premier time for song circles), I had trouble seeing my hands and couldn't play, which of course led to feeling embarrassed in front of notoriously excellent musicians. Additionally, there were the usual frustrations of being an outsider: I did not know where anything was, I did not know what anything meant, I did not know about Kerrville traditions, much less where or when they were. In short, I shared very little meaning and knowledge with anyone there (aside from being a music lover), and as a result I was logistically and culturally disoriented. I was the antithesis of "authentic."

Thus, my initial fieldnote entries pretty consistently look like the following example, which was written on the third night of my first year at Kerrville:

> It then becomes my turn to play a song, so after tuning my guitar I drudge up the courage to play "Take it Away" [an original], somewhat shakily. I realize about halfway through the song that this damn guitar I've borrowed is terribly out of tune, because it will *not stay* in tune, but I finish the song and immediately begin fiddling with my tuner. Everyone claps quietly, the "golf clap" – not a good sign. Totally embarrassed I sit quietly and listen to all these other brilliant songs. When it becomes my turn again I say, "I would just play covers and ruin the mood," which seemed to be enough to pass the buck to someone else…It's not long before I realize that this is another one of those circles that makes me uncomfortable; all New Folk winners or finalists, all original songs, all seem to strum a rather quiet, somber, thoughtful, and profound chord. Pun intended. All of us "listening." And bring on the familiar ostracism. Tonight, I miss Winfield. Tonight, I miss Monty and Elvis, Dan and Greg, Paula and everyone else. Tonight I miss jamming and tonight I am bored. I don't know if it's my lack of suitable songs, but I'd rather be jamming instead of listening to everyone's originals for hours

upon hours. And I'm not really sure why we can't do both: jam *and* play originals. I find this confusing. The feeling that I'm an outsider seems pretty familiar and really unpleasant. It really, really bothers me when I feel this way and I don't like who I become when I *do* feel it: introverted and sorry for myself. Not a good combination.

This example highlights a handful of interesting comparisons between Kerrville and Winfield that it took me quite some time to "get," and that I discuss more thoroughly below. For example, as previously mentioned, I did not dawn on me until much later that the reason participants do not play originals *and* jam at the same time, despite the stylistic cultural conventions of folk music that render it simple to do so, is because when one is jamming, one is not actively listening to the song, much less to the most important aspect of the song: lyrics. I had not yet attained the cultural knowledge needed to understand that this type of musical interaction served specific purposes for both songwriters and listeners that hinted on the character of folk music as creative, lyric driven, and emotionally engaging, as opposed to the enactment of musical "authenticity" I had so easily accomplished at Winfield. I also touch on the uncomfortable vulnerability that accompanies solo performance, as well as the feeling that my song was not well received by others, and thus I was not validated as a songwriter who wrote authentic songs. As a result, I had a difficult time claiming the identity of "songwriter," even though I was certainly a "writer" of "songs."

This example also showcases how some song circles just are not for everyone and one must learn where one is welcome based on the mood of a circle, the notoriety of songwriters in the circle, the inclusivity/exclusivity dynamic that characterizes certain camps, and the skill level required to participate, all aspects of festival membership I more fully describe below. In this case, I found myself lacking skills, songs, and confidence in a circle populated by winners of the New Folk Competition. Worse, I learned later that the camp in which this occurred was not well known for welcoming those who lacked any of those qualities. Perhaps most importantly, at least

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for the time being, is my mentioning of how I missed my Winfield "family" who made me feel comfortable, knowledgeable, and validated.

The process of "getting it," of going from outsider to insider at Kerrville, started to take shape relatively deep into my first three weeks at the festival. Without reservation, the single most important part of becoming a member was getting to know people and slowly piecing together my own "Kerr-family." As I started developing relationships with others, I grew more comfortable, and as the intimidation faded, I played more. The more I played, the more friends I made, the more those friendships deepened, and the more comfortable I became. Many of the relationships I made that first year were built around a willingness to jam, or at least be open to covers as opposed to *only* originals. As I grew more comfortable around certain people, I did eventually begin playing my few originals as well, and suddenly I was not bored anymore (though still frustrated I did not have my guitar). Near the end of that first year, I found myself surrounded by people who I knew had become deeply meaningful to me, just like at Winfield, and I began to feel at ease when claiming the identity of "songwriter" and "Kerr-vert." Claiming these identities meant that I listened more closely to others' lyrics, to their stories, to who they were as artists and people, and suddenly I often found myself overwhelmed with emotion and increasingly relaxed when sharing it with others.

Developing the musical "family" that characterizes festival life brought with it a host of other solutions to my previous disorientations. My newfound friends, recognizing my Kerr-virgin status, were excited to tell me *all* about the festival; thus, I quickly learned about traditions and language, politics and rumors, navigating the ranch, the "do's" and "don'ts," camps to avoid and people to hear, and a plethora of other random tidbits in the form of stories, general information, and entertaining hearsay. Moreover, if I felt like a certain song circle was not for

me, or that someone was being an insufferable snob (rare, but possible), I would go find any one of the many people that made me feel at home. Instead of feeling trapped and ostracized, I now had possibilities and knew the lay of the land. Thus, my initial fieldnote entries from my second year consisted of the following, which was written following my first night at Kerrville:

> After getting set up, chatting some, and a little relaxing, we headed down to see Fernando and Archer. And I must say that I have never been so overjoyed to see two people – all of my nervousness and anxiety melted away as I first saw them from across the meadow. It all of a sudden felt just like home where I was instantly accompanied by family. Out of everyone at the festival, I feel most comfortable around Fernando, and I am reminded of how powerful festival family can be, how joyful it is to see their faces and hear their voices after not having seen or heard them in a year. It wouldn't be Kerrville without them for me, and I am so grateful to feel finally at home in their presence. Shortly after arriving, Fernando sat at his piano and we jammed on a couple of bluesy tunes. In that moment I was entirely, wholly happy, content. Perfect. The combination of music and good friends began its nourishing. And it only got better, because this time in the meadow brought with it Brandon, whose arms I just fell into immediately. We chatted for a minute and immediately started joking about the festival and life in general. We wound up sitting in a circle around Fernando's tent and I play "Prayer to Music" [a recent original]. Brandon and Fernando were incredibly supportive and encouraging, which just made my heart soar. We then got a good jam cranked up with both originals and covers. I was just thrilled to be a part of it; the night, the songs, the jam, were magical. It was absolutely perfectly magical.

The above excerpt, and my initial experiences more broadly, highlight a broad and essential theme that runs throughout folk music and festival culture: the importance of community. It is not a coincidence, although completely unintentional at the time, that I used members' language to describe the first night of my second year: "powerful," "nourishing," "family," "home," and not just "magical," but "perfectly magical." I also began using words like "comfortable" and "content," important emotional states at a festival built around what is quite literally a non-stop solo performance of "emotional truth."

In stark contrast to my first Winfield experience, becoming a member and developing a "family" at Kerrville started from absolute scratch. This led to a great many problems that impeded my claim to authenticity, particularly when it is here conceived of as knowledge, shared

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experience, and emotional resonance, both to the music and to others. This of course is further compounded by the character of authenticity as necessitating education and validation by other members in the community (Richardson 2005). Given this, and to put it plainly, one cannot have shared, emotional experience with others, who then validate one's membership, when there *are not* any others, at least in the beginning. Moreover, and at Kerrville, when authenticity is further defined by the degree to which one writes "good" songs, or at least by the type of cultural capital required to know a "good" song when one hears it, it is seemingly impossible to find oneself in a comfortable (much less authentic) position at the festival without developing a community in which one can be at ease engaging musically and emotionally.

As I discuss at length in chapter seven, this is all the more important when the degree to which songs are perceived as "authentic" is directly related to the extent that they are "honest," "vulnerable," and "emotional," meaning that when one is performing or listening to a performance, one rather feels a certain degree of emotional nudity, or at the very least feelings of raw and blatant exposure. Again, like Winfield, the point is always about making music; without songs and songwriters, there is no festival and there is no community. Without community, there is no authenticity, nor is there a path to achieve it, claim it, or have it confirmed, and precisely the same can be said of Winfield. Becoming a member, then, first involves developing a "family," people who anchor the experience and serve as a source of cultural knowledge, comfort, inspiration, and encouragement.

The story of Phoenix, recording artist, working musician, and Kerr-vert of 5 years, provides a particularly salient example of the importance of community when transitioning from outsider to insider. Phoenix first came to the festival with a friend eight years ago, stayed for two days and says of his initial experience, "I didn't feel like I got anything out of it. I felt like I

didn't understand what was going on here." Following persistent advice from another good

friend, who literally moved across the country "because she loved the community so much," he

made the decision to return to the festival "to really check it out." He says of his first

experiences,

> I was wandering around one night and I was feeling pretty lonely actually. I had camped out in the sunny, bright, hot meadow, and I was by myself, and I didn't know anybody. And I'm wandering around and I was a little depressed, because I was still like not finding my groove, and I'd been here like three days or something. And you know I was really wanting something to like - like to find people that I really, you know, gelled with, or identified with, or something. So I'm wandering around looking for an opportunity to play my music. I didn't know anything about song circles or – Nothing. So I get up to some random camp and I suddenly run into this trio of people singing for an audience. And I'm like "Well, that's interesting." And I look at the guy in the trio and I know him [from a party in his home town several years ago].…So here he is and I go up and I introduce myself and he's like, "Yea, I remember you!" He's like, "Where are you camped?" And I'm like, "In the hot, sunny meadow." And he's like, "That won't do." And he basically took me in, into this camp, and he introduced me to Avery and everybody and from that moment I was family, and it was pretty, pretty amazing.

As seen here, Phoenix and I shared very similar emotional states our first year at Kerrville:

"lonely," "depressed," and not getting "anything out of it." Then, rather suddenly, the experience

became "amazing" when we found our "family," the community that enabled us to play music

and thus to "get it."

Another important point that Phoenix makes regards his total lack of familiarity with

song circles. This means that even as a working songwriter and recording artist, he had not yet

acquired the cultural knowledge required to enact his authentic folk songwriter identity at

Kerrville, despite having it extensively validated in many other arenas. However, following his

initiation into the community, he effectively learned how to navigate song circles, which allowed

him to engage in the principle form of musical interaction required for the confirmation of one's

authentic folk and festival identity, as much as it served to forge and strengthen the "familial"

ties that enable that type of validation. Said differently, while Phoenix's authenticity as a

songwriter in the folk musical community had been confirmed outside of the festival context, enacting that authenticity at Kerrville required a different type of shared meaning specific to that context. Knowledge of both is a requirement for the confirmation of both at the festival.

In addition to the mechanics behind song circle participation, the process of becoming a member at both Winfield and Kerrville involves learning of the shared understandings specific to the festival context itself, as well as the activities that take place therein. Such knowledge represents an essential component of festival membership that is a requirement for the enactment and accomplishment of authenticity as it relates to folk music culture more broadly.

What One "Needs to Know": Authentic Membership at Festivals

The system of meaning pertaining to general festival participation at both Kerrville and Winfield, as well as the shared experience that generated that system, can be entirely overwhelming to newcomers. Despite their expansive prevalence, and true to interpretive conceptualizations of culture, they undoubtedly represent the things that all members "need to know" in order to participate in sensible and meaningful (i.e., "authentic") ways. "Virgin" years at festivals are processes of initiation, where one often learns how to appropriately navigate their festival and musical experience through accidental breaches and stories of such breaches. It is worth noting that, because I refer to both Winfield and Kerrville in this section, when I use the word "circle" as opposed to "song circle," I am referring to both "song circles" and "jams."

For example, song circle participation at Kerrville often requires knowing of certain traditions pertaining to those circles. One established camp hosts a song circle specifically reserved for New Folk finalists who did not make the top six. This only takes place one night of the festival, but if one is not a finalist and stumbles upon that particular song circle in hopes of playing, they will be sorely disappointed and perhaps rather mortified. Also, some camps have

memorial circles that take place yearly on certain nights and are dedicated to friends and family who have passed. It is helpful to at least have an idea about when and where these are, lest one wander up to such a circle to perform their latest song about trains.

The same can be said of becoming a member of Winfield and attaining the cultural knowledge necessary to effectively negotiate the inclusive or exclusive character of certain jams in certain Groves. For example, the degree to which bluegrass is played at Winfield represents a principle difference between the Walnut Grove and the Pecan Grove, where only the most serious "bluegrass pickers" camp in the Walnut Grove. Those in the Pecan Grove who are experienced and respected enough to play in the Walnut Grove often sit together in small circles during the day to practice before making the trek over at night, meaning that even in the Pecan Grove there are certainly exclusive bluegrass circles scattered about the festival. It is not appropriate to "bust" such a jam by misunderstanding the definition of the situation pertaining to a "practice" session, one that is inclusive only to those with intentions to engage purist bluegrass (which, as it were, happens to be Jammandment Seven).

Similarly, picking up on certain "moods" of song circles or jams is an important aspect of participation and membership that is largely related to one's ability to culturally embody, or "sense," what brand of music, emotion, and interaction is taking place. Such a claim largely resonates with Fox's (2004) notion of "authenticity" as "feeling," where one simply knows it when they hear and feel it, and as such, it does not require articulating. In this case, the cultural knowledge required to pick up on "moods" has much to do with ones membership in the folk musical community more broadly, particularly as it relates to one's experience with music, emotion, and the embodied ways of "knowing" that accompanies the relationship between the

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two. However, one might be inclined to think that festivals are convivial places where one can play whatever one wants to play despite the feeling of the circle. This is decidedly not so.

"Moods" are characterized by the feel of the songs being played therein, which leads to more songs with a similar feel. This does not mean that circles do not slowly take on different shapes over time, but it is to say that in a circle characterized by silly, humorous songs, it is nothing short of abrupt and uncomfortable for someone to play a song best suited for a funeral. Also, the mood of a circle has much to do with where it is and who is in it, important knowledge that accompanies becoming a member, as showcased in the previous example about bluegrass jams in the Walnut Grove. For a Kerrville related example, late night song circles at "Crow's Nest" are typically slow, quiet, pensive, and lyrically driven, often involving a philosophical depth that encourages experiences akin to meditation. At best, it would be alarmingly inappropriate, at worst, totally appalling, to kill the "spirit" of that circle with, for example, an upbeat song about "sexting."

Such a mood would also be damaged by the introduction of sounds that simply hurt the ear, particularly when a circle is characterized by skillful songwriters, musicians, and vocalists. This too is related to one's experience and membership in the broader folk musical community, at least to the extent that one knows what "skill" is and can sense that perhaps one is not up to snuff. Songwriters and musicians with impressive abilities collaboratively, though not always purposefully, create a certain atmosphere around skill level, and bad musicianship, such as singing or playing out of tune, hitting the wrong chords, or missing them altogether, will undoubtedly kill the mood.

The heightened emotional atmosphere at festivals cannot be (re)created and sustained by music that is simply uncomfortable to listen to; thus, in many cases, it is not so much about skill

and notoriety as much as it is about massacring the emotional experience. Take, for example, the fieldnote excerpt below, which is purposefully vague and partial, even as it relates to the songs, written following such a "massacre":

> Right before I went to bed, [a participant] walked up and played a song…And holy God it was just the most amazing song I've heard in - I don't know how long. [Their] voice was just unbelievably beautiful and every word of that song was so perfectly placed, so perfectly sung. In that moment, it was just the most perfect song in the world, and as I thought about [things in the song that resonated with me], tears streamed out of my eyes and down my face, and I tried not to have an emotional breakdown. I literally cannot describe the moment. And everyone had one, tears flowing everywhere. It was one of those moments where after the song ended, we all just sat there staring at each other bleary eyed. It was that sacred silence following a song that ruins everyone. And then [another participant] TOTALLY slaughtered the mood with [a] terribly played and horribly written song while [another participant in the circle] just cradled [their] face in [their] hands and eventually mouthed the word "bad." Later, I told [that participant] that, in sociology, we talk about the importance of impression management and we both chuckled. I hate to be mean, but really - Just terrible. Everything about it was terrible. And now that [it's so obvious], I'm not sure I can listen to anything else of theirs without laughing. I feel guilty, but I just can't help it. Luckily the next song [they] played found me [walking away], so I could chuckle to myself while [another participant] just shook [their] head, maybe a little ashamed of me, but smiling, because [they] knew.

In chapter seven, I explore in great depth what about these particular songs rendered them "perfect" and "terrible," and how members in the circle collectively shared that evaluation as members of the folk musical community, but for the topic at hand, this experience resulted from a lack of appreciation about when and where it is appropriate to play certain songs in certain circles characterized by certain moods that have been generated by certain levels of craftsmanship. Though I have grown over the years as a songwriter and musician, I am still exceptionally sensitive to this issue, particularly because ruining the mood of a circle will literally highjack participants' emotional experiences, and suddenly, things do not feel so "spiritual" and "magical" anymore.

The same can be said of Winfield, where there are certain jams that take on a hyperemotional and seemingly transcendent quality that can easily be damaged if one is not

capable of "sensing" that. For most, it only takes one or two instances of obvious mood killing to learn that there are certain times, places, circles, and jams where perhaps it is best just to listen. As shown in the previous example, people tell stories that survive long after the experience has concluded, and, to this day, other participants and I still joke about the above mood "slaughter" story. Needless to say, joking and laughter is not quite the response that one hopes for following a performance that was seemingly meant to invoke a rather different emotion. These stories serve to reinforce the importance of attending to "moods" for veteran members as much as they serve to make newcomers (myself included) extremely cautious about violating this rule.

Another important aspect of membership regarding "moods" and "feeling" pertains to feeling rules that circulate around Winfield and Kerrville, and how to appropriately express that emotionality. Both festivals are extremely emotional places, especially Kerrville, where everyone is quiet, attentive, and listening. As a result, it is not at all unusual to find oneself absolutely overwhelmed by a song, or sitting in a group of people who are similarly overcome. Because we are all so infinitely taken by music, the display of heightened emotionality is very much understood and encouraged at both festivals, far more than in one's daily life. This type of openness to emotionality, however, is not without conditions. For example, one must maintain circle decorum, and thus sobbing uncontrollably is problematic to the extent that it disrupts the performance.

Also, because festivals overall are supposed to be fun, joyful, and playful, negative emotions such as anger, sadness, and jealousy, especially if expressed with consistency, are not welcome, as they tend to seep into the communal and "magical" experience others so enjoy. In this case, excessive crying is absolutely normal as long as it relates to one's embodied response to the music. Actually, such a response is largely understood as a huge compliment for many

musicians and songwriters, as songs that evoke emotional responses are often understood to be "good songs." Otherwise, people will tell stories and word will definitely circulate about how certain people are simply not a pleasant or likeable person to be around and are thus to be avoided. Furthermore, the degree to which participants express emotionality is highly contextual and quite related to feeling rules outside of festival life; it would be strange to have a nervous breakdown in a circle characterized by silly or humorous songs, or to laugh uncontrollably in a memorial circle. Similarly, and most often, the extreme emotions expressed as a result of musical experience are typically witnessed by members of one's festival "family," as opposed to complete strangers, although this is not always the case.

Like most aspects of festival membership, the degree to which one's perceivably bad behavior is tolerated has much to do with the context in which that behavior occurs. Along these lines, despite understandings of festivals as "safe" and "supportive," there are certain people and places that are not open to beginners and/or non-professionals, and people are not particularly shy about making it known. At Kerrville, because the festival is populated by so many accomplished, professional, and at times, famous singer/songwriters, it is not surprising that some circles are characterized by a different type of membership altogether, one that many participants describe as "the ego thing." Take for example the following interview excerpt from Marjorie, recording artist, working musician, and Kerr-vert of 17 years:

> One thing that's very difficult at a festival is when you are playing and somebody gets up and walks away, that happens all the time. Some people have to pee, some people don't care for a song you're playing, and you know, the ego thing here—that can be tough. Especially, you know, validation, or "I can't play at that camp because they don't like me." That happens a lot… And I do feel pretty comfortable everywhere, but I don't go to [certain camps]. I mean, why would you? "Well who are YOU," kind of thing. Like not getting eye contact from people, "I can't see you." They look right passed you.

An important point made in this excerpt has do to with the importance of "validation." In this case, having one's authentic identity as "songwriter" and festival member is dependent on the extent to which participants are willing to welcome others in their camp and listen to their songs. This excerpt is an exceptional example of how enacting authenticity as a member of the folk musical community, particularly as a songwriter, has most everything to do with the cultural knowledge that pertains to authentic membership within the festival culture itself. It also highlights the importance of shared understandings regarding song circles as they relate to both types of membership, namely the importance of listening and how listeners who care about others and their songs are those who are categorized and validated as "getting it." Behavior such as leaving a circle while others are performing, or "looking right past" others, is decidedly not conducive to the attentive environment that members duly promote at the festival.

Becoming a member then, and being able to enact authenticity in both folk and festival culture, means knowing who and where these perceivably less authentic people and camps are. This does not take the newcomer long at all, as stories about such experiences and this brand of condescension incessantly abound at both Winfield and Kerrville. So much so, in fact, that others who have written on Kerrville have quite literally outed these camps and their inhabitants. If one is unfortunate enough to have not received this narrative warning, then they will undoubtedly learn it on their own and become narrators of such a tale themselves. Interestingly, however, the people and camps that embody the so-called "ego thing" are entirely aware of the stories and opinions that circulate among other campers. It does not seem to faze them at all; instead, they return to the festival every year, because, like everyone else, they associate with other attendees who share their brand of authenticity.

It is also perhaps worth noting that the above example was experienced by a woman, although plenty of men have experience with the "ego thing" as well. As a young woman in an environment largely populated by aging white men, I have experienced sexism, ageism, and a type of invisibility as a musician that other female attendees have similarly experienced. I have, at times, endured overt commentary about my body and sexuality, been quite literally cut out of a circle by men who sat directly in front of me, been interrupted and silenced during conversations, and had my authenticity as a folk music enthusiast openly contested due to my age (supposedly, I am simply not old enough to appreciate the gravity of Pete Seeger and Bob Dylan due to my lack of life experience). Other younger attendees at Kerrville have confided that they have grown weary of the fundamental traditionalism showcased, rewarded, and adamantly reinforced by "old dudes" who are simply unwilling to change with the times and be open to more contemporary notions of what constitutes "folk music."

Experiences such as these are definitely more the exception than the norm, and typically, festivals are an exceptionally welcoming and nurturing place for songwriters, musicians, and listeners. Minor infractions in circle etiquette, such as monopolizing a circle by playing or selecting multiple songs, or completely wearing out a song by overplaying it, are typically met with a smile, or at worst, a half-hearted eye roll. Participants who feel dismissed, insulted, and/or silenced by others as a result of age, gender, and sexuality simply avoid those who are dismissive, insulting, and silencing. Overall, the atmosphere of Kerrville is one of support and encouragement. As Marjorie puts it, "We have to help each other here."

The notion that we "have to help each other" seems to echo a familiar claim that "we" are rather a different "type" of person, such that we have to stick together. In sum, and to come full circle, people's ability to stick together, to have one's identity confirmed as part of the "we," is

built not only on one's ability to appropriately engage in and around musical interaction, but also one's knowledge of festival culture itself that enables the enactment of both an authentic folk and festival membership. In this section, I have argued that this entails developing a festival "family" that serves as a source of the comfort and information necessary to navigate the festival in ways that make sense to other folk and festival members. Such knowledge includes learning the "how's" of participating in song circles, knowing of traditions, moods, feeling rules, and certain circles and camps that are unwilling to confirm or validate other's membership for "inauthentic" reasons.

Discussion

This chapter can largely be summarized as an examination of the accomplishment of authenticity in specific cultural settings that are driven by musical interaction and thus emotion. As such, this chapter explores the affective, social, and cultural "work" accomplished by communities in which emotional expression is embraced and encouraged (Clarke et al. 2015:75), particularly as it relates to authentic membership and identity. This chapter has also somewhat followed in the footsteps of Benzecry (2009), who, in his work on the ways in which people both formally and informally become opera fans, extends Becker's (1953) pioneering work on becoming a marijuana user to include the importance of various settings in which this "becoming" takes place.

In so doing, Benzecry (2009) also directs attention away from the prevalent interest on cultural production and initiation, and instead towards the ways in which people initially engage, interact, and attach meaning to "taste." While most of my participants were already initiated into the folk musical community, meaning that initial attraction was not of principle interest, and while I am less concerned with theoretical frameworks related to the intertwining of structure

and taste, my hope is that I have accounted for the process through which one becomes a member of the festival community in ways that enable them to enact their authentic identity, personally and collectively, within folk music culture writ large.

This chapter also represents a call to pay homage to the complexities of how we understand, use, and feel music by attending to more "atomized" studies focused on "small-group musical experience" so as not to reproduce the general scholarly tendency to diminish that complexity (Rice 2003) by neglecting context, interaction, and emotion. The intricate and interpretive ways in which participants at Winfield and Kerrville engage in musical interaction as a form of small group musical experience has much to reveal about the broader character of "authenticity" and identity as it relates to folk music culture. It also showcases how musical performances "in the now" represent opportunities for the study of "the accompanying communication, embodiment, emotion and expression" of participants who are knowledgeable and actively engaged in these specific cultural contexts (Morton 2005:661-662).

Following this, and perhaps most importantly, this chapter has largely been founded on Force's (2009:305) empirical and theoretical contributions regarding authenticity as accomplishment, as well as his argument regarding the importance of attending to the settings in which this accomplishment ensues. He writes,

> [A]uthenticity is not simply a characteristic but a practical accomplishment. It unfolds in culturally distinctive interpretive activities requiring effort and commitment to master. Authenticity, in particular, requires consistent and durable (i.e., rule-bound) interpretive effort and appreciative commitment. Familiarity with applicable cultural forms is of chief importance in maintain a sense of what is and what isn't genuine or real…Authenticity practices not only construct the genuine but regularly point to the nongenuine.

In attending to this conceptualization, this chapter has outlined the various ways in which participants learn and accomplish authenticity as members of both folk and festival culture. This entails attaining, enacting, and embodying ("feeling") the system of shared meaning around

"rule-bound" forms of musical interaction, which represent the central focus of folk and festival life, and thus characterizes the emotional atmospheres and experiences that lend themselves to this type of authentic "feeling." It also requires developing a festival "family" that has attained folk and festival membership, and thus serves as a source of knowledge, comfort, and validation, all of which are required to accomplish authenticity in ways that are intelligible to other members in the broader community.

Accomplishing authenticity within folk culture writ large as it is enacted with the festival setting also requires "familiarity with applicable cultural forms" that are specific to the festival context. These include knowing of festival traditions that occasionally impede musical participation, knowing and "sensing" moods and feelings that characterize musical interaction, knowing the appropriate ways in which to express feeling as it relates to that interaction, knowing the places and times in which certain moods are likely to be generated, and knowing of certain people and places that are not conducive to sharing such moods and experiences with other participants not deemed worthy. Such knowledge as it pertains to both Winfield and Kerrville is specific to the ways in which one navigates the festival experience, but also indicative of broader membership within the folk musical community, particularly as it relates to one's ability to accomplish authenticity through "sensing" and "feeling" moods and, as noted in the excerpt above, the "interpretive effort and appreciative commitment to maintain" them.

Folk and festival culture, and the ways in which authenticity is accomplished in both is reproduced most often through personal experiences with breaches or through stories of breaches. The narrative work surrounding the accomplishment of authenticity directs attention to what is perceived as "real," and in so doing, what is decidedly not "real" (Force 2009). Stories that circulate around "jam busters," participants who lack the embodied knowledge required to

sense "moods," attendees who express emotion inconsistent with the feeling rules of folk and festival culture, or certain groups who are, according to some, unapologetically exclusive to others, lend much insight into the character of folk and festival culture, serve to solidify members meanings, and represent primary vehicles through which newcomers learn how to appropriately accomplish authenticity. In this way, stories of breaches that are situated and circulate within the immediate festival context showcase broader cultural narratives surrounding folk music as community oriented, inclusive, socially conscious, lyric driven, emotional, and more or less traditional (or at the very least, not "popular").

One's ability to "know," recall, and recirculate these stories represents an important part of accomplishing authenticity in folk and festival culture, which plays a significant role in the construction and maintenance of both personal and collective identities. Authenticity as it relates to personal identity, or the feeling that one is staying true to oneself (Eastman 2010; Peterson 2005), is founded on a broader system of meaning perpetuated by cultural narratives within a broader community. As shown in my story of transitioning from outsider to insider, the confirmation of one's authenticity by this larger collective not only validates one's "realness" on a personal level, but also secures one's membership in the community, thereby generating a collective identity that is distinct from other groups (for example, "we" are not "pop people" and "I" am not a "pop person.") The construction and maintenance of personal and collective identity within folk and festival culture hinges on the intelligible accomplishment of authenticity that is then confirmed by other members and thus also personally validated.

The confirmation of authenticity and identity (and authentic identity), also entails the capacity to negotiate the "types" of people who are seemingly unwilling to offer confirmation, and thus present an abrupt paradox. The narratives that run rampant about the exclusive and

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demeaning character of some groups represent stories of those who have breached broader cultural understandings of folk music as inclusive, for "the people," community oriented, and socially conscious. The sheer prevalence of such stories clearly points to how participants find this entirely inappropriate (i.e. "inauthentic") behavior worthy of talking about somewhat consistently.

What is particularly interesting is that it seems rather obvious that not everyone feels this way, as such people and camps enjoy a great number of friends, "family," and a great deal of ongoing musical interaction. Gruning (2006) noted that the degree to which these camps are perceived as rewarding or disgusting is largely based on whether one is welcome, and I suppose that, in some circumstances, this is true in my research as well. However, what is more interesting is that participants who find these situations appalling do not attach this sentiment to "folk music" or "festivals," but instead to the people who fail to accomplish authenticity as it relates to both.

To be sure, festivals are extremely large places that include thousands of people. It is not at all difficult to disassociate oneself from people and camps that, in one's eyes, do not attend to broader cultural notions of inclusivity and equality and then actively seek out others who do. In short, participants negotiate tensions such as this by attaching meaning to individuals and groups, not to the larger community, and instead attend to the interactions and musical experiences that, in their eyes, do align with the cultural narratives of folk music writ large. The degree to which these cultural narratives match the lived reality of festivals or the folk musical community is entirely irrelevant. Instead, what is far more interesting are the ways in which some members detach meaning from situations incongruent with their cultural understandings of "folk music,"

and reattach it to certain "people," thereby maintaining, upholding, and recirculating the cultural narrative of egalitarianism.

In conclusion, while this chapter has been focused on the accomplishment of authenticity and membership as it relates to a variety of key themes within folk and festival culture, it is worth returning to and emphasizing the cultural work of music, narrative, and emotion as they are understood in this chapter. Cultural narratives that circulate within folk music culture become articulated, enacted, and re-narrated in specific situations at festivals, the vast majority of which relate to musical and emotional experiences. The process through which one becomes a member and successfully accomplishes authenticity is highly related to the degree one aligns oneself with these broader cultural narratives surrounding musical participation and emotional expression.

Moreover, this narrative alignment is always already predicated on one's emotional relationship to music in the first place, thus cultural narratives circulating within the folk musical community dictate how one "should" feel and express that feeling in relationship to folk music. The experience and expression of emotion, then, further accomplishes authenticity, as well as personal and collective identity, by reproducing cultural notions of folk and festivals as emotional and having one's emotional displays validated by other members who clearly feel similar. In sum, the cultural work of music, narrative, and emotion is interrelated, cumulative, and necessary for the accomplishment of authenticity, identity, and membership in both folk and festival culture.

As such, and broadly speaking, this chapter has been dedicated to the cultural narratives embedded within folk music culture that are enacted at festivals and serve to guide members towards the accomplishment of authenticity and identity in both cases. In the next chapter, I continue to build on these themes by examining two predominant cultural narratives pertaining

to the creative songwriting process, how such narratives lend insight into identities, authenticity, emotion, and social change, and how they reproduce notions of what "authentic" folk songs can and "should" do, why, and for whom.

CHAPTER SIX:

BETWEEN THE MUSE AND THE EDITOR: CULTURAL NARRATIVES AROUND

THE SONGWRITING PROCESS

In this chapter, I examine the two most predominant cultural narratives around songwriting that are used to convey, explain, and generally make sense of the creative songwriting process. In so doing, I analyze their two main characters, the plot lines, the setting, the moral evaluations embedded within both, and what they accomplish for songwriters and sociologists in the form of *songwriting as inquiry* and *songwriting in action*.

The first story is that of the Channeling Artist, where songwriters understand themselves as vehicles for songs to come through, as opposed to purposeful writers of them. The main character in this story is the Muse, the unseen inspiration and guiding force behind the song's creative and emotional energy. The plot of this particular story centers on how songwriting serves as an embodied vehicle for exploring, understanding, organizing, and expressing emotions and the Self. In contrast to the first, the second story is that of the Master Craftsman, or the songwriter who works arduously on their songs, some for months or even years. There are two main characters in this story: the Editor, or the "analytical" and "rational" voice that urges songwriters to continue toiling over their songs, and the Audience, whom the Editor is working so hard to please. While I do discuss listeners in this chapter, the next chapter is more fully dedicated to an examination of the audience and their reception of "good" and "great" songs. The plot of this story revolves around the "discipline" and "craftsmanship" necessary to thoughtfully

and strategically employ the correct songwriting "tools" so as to successfully deliver a message, one that often takes the form of social commentary.

The Muse and the Editor are metaphorical characters, which points to the importance of metaphor when it comes to articulating both music and emotionality (Katz 1999; Rice 2003; Helsel 2007). However, they are "real" to the extent that participants literally refer to them by name and attach their associated meanings to embodied songwriters who are then morally evaluated based on the type of story told. In the first story, the Editor lacks inspiration, emotion, only cares about "formulas" and "cranking out hits," and if he gets too close, will quite literally "kill the Muse." On the contrary, in the second story, the Editor finds the Muse to be a "lazy," "confessional," and narcissistic songwriter, who only writes "diaries," cares little about others, and often writes "boring" songs that puts listeners to sleep, in a state of deep depression, or worse, makes them want to "slit their wrists."

Both stories and their relative evaluations showcase shared meaning around authenticity as it relates to folk music culture (songs should come from the "heart," not be commodified, and be written in ways that appeal to listeners so as to deliver a message), as much as they construct symbolic boundaries around "types" of songwriters ("we" who write songs the "right" way). They also showcase how songwriters (as well as academics who write about songwriting) draw on Western cultural understandings of emotion to make sense of creativity and songwriting, such that emotion is interior, private, distinctly feminine, and antithetical to thought, reason, and rationality, a point scattered about this chapter.

While songwriters are generally more prone to tell one story over others, which has much to do with issues of personal identity as it relates to the larger collective, it is important to note that the type of story told most often depends on the song. For this reason, there are several

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excerpts from the same songwriters presented in both stories as described in this chapter. As I discuss below, some songs result from emotions that are difficult to understand and express, and storytelling around such songs typically involves the metaphorical work of the Muse. Because both stories characterize songs as independent of the songwriter, the song itself informs what type of story should be told. Songwriters "serve," and "surrender" to songs, they "think about what the song needs," "likes," "wants to hear," they are "in service to it" and "humbled before it." (As evidenced by this sentence and throughout this chapter, quotations used around words and phrases are meant to distinguish members' language from my own, unless used in relation to scholarly material.) In this way, the song itself is an important character in both stories. Like the character of the "audience," the character of "songs" will be discussed more thoroughly in the next chapter.

That songs are described as independent is why songwriters are not categorized as characters in either story; they are only guided by "songs," the meaning attached to the metaphorical characters behind those songs (songwriters as a "channel" or as "working" for the audience), and a type of intuition, "instinct" (Hatch and Watson 1974), or "feeling" (Fox 2004) that accompanies a broad range of cultural competencies that render the process "automatic" (McIntyre 2010). On a related note, it is also worth mentioning that there are always other stories, and not all songwriters write songs the same way all the time, particularly when "songs" are typically understood as driving the process. In re-telling participants' stories in this chapter, I have presented them in "ideal-typical" form, or as a partial and "formal template" (Hatch and Watson 1974:163), that does not include any overlap between the two stories. For example, there are songwriters who "channel" their songs and then "work" on them afterwards. There are also songwriters who "channel" parts of songs (a chorus, for example) and then "craft" the others.

However, despite my presenting them as ideal types, these two stories are by far the most prevalent, colloquially and in the literature, and songwriters often rely on one story more than the other based on their identity as a certain "type" of songwriter. Given their widespread predominance, enacting authenticity as it relates to folk music songwriting has much to do with one's ability to situate the telling of one's story within one of these ready-made templates which others within the folk musical community understand and thus validate. These stories, and the ways in which songwriters use them to make sense of their process, do not exist in a vacuum, but instead they represent cultural resources that are readily available in and around folk music and American culture about what it means to be an "analytical" or "emotional" songwriter. As such, they are consistently reflected and perpetuated by those within the musical community.

In what follows, I present both stories, which are organized according to their respective plots: "'Channeling' and 'catching' songs" and "'channeling' and 'ordering' emotion" as it relates to the Channeling Artist, and "acquiring, 'sharpening,' and using 'tools'" and "honoring the audience and 'speaking to the culture'" as it relates to the Master Craftsman. These stories are further organized by their main characters (the Muse and the Editor), as well as the moral evaluations that are attached to these characters based on which story is told. Following this, I offer the concepts of *songwriting as inquiry* and *songwriting in action* to describe the material consequences of these stories for songwriters, and the theoretical accomplishments of these stories for sociologists. In the discussion section, I specifically attend to the research questions answered in this chapter.

I now turn to the first of these two cultural narratives, that of the "emotional" Channeling Artist and the Muse.

The Channeling Artist

The Channeling Artist describes songwriting in a way that completely divorces his or her conscious mind from the process, as if the song always existed in some existential sense and the songwriter merely represents a vehicle through which it can be channeled. The "channeling process," and how songwriters "catch the song" in a variety of ways, represents the primary plotline of this story, one that is told using metaphors of authenticity, the Self, and emotion.

The Plot

"Channeling" and "Catching" Songs

Songs "pop out," "come out," "come through," "happen," "appear," and "fall" into one's "lap." They are "channeled," "caught," "grabbed," and "picked out of the air," where "they're out there floating" or "hovering around." Here songs are entities that exist and endure beyond physical manifestations, such as sheet music, recordings, and performances (Negus and Astor 2015:227). "Songs can live almost forever," writes Gillette (1995:5), an expert, instructor, and author of how-to songwriting books meant to assist and inspire songwriters. He continues, "[They] can survive on a scale that approaches true immortality. It is not just the name or the idea of the songwriter which survives, there is in each song, a kind of spiritual DNA that is evident and reassuring to people of distant places and times."

Given that songs are independent entities that "happen" without invitation, songwriters in this story acknowledge the "mystery" of the process, where one does not "consciously sit down" to write a song, "can't say how the words come about," and "feel[s] guilty saying [they] wrote it." As accomplished songwriter, instructor, and recording artist, Joni, says of certain lyrics,

> It's almost as if we didn't write them. They snuck in and then we get to go, "Guess what I just wrote!!" But I didn't. I don't know where they come from. I'll take credit, but I know in my heart of hearts it came through me, from somewhere else. And it comes from a serious place, you know…It's a mystical and magical process and you can't really put

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your finger on it. It's just not possible to really explain it. It's mystical. It's beyond our rational minds.

As shown here, "rationality" and "explanation" have no place in a story characterized by a "mystical and magical process" that songwriters take "seriously." Interestingly, Long and Barber (2015) note that, because the process is "shrouded in mystery," songwriters often have difficulty describing their process, as it is often "not reducible to rational explanation" (p. 145). Similarly, in their eloquent autoethnography of songwriting, Carless and Douglas (2009:36) caution against the "symbolic violence" caused by "imposing reason on a process that may itself be devoid of reason." Perhaps songwriters in this story are the "romantically inspired expressive artists" that Negus and Astor (2015:226) feel compelled to re-conceptualize as "architects"—a term better suited for songwriters in the next story.

Despite scholarly re-conceptualizations involving architecture, songwriters in this first story, as self-identified "expressive artists," indeed see their process as "beyond [their] rational minds." Like Joni, many songwriters in this story "don't know where [songs] come from," and in some cases, songwriters do not remember writing certain lyrics or even an entire song at all. Take, for example, the following excerpt from Skip, a working musician and prolific songwriter:

> I don't remember the process…I don't recall writing but one or two songs, and I've written maybe 300 songs, and the actual process of putting it down on paper I have no recollection of. The process disappears when it happens…I've done it and it is on paper and now I can't remember actually doing it.

In this case, the song itself is the only remaining artifact of a forgotten process, a reminder of what has been "channeled." While the songwriting process described in this way is similar to dreaming, for many participants, some songs literally come from dreams. As Brandon, New Folk winner and recording artist, says of his process, "Well a lot of times its stuff I dream, you know. It's stuff that comes out of another place."

Given that the songs "happen" and represent all that remains of the experience, it is not surprising that, much like a dream journal of sorts, almost all participants are adamant about recording what is "coming through" in an effort to "grab the song before it gets away." For example, Jimmy, recording artist and winner of Winfield's Songwriter "NewSong Showcase," says he has learned to "*recognize* the fact that a song has just appeared in front of me and that I need to *grab* it, I need to write it down, and play through it a couple times, and write down the chords, and if I do that, I get to keep it" (his emphasis). Without doing so, he continues, songs are only "sandcastles"; beautiful and short lived, destined to be washed away forever.

Similarly, Bill, working musician and recording artist, says of his songwriting process, "What happens is, I just sit around and the song comes rolling through and I grab a recording device. As soon as the song appears, I just start recording." Likewise, Elizabeth explains, "I have recordings forty minutes long where I just go from one thing to another and it is all song stuff…I'd get done and go, wow! There's probably like five songs in there!" For Bill, "My process is to *catch* that thing that's coming through in my subconscious," which is perhaps why he loves his voice recorder, as it allows him to capture "the source of the song."

Interestingly, others, too, understand songs as emerging from their subconscious minds. For instance, Lola says of her songs,

> Whether they are conscious or not, sometimes they aren't. I just start throwing stuff out. I really think I've thought about it more than—I just think they come sometimes, but I really don't think that's true. I think I've really been thinking about them and just don't know it.

Additionally, Maxwell uses metaphors to describe a place deep within his Self, such as "the dark room," the "rusted door," and the "big you," to explain how his songs emerge;

> You get really, really quiet and you listen really, really close, and they show up one line at a time. That's what it takes. You gotta crawl in the void, where there's the dark room, where the words all happen. You go inside there, and you wait on them to start sticking to

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you. I don't know how it happens, but you get quiet enough, stuff shows up. Great songs, you get quiet and wait with a guitar in your hand, playing, so that the music opens the door that's rusted. And there's all the noise—the music has to cut through the noise, make the noise quiet. And then in that quiet space, the words come. Because it has to be what 'the big you' knows, if you want to write great songs. The 'big you' knows all of the great songs.

Metaphors such as "the void," "the dark room," and opening the "door that's rusted," all speak to how songwriters in this story understand their process as accessing parts of their Self, or "the big you," that was previously obscured by "all the noise." Interestingly, in his study of the relationship between music and identity as it relates to music therapy, Ruud (1997:8) finds similar metaphors, such as "'private space,' 'inner core,' 'private room,' and so on. Listening to music or playing an instrument seems to lead to an awareness of a space within oneself which is totally distinct and not accessible to other people. Sometimes this is called the 'true self.'" Such a proposition resonates with Turner's (1974) notion of the "real" self, one that is evidenced and recognized through impulse and feeling.

Whether songs come from the subconscious, the Self, or for one participant "genetic memory" (which is interesting and perhaps coincidental given a song's "spiritual DNA"), in this story, songwriters describe their process as a way of "channeling" something just beyond their perspective reach (Katz 1999). All such explanations for the seemingly inexplicable, as well as the metaphors used by Maxwell and examined by Ruud (1997), highlight the importance of the Self throughout this process, or a "real" and "impulsive" (Turner 1974) self that emerges through the subconscious. Songs become mirrors through which songwriters show themselves to themselves. Because it resists "rational" explanation, such a musically mirrored Self is understood to be the authentic one. This experience is emotional, as it is emotion that is "channeled" through the Self and through the song, and as Katz (1999) would note, it is precisely emotion that is (or was) beyond perspective reach.

"Channeling" and "Ordering" Emotion

In this story, songwriters are not shy about discussing their emotions in relation to their creative process, which is not altogether surprising given that emotion is inextricably linked to both music and creativity (in addition to chapter two, see Juslin and Slodoba 2012 for an expansive review of such work). For example, Sigmund says of his songwriting, "It's hard for me to write a song about just anything. It has to be something that I feel. It has to be something that I *feel*, for me. All my songs come from my feelings, from my emotions" (his emphasis). Likewise, as Cooper succinctly puts it, "I operate from an emotional standpoint."

Many songwriters acknowledge the relationship between their creative process and their emotional experiences (one must "feel" to write), but still others are quick to link these experiences to "channeling." For Garret, winner of Winfield's Songwriter Showcase,

> Sometimes I just play and songs happen, and those usually turn out to be my actually somewhat better stuff that I play myself, because they come from another place you know, I've had that happen, that's pretty cool. Like you're channeling something and you go, whoa! Where did all that come from? I'll see something—it'll piss me off or make an impression on me and I'll write about it.

Similarly, Gale, recording artist and student of Songwriters' School, explains, "Whenever one just falls in my lap it is often because a strong feeling I've got about someone or something…Maybe it is stressing me out or maybe worrying." Elizabeth echoes these sentiments when she says of her process, "I probably am really feeling a lot of emotion and I pick up the recorder and I just start singing my emotions."

Given that writing represents a form of healing, emotional understanding, and meaning-making (Linde 1993; DeSalvo 1999; Richardson 2001; Kiesinger 2002; Ellis 2004; Tamas 2009), it is not surprising that many participants use the combined power of writing *and* music as a way to make sense of troubling and painful emotional experiences (Kinney 2012; Stewart and

McAlpin 2015). Like Garrett who was "pissed," or Gale who was "worried" and "stressed," working musician Phillip says of some of his songs, "I just got really tired of feeling angry and played those feelings," and Harper, a classically trained musician and contest winner, explains, "I was really pissed off and just had to write something out." Scattered throughout my interviews are songs that arise from divorces, deaths, breakups, alcoholism, and "major emotional events," and such events are described as "providing so much," inspiring "a lot of songwriting material," "the most prolific time period for writing songs," and an opportunity to "take that pain and that suffering and write about it."

On the contrary, songwriters who are *not* struggling to make sense of their emotional experiences, or who are going through a particularly happy or contented period, often have considerable trouble writing songs, a point also made by songwriters in Long and Barber's (2015) research. Thus, many suggest that "it is harder to write happy songs," "it is hard to just sit down and write up something that's happy," and "now the challenge is I'm too happy." Perhaps this is why Carl says of being a songwriter, "You're better off with a fucked up life. It gets different juices going." Or as Joni puts it,

> [Songwriters] are often at their best when they are singing their struggle. The struggle…..
> It's almost as if somebody whacks the shit out of us and then it turns into the part of our
> brain that starts manufacturing songs. It's the damnedest thing. I see songs as a form of
> articulating sense out of chaos in about four minutes.

In an interesting turn of events, Joni uses the words "brain" and "manufacture" as opposed to the common metaphor of "channeling" from the "heart," however, she remains divorced from this process: it is the "brain" that "manufactures songs," it is the "song" that makes "sense" out of chaos. Here the songwriter is only there to get "shit whacked," and it is the song, as well as the story around the song, that "orders" that experience, thus enabling the culturally and emotionally embodied experience of singing "the struggle" (Kuutma and Kästik 2014).

Similar to Joni's remarks on songwriting, Linde (1993) argues that storytelling is the principle vehicle through which people organize and make sense out of their life experiences and histories, through which we construct, experience, and express time and reality. It is how we construct and make sense of our worlds (Bruner 1987). Joni, in the above case, highlights a meta-narrative (here understood as simply a story about a story), where songwriting represents a form of "ordering" the "chaos" of life, and her story *about* that process "orders" what Carless and Douglas (2009:36) refer to as the "ambiguity," "paradox," "disorder," and "chaos" that characterizes the songwriting process itself.

In this story, and similar to many autoethnographers, songwriting can be understood as a therapeutic examination (Ellis 2004), "a cathartic discharge of complex, pent up feelings" (DeSalvo 1999:22). Feelings such as happiness rarely, if ever, compel examination or catharsis, much less "therapy." Instead, it is the "struggle," or those emotions that are difficult to manage, identify, and express that beg to be understood or overcome. For example, following an exercise where her students were asked to freely write about (and thus reflect on) a difficult experience, DeSalvo (1999:22) found that "they understood what occurred and what they felt about it, and they had assimilated the meaning of this event into their lives, thereby diffusing its power over them."

Others, too, have described similar outcomes in their examinations of songwriting and songwriters (Helsel 2007; Kinney 2012; Stewart and McAlpin 2015). As a musical form of writing as inquiry (Richardson 2001), emergent meanings arise as songs "come through," or as Maxwell says of songwriting, "The minute you start writing it you see all the levels of everything that it reveals." Similarly, in regards to "singing" her "emotions," Elizabeth says, "Sometimes things come out that I didn't even know I was thinking about," and for Brandon, "it

is a place to go to make sense of the world." As New Folk finalist and working musician Fred says of his first experiences songwriting, "I felt like it was therapy. I felt like it was getting these – getting these feelings out in some sort of expression other than just muddling around in my mind you know. To be able to put some focus on it." Described in this way, it is through the emotional properties of music which transcend language (Katz 1999) that songwriting takes the form of revelation; it constructs emotion (Dibben 2006), reveals emotion (Langer 1956), and orders realities (Vambe 2004).

The songwriting process is one of "ordering" or "clarifying" (Ruud 1997) lived emotional experience as it comes through the song, and throughout this process, songs also "come through" the body. As Morton (2005:672) notes in relation to "sessions" (or what I refer to as jams), "The non-verbal and highly emotional events of musical practice in sessions channel through the body rather than through words, talk or discourse, and of course, take place in the real-time encounter of musical practice." Similarly, and because making and listening to music is always a physical experience (Frith 1996), it is through songwriting as a musical practice that "highly emotion events" are felt and "channeled through the body." And as Katz (1999:10) reminds in regards to emotions, we should take participants' "metaphors seriously as providing elements of explanation," as they represent a principle resource for articulating emotional experiences. When it comes to the embodied character of music and emotion as it relates to songwriting, the metaphors abound, particularly when it comes to knowing when a song "needs to come out."

Many songwriters speak of songs "nagging," "bothering," "boiling," "marinating," "percolating," and "ruminating" until they are produced, or until the "faucet" turns on, the "flood gates" open, and songs begin to "flow" or "pour." Songs, much like emotion, "nag" at the body,

where songwriters "just had to get them out" or "need to get them out," because, as one participant put it, "I've got music going on in here." For Veronica, New Folk winner and songwriter of 40 years,

> When I feel a song in me—this sounds so—I hate talking about this because it sounds so dumb and spacey and new agey, and I'm not like that—but I'll be walking around and it's like, "I feel like I have a song that's gotta come out." It's like sort of a tenseness in my skin or something, something kind of going through my head that's been there a few days, and it won't go away…And it kind of percolates in there for a while and I get kind of restless and "What is this feeling? Why am I feeling restless? Oh! I gotta write a song!" It's an urge, it is a pretty undeniable urge.

Much like Veronica, Fernando describes this "urge" as existing in the "blood" and the "body." He says of songwriting, "You can't help that your body—you've got that music jones inside of you and so you are—that's kind of what you are living for….It's something you have to do, it is in you. It is in your blood. You can't help it."

While songs "percolate" in the body and in the "blood," they also "flow" through it, or as Maxwell says, as "a chorus of sound coming through me, through the back of my head, through the front of my head." Similar to the "spilling out of emotion" (Katz 1999) from the body, participants often use water related metaphors like "pour" and "flood" to describe a source of "release" and "relief" from overwhelming, or "nagging," emotional experiences. For Lucinda, "they've just been pouring out of me and it is amazing," and Gale says of her experience, "It's such a good feeling…It just *feels* good. It's a release" (her emphasis). Similar to Gale, Tim describes the process of writing one particular song as the pouring out and subsequent relief of overwhelming emotion; "I was so overwhelmed with emotion I didn't know what to do with it. I had this melody I played for a year, and I just wrote [the song] to this melody I'd carried around.... And when I sang it, it gave me relief."

Metaphors related to water and relief parallel those that were previously mentioned regarding the Self, such as Maxwell's description of "the void," the "dark room," the "quiet space," and the "rusted door." As Dibben (2006:171) notes,

> One speaks of "filling up" with emotion, "bursting with happiness," emotions "spilling out." It is no coincidence that the language used to speak of the emotions employs images of the person as a container and of emotions as liquids since this is congruent with the construction of the subject as a unique and bounded individual (in other words, the body as an emotional vessel) possessed of an interior life known only to itself.

The story of the Channeling Artist is ultimately a story about emotion; thus, it is situated within broader, Western, cultural understandings of emotion as antithetical to thought and "rationality" (Lutz 1986; Reddy 1997; Harkin 2003; Loseke and Kusenbach 2007; Katz 2009), and, as Dibben (2006) noted, it is understood as private, interior, and individualized. In this case, the "dark room" that houses the "big you" is the same dark room from which emotion "spills" and "floods" through song. While founded on cultural notions that dichotomize cognition and emotion, such metaphors used to describe songwriting in this story do not neatly align with dramaturgical and constructionist conceptualizations of emotions as managed and displayed. On the contrary, emotions, in this case, are not "done." Instead, they "do" (Katz 1999).

In the next section, we are introduced to the Muse, the metaphorical character often called upon to describe the emotional "flow" of creative "inspiration" behind the indescribable "channeling" process. In keeping with cultural understandings of emotion as feminine, we are also introduced to how she feels about those who write "analytically" and "rationally" (i.e., *not* emotionally, thus *not* authentically). In other words, how Channeling Artists morally evaluate Master Craftsmen, whose violent (and masculine) Editor is well known for killing the Muse.

Main Character: The Inspirational Muse

As described above, while some have explanations for where songs "come from," all of which point to an authentic Self from which emotionality "pours," the metaphor of the Muse remains a pervasive main character in the story of the Channeling Artist. Not only is she prevalent in songwriter's personal stories, she can be found in songwriting books meant to inspire creativity and guide burgeoning songwriters:

> Doesn't it seem that there is a voice that comes to us, or through us at those times? What is that voice and where does it come from? Can we listen for that voice? Can we cultivate a relationship with that wise voice? Can we ask for and receive guidance and wisdom from that voice? The name given to that voice by the ancient Greeks was the Muse…If it seems like I am taking this to an extreme, consider the serious nature of our need to find some way to approach this special voice or gift within us. (Gillette 1995:5-6)

She can also be found, for better or worse, in scholarly work on songwriting:

> The inspirational view [of creativity] has its antecedents in Greek thought. Plato's (1937) musings on the muse and the idea that a creator must be undisciplined and almost mad while waiting to be divinely inspired [is] still with us today…Both positions, the inspirational and the romantic perspective, exemplified at the extreme by the myth of romantic irony (Petrie, 1991), have provided the ground for the stereotypical and common view of the unconstrained, self-expressive, quasi-neurotic artist existing in their garret, waiting for the muse to arrive or for inspiration to strike…[T]here has been an insistence on a belief in individual genius figures inspired by various muses who are unconstrained and free to channel their songs from seemingly mystical sources. (McIntyre 2008a:40-41)

For McIntyre (2008a:41), such "myths" prevail "despite the lack of a rational or empirical base," and thus "a more rational and less mystical approach," or a "rationalist conceptualization" of creativity, is much needed when it comes to the study of songwriting. In this view, creativity can be understood using Bourdieu's notion of field and habitus, and "successful" songwriting requires skill, networks composed of those in and around the industry, and a considerable amount of effort (the latter of which just so happens to be the plotline of the next story). Yet, I am far more interested in "approaching the other side of the dichotomy,

experience" (Rice 2003:154), and how that experience shapes (and is shaped by) storytelling, than I am in risking the "metaphor trap" (p. 165) of debunking a metaphorical character's existence. I dare say that my participants fully recognize that she is not an embodied Grecian goddess handing down songs from the sky.

Unfortunately for McIntyre (2008a, 2008b, 2010), such "myths" indeed prevail among songwriters who continue to "feel free to channel their songs from seemingly mystical sources," despite his rational, empirical contribution to creativity and cultural production. In this story, songwriters "wait for the muse," are "available to the muse," and "listen to what the muse has to say." I came to find out, embarrassingly later than most people, that it is from the "Muse" that we have the word "music." While not all songwriters are apt to trace the ancient lineage of the Muse and "music," such a history is not altogether lost on some. As songwriter and recording artist Mitch explains, "It's been there forever. The muse is an ancient concept. Poets have talked about the muse forever, the muse being the goddess that gives you the inspiration and it is—you do have a sense that it comes from somewhere else, that it is not something that comes from within you." The metaphorical character of the Muse is often held responsible for songs that "come from somewhere else," and like Mitch, many songwriters associate this goddess with other metaphors commonly used to describe the "channeling" experience.

As mentioned above, the "spilling" out of emotion (Katz 1999; Dibben 2006) through the "channeling" of songs is depicted via water related metaphors; thus, the Muse is typically the creative force that "opens the flood gates," "turns the faucet on," or as Lucinda describes it, "The best flowing muse is when I'm kind of joyful." As an interesting side note, it is perhaps not a coincidence that water is often associated with other goddesses beyond Greek mythology. As songwriting instructor Leon says of his "faucet" and the Muse,

> I feel like if I'm going to enjoy the times where the faucet is just rockin' on, like, "Whoa, I just can't stop writing!" then I have to accept the times when it is not. And I have to maybe think that maybe the reason the muse has turned the faucet off for a minute is for me to take longer walks, smell the roses, you know. Live a little.

Furthermore, while the Muse is behind the turning off and on of "faucets" (i.e., the "flow" of emotion) she is also responsible for bearing a great many children (i.e., emotional songs).

Given that many songwriters refer to their songs as "babies" in this story, it is not altogether surprising that the Muse is also associated with "giving birth to something" and with motherhood. As Joni puts it, "It's a baby coming into the world. Literally." While the story of the Channeling Artist typically has a happy ending, at least in as much as songwriters have a way of understanding and expressing themselves and their emotions, there are times when, as Joni puts it, the "baby" dies in the "birth canal." In this story, the Muse, or worse, her "baby," is killed by the hands of "analysis" and "rationality," or what Phoenix describes as "the killer of any creative idea." It is here that we are introduced to the villainous character of the Editor.

Moral Evaluations: The Muse vs. the Editor

Quite unfortunately for the Muse, the Editor, as he is presented in this story, is well known for being violent. As Bill explains of the danger of "editing" when "catching" things as they "come through" his "subconscious," "Don't edit yet, because as soon as I start editing, the creative part stops and I stop listening to whatever the source of the song is. If I start editing as soon as I hear it, it will stop. It will turn off and I just kill it." Similarly, as Joni says of "rewriting" (a principle function of the Editor), "Trying to rewrite and write at the same time - You kill the writing. The rewrite just goes 'Nah, Poof!!' So you're just killing the baby. The birth canal is clenched up." In this story, the goddess and her "baby's" survival necessarily entails "turning off the analytical part of the brain" and "not thinking too much," as these things "ruin the beauty" and the "wonderment." As one participant so succinctly and eloquently put it,

"Don't let the editor fuck with your muse," or at the very least, "never invite the editor into the room too early."

Set in total opposition to emotionality and inspiration, the Editor is associated with "intellect," "rationality," "analysis," and "cleverness," or what Cooper, a self-identified Channeling Artist, calls the difference between a "head" and "heart" song:

> There's a head song and there's a heart song. The head song is a good title, good ideas—the heart song is obviously coming from a place of—the emotion is coming out musically and you lay the bed down, or open the door, for what is on my mind, what's coming from the heart first. That's not to say that there is anything secondary about a head song, it's just that—it's more of an intellectual thing whereas the other is more of an emotional thing.

Again, metaphors such as "opening the door" are linked to emotionality "coming out" from the "heart," which is set in direct opposition to "intellect" and "good ideas," which is the Editor's territory. Such a sentiment is shared by Maxwell who says, "There's a way to write hit songs. And there's a way to write great songs. Hit songs you think up a hook and you get clever." In this case, there is a clear distinction between "hit" songs (the "clever" Editor who "thinks") and "great songs" (those from the emotional Muse who lives behind the "rusted door"). For Channeling Artists, the notion of writing "hit" songs from a place of "intellect" has everything to do with "cranking out hits" for the "music industry" or "music business" for fortune and fame, thereby "killing" the beauty of the songwriting process and the very purpose of songs.

While the Muse is often depicted as "sitting up there" or "looking down" from the sky, lovingly providing songs to be delivered "from the heart," the Editor appears to live in an overpriced estate in the middle of Nashville. Perhaps Joni says it best when she says, "I live in a town that takes songs and tries to turn them into McDonald's french fries. I live in Nashville." Despite the fact that Nashville, known as "music city" or "songwriter row," is a large city populated by a great many types of songwriters, some of whom are far more successful than

others, Channeling Artists typically associate Nashville with "formulas," or what Skip refers to as "writing to assignment." As it relates to Nashville, "writing to assignment" involves a professional songwriter who is paid to write songs for others to perform, typically based on a specific topic or set of guidelines. Similarly to the above from Cooper, and in a description of the difference between "heart" and "brain" songs, Skip says of such writing,

> I don't like to write to assignment….When I finish a song that I thought I wrote to assignment, it never sounds as good as a song that was written from the heart to me. Mine personally. But maybe a staff writer in a publishing company in Nashville—I have to say some songs they've written are absolutely amazing songs, but most of those songs they're sitting there and writing to formula, and formula says they have to write it about this, it has to be this many minutes, has to be this long and an introduction and it has to be about certain topics to be successful. I don't think—I'm not the kind of person that could go to work in Nashville on songwriter row and turn out song after song. If I tried hard enough I probably could but I wouldn't be happy with most of what I was doing…It's a tough life to have to rely on nothing but your brain.

As shown above, this type of writing is far removed from emotion, inspiration, and "channeling," and because such songs do not come from the "heart," they distinctly lack the type of authenticity associated with the Muse. For Lucas, "I know that that the Nashville system, which I'm worried about my little [songwriter] friend getting sucked into—it is literally, you know, 'hey, let's meet at ten o clock Tuesday and write a hit song,' you know." Here Lucas makes an interesting, albeit subtle, comparison between Master Craftsmen who are far more likely to co-write with other songwriters, and Channeling Artists who typically prefer to write in quiet solitude.

The important point to be made here is that writing with others potentially counteracts or occludes the emotional "channeling" process. It is understandably difficult to walk into the "void," the "dark room," "quiet all the noise" (perhaps so one can hear the Muse), and have a transcendent and revelatory emotional experience with other people around who are making the noise one is attempting to quiet. Co-writing then, in opposition to "waiting for the Muse," is

more like making an appointment (which is probably noted in the Editor's day planner) in hopes of fabricating some contrived song for the wrong reasons and for the wrong people.

While the Muse inspires songs that are honest, emotional, and come from the "heart," a process understood to be intensely lived, embodied, and felt, the Editor relies only on his "brain" to "crank out" songs for "notoriety" and "radio play." For Channeling Artists, this is an obvious distortion of the purpose of songs and songwriting, and, according to Phoenix, this type of transparent dishonesty comes in the form of such songwriter's inability to showcase their "real" self:

> When somebody's achieved a certain level of notoriety I think their mechanism for reaching out to people kind of atrophies, because they haven't had to reach to out to anybody in a long, long time. And there's something about their eyes that just kind of glazes over and they're no longer, you know, offering their real self to you.

Though said in relation to performance as opposed to songwriting, the point remains that "notoriety" is here associated with inauthenticity, particularly as it relates to the Self. While the Muse is associated with the "pouring" out of a "real" Self, the Editor is seemingly without a Self, or at least without the capacity to share it in ways that ring true, authentic, and honest (i.e., emotional) to Channeling Artists. If the Editor does actually have a Self, it has already been sold to the industry.

In the following excerpt, and similar to Phoenix above, Brandon describes the difference between songwriter's who "work" the system and songwriter's who write songs because they "have to":

> There are people who are singing because that's what they want to do. And there are some people that aren't even particularly good writers or interesting writers to me who are doing it and being noticed because they know how to work what you have to do to make that happen…There are people who are singing and you go, "well, I don't get why they're singing that song," but people really like them or they get good promotion or whatever. They're getting on the radio, there's that thing. And then there's the other people that do it because they have to. They're never going to stop, they don't want to be

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the next big thing, they're not trying to even make an album a lot of times, but they are just as important as anything else that goes on. In fact, more so to me.

Perhaps more succinctly said by Bruno, "Only a fool is in it for the money." Instead, as Brandon put it, Channeling Artists *have* to write, they are emotionally compelled to do so. Interesting, the exact words "have to" appears frequently in my interviews with such songwriters. As Fernando mentioned earlier, it is a "music jones inside," it is in their "blood." While songwriting is a source of income for some, "work" in this sense "is unrecognizable in any conventional sense as work" due to the (authentic) "investment" in the emotional experience and outcome of songwriting (Long and Barber 2015:151).

In this case, there is a difference between staying true to oneself and making a living, and "selling out" to record companies, which is perhaps the furthest from authentic one could possibly get (Eastman 2002). Moreover, as evidenced above by Brandon, songwriting is certainly not reducible to "good promotion," "working" the system," or "radio" play (i.e., making and selling "french fries," or "that shit you hear on the radio.") In the story of the Channeling Artist, there is a clear distinction between songs that come from an authentic place, or songs that are personal, honest, and emotional, and songs that come from an inauthentic place, or those written according to some contrived formula that originates in "Nashville," the place where songs go to die.

For most songwriters in this story, those who only care about "fame," "notoriety," and "radio play," or those who are hired professionals and live in "Nashville," are those who unjustly distort the character of folk music culture writ large, such as emphasizing the "common" folk and anti-commercialism, for example. For Neal (2007:62), "to criticize the radio and commercial industry [is] a rhetorical means of asserting authenticity." Because it is associated with the industry and the radio, Nashville is understood as a "commercial sham," which only renders

Nashville all the more inauthentic. "The Nashville Sound," according to Lena and Peterson

(2008:711), was

> an unintended byproduct of music industry actors. It was the work of major music corporation producers who were also accomplished musicians... [They] created an assembly-line system of production in an effort to produce standard, high-quality country music at a low cost.

Needless to say, given this description, which is not at all lost on songwriters, I dare say nothing

could be less authentic to tried and true members of the folk musical community.

However, in complete opposition to the above evaluations offered by Channeling Artists,

in the story of the Master Craftsman, the Editor, as well as his purpose and place of residence,

takes on a drastically different character. Although still extremely "rational" and "analytical," the

Editor works arduously to ensure that songs are successful in ways that extend far beyond

monetary value. Much like the Channeling Artist, the Master Craftsman has equally strong

opinions about the Muse and how songs "should" be written, why, and for whom.

The Master Craftsman

In complete contrast to the idea that songs simply "arrive," the story of the Master

Craftsman is a story about hard work and spending a tremendous amount of time. While the

Muse tends to inspire songs that are "channeled" in "10 minutes," or songs Joseph says (perhaps

coincidently) are "from Zeus," the Master Craftsman is well known to spend "80 hours,"

"months and months," and even "years" on songs. The importance placed on this type of

dedication is often valorized in stories about famous songwriters who care enough about their

"craft" to invest the necessary time and energy. For example, there are stories about how it took

Kris Kristofferson twenty years to finish "Bobby McGee," or stories about how it took Leonard

Cohen seven years and 70 verses before he finished "Hallelujah." Such a dedication is quite

emphatically shared by Master Craftsmen like songwriting instructor and accomplished

recording artist Tara, for example, who says of her process and "time,"

> And I know the arrangement's right, and how do I know? Because I spent that much time. Art takes time. It takes a lot of time. It takes a lot of time. It takes *SO* much time, but that's the beauty of it. It takes time but it is worth it. I'll stress out over a word, because that's how important it is to me. I get real meticulous about it. I keep everything. That's what makes this so hard. When do you let go of the song and when do you quit editing? But you have to edit more to make it the song it should be. If this was easy I think more people would do it. It's just flat hard. (Her emphasis)

As shown in this excerpt, the reason it takes *so* much "time" to write a song has much to do with

the Editor 's emphasis on "meticulous" perfection through "editing," which involves, as one

participant put it, "walk[ing] around it sometimes 10,000 times, tightening it, tightening it,

tightening it."

Main Character: The Disciplined Editor

Unlike the Muse, the Editor's principle function in this story is to *craft* as opposed to

inspire. As Archer, songwriter and working musician of 33 years, says of his process,

> I like to think of songs as like a miniature, small, like, painting on a small canvas, or creating a small, miniature model, you know, that's very carefully crafted… It's a craft. It's a craft. It's an art form, sure, I don't mean to sound pretentious, but I like to think of songs—crafting a song—I tweak and I tweak and I tweak and often spend months on songs.

Such is the type of songwriting "craft" (McNeal 2007) most celebrated by researchers of

songwriting, as such songwriters can easily be conceived of as "rational" (McIntyre 2008a,

2008b, 2010) "architects" who "build" songs (Negus and Astor 2015) using "tools" (Rideout

2014). Creativity in this regard appears to be about "problem solving" as opposed to emotion

(Rideout 2014).

Indeed, for my participants who are Master Craftsmen, while songwriting is still

considered an "art form," songs do not simply "pop out," "come through," and "happen" in this

story, but instead, songwriters purposefully use the Editor's "tools," "toolkits," and "techniques" to "craft," "sand," "polish," "tighten," "woodshop," and "work" on songs. As one participant put it, "there's a difference between being a carpenter and just hammering nails into a board." In relation to such "hammering," the Editor motivates Master Craftsmen to be very "disciplined," "deliberate," "intentional," "clever," "thoughtful," "analytical," "purposeful," and "critical" when it comes to songwriting and the character of their songs. "Our rational minds work on the craft part," says Joni. "*That's* how the work gets done!" (Her emphasis). Needless to say, the Muse is not well known to be a construction worker.

The "tools" utilized by the Editor abound and can be acquired in many ways. For example, a quick search online for "songwriting books" reveals 3,529 hits. Such books include chord charts, rhyming dictionaries, songwriting ideas, music theories, and strategies for writing better lyrics and melodies. Not coincidentally, these books have titles such as *The Chord Wheel: The Ultimate Tool for All Musicians* (Fleser 2000), *Songwriting: Essential Guide to Lyric Form and Structure: Tools and Techniques for Writing Better Lyrics* (Pattison 1991), and *Melody in Songwriting: Tools and Techniques for Writing Hit Songs* (Perricone 2000). Others refer to the "craft" of songwriting, for example, *The Craft and Business of Songwriting* (Braheny 2007), or *Songwriting: Crafting a Tune: A Step by Step Guide to Songwriting* (Davies 2015). The plot of this story certainly revolves around "work" and "craft," but it also entails the importance of acquiring, sharpening, and employing the Editor's tools so as to improve songs.

The Plot

Acquiring, Sharpening, and Using Tools

In addition to the Editor's books and guides, "tools" and "skills" can be "polished" in many other ways. For example, Master Craftsmen are well known for attending a variety of

songwriting schools, workshops, groups and circles that are specifically designed to teach people how to effectively "craft" songs or to "work" on bettering their "craft." A great many Master Craftsmen meet weekly with other songwriters to receive honest feedback on their songs, and some of these groups entail "homework" assignments that require a new song every week, which means such songwriters are perpetually sharpening their "tools" whether they are inspired or not. Festivals such as Kerrville and Winfield provide opportunities to work through songs, share them with others, and receive constructive, knowledgeable critique. Kerrville in particular, with its emphasis on songwriters and songwriting, is certainly the perfect place to hone one's songwriting skills. Songwriters' School and daily song critique circles find many songwriters "working" on and through their songs with accomplished and respected songwriters, many of whom are songwriting instructors or have published books on songwriting.

Because this story does not center on the importance of the Self, Master Craftsmen need feedback from average listeners and other songwriters so as to know what it is about the song that needs "time" and "work." This, too, helps Master Craftsmen "sharpen" and use the Editor's "tools" in ways that better the song. For example, upon playing my originals in song critique circles, I have been told that a song is too long, tells two different stories, is rather confusing, lacks necessary information, needs "integrity" and "courage," is too repetitive melodically, requires a bridge, and that I always fail to enunciate my lyrics, so no one has a clue as to what I am saying.

In one critique, I was told that a song I had written entitled "Mr. Brown," a song about a friend, was heard as an admission to heroin addiction. The suggested "tool" to fix this problem was to include more detailed information about "Mr. Brown" the person, so as to occlude the possibility of a rather serious misinterpretation. I have also been told that a song I concluded

with "standing at the edge of the unknowing, always jumping" was interpreted as suicide. Thus, I used a lyric "tool" and included "dancing" after "jumping" in hopes of indicating that no one is jumping to their death. While Master Craftsmen acknowledge that listeners may interpret songs in ways that diverge from the intentions of the songwriter, "mystery is not confusion," as one songwriting instructor put it. Getting feedback from others is an important part of being a Master Craftsman, as it ensure their songs are "hitting" or "landing on" audiences in ways that are not confusing, upsetting, and relatively close to their intentions.

Moreover, within the first thirty minutes on the first day of Songwriters' School at Kerrville, instructors repeatedly mentioned that the point of such a school was to provide "tools in your tool box," "tools for your tool kit," and "tools for that tool box." By the end of the school, our "kits" and "boxes" included tools such as musicianship (chord patterns and progressions), vocal and melodic range, imagery, rhythm, time signatures and tempo, melody construction, tuning and keys, prosody (the marriage of lyrics and melody), structure (verses, choruses, bridges, etc.), appropriate song length, lyric construction, performance, theory, instruments, and equipment. Indeed, as one instructor put it, if the point was "to leave with a much heavier tool kit" than when we arrived, such a mission was surely accomplished.

Far removed from simply "waiting for the Muse," the Master Craftsman is forever "disciplined" about "sharpening" these tools. This, too, can be achieved in a variety of ways. For example, many Master Craftsmen I spoke with employ "daily writing," which can the form of "assignment writing," "sense-based" or "sensuous writing," and "object writing," none of which initially requires inspiration, but instead dedication to writing "exercises," "activities," and "practice." Many read books about writing that are not specific to songwriting (some of which, interestingly, were assigned in an autoethnography course I took in 2013), or consistently read

poetry and elaborate novels in search of new words, phrases, and ideas. In this way, the Master Craftsman also "works" on being inspired and creative. Many have hundreds of voice recordings and notebooks upon notebooks filled with what one participant called "grist" or "songwriting fodder" for future songs.

In both stories, songwriters are entrusted with a certain type of responsibility. In the story of the Channeling Artist, this responsibility lies in staying "true" to oneself and writing from the "heart," or a place of emotionality, without diluting the process with notions of grandeur. The Master Craftsman, however, has a responsibility to the Audience, and this is precisely who the Editor is working so hard to please.

Honoring the Audience and "Speaking to the Culture"

Ultimately all the work, time, thought, and practice that goes into songwriting has everything to do with "crafting" a song that is specifically meant to be heard and well received by others. Because listeners have such an enormous variety of music to choose from in their day to day lives, the general idea is that to have the honor of a listener is to have a serious responsibility to "craft" a song that is worth the time spent listening to in the first place. As New Folk winner Calvin puts it, "It comes with, you know, a certain responsibility that you have to be willing and ready to put in the work to do it."

For the purpose at hand, it suffices to say that perhaps the worst thing a song can be is boring to the listener, particularly in this story. As Leon says,

> We have a responsibility to be succinct. In other words the nature of the beast of songs—let's say, how long? Two and a half minutes to about five minutes. Would you say that's about the average? ...But we've all heard those songs around the campfire where somebody's singing the chorus for the 15th time and no one is singing along. It's like, "enough already!"

Much of the difficulty of songwriting in this case has to do with the amount of time one has to successfully convey what one wants to convey in the song and still manage to keep the listener engaged. In other words, songwriters have "very little real estate" to get their point across. The Editor's principle function, then, is to deploy "tools" throughout the songwriting process so as not to "burden" audience members with the final product. According to Joseph, organizer of a critique circle,

> We're concerned with it being worth the listeners' time. Is the game really worth the candle, you know? Are you getting a gift that's really worth investing that few minutes? We talk about condensing, shortening, tightening up so that the song has a little more impact, you know, and doesn't seem like such a burden on the listener. But you are the only one who can decide what kind of editor functions in your work.

Channeling Artists tend to see the Master Craftsmen's emphasis on the Audience as a less than subtle quest for fortune and fame, one that dilutes the authenticity that comes with showcasing emotion and the Self through song. However, the attention paid to the Editor and the Audience, as it is explained by Master Craftsmen, has very little to do with such an evaluation. In fact, these songwriters share precisely the same view of the music industry and "Nashville" that Channeling Artists do. As it turns out, "Nashville," as it used in both stories, represents another metaphor, one that encompasses and symbolizes the music "industry" or "selling out" in general. Instead, in this story, analytically "crafting" a song centers on the song's ability to convey an important message that has the power to "speak to the culture." As songwriting instructor and professional (i.e., "hired) songwriter Arlo puts it:

> In my lifetime, in my lifetime, I have never seen a time in this world that the world needs songs more than right now. Great songs. In the sixties, I got a good dose of how music can speak to the culture and what we need right now are songwriters who will speak into the culture about what's going on and what's happening more than ever. Right now. So this is a great time to be you. This is a great time to be sitting down at your desk writing songs. I don't care if people are downloading it all for free! This is bigger than us. This is bigger than us.

In this excerpt, the Editor does not live in "Nashville," but instead, sits at his desk working on songs to give away for free because the world is in dire need of them. This "work" involves keeping the listener engaged and involved for very specific reasons, typically for the purposes of social commentary, protest, and change.

In addition to his emphasis on rationality and analysis, the Editor is very much aware that songs can and should be deeply emotional; however, despite experiencing the "channeling" of emotion at times, songwriters do not stop there. Instead songs are purposefully constructed and "edited" to be felt by listeners. Constructing songs that lead to emotionally embodied responses in listeners is understood to be a powerful form of communicating, typically because whatever is being communicated will remain with audience members long after the song was initially heard. As working musician and political activist Bob says of this type of "communication" and "internalization,"

> The best way to tell the story about something that's going on in the world is not in a thousand word rant on the web, or article in the New York Times, or whatever, it is in the form of a song. That's the way people integrate and internalize information about what's going on in the most powerful way. It gets deeper into your soul, if you believe in soul. If you can tell a story about something that's going on, whether it is PTSD or the news in Iraq or Syria or whatever in the form of a three minute song, it is the most powerful way to communicate that message than any other form of communication.

As shown in this excerpt, good songwriting is much like good journalism, and like journalism, where one must write something worth reading, songwriters must write something worth hearing. Similar to Bob, and because songwriters are the "great observers," many refer to songwriting as "chronicling the human condition," "lifting consciousness," "saying things that need to be said," and having "social significance" or "social value." Songs in this case are described as "incisive social commentary," "messages," "powerful," and "sacred."

Many songwriters understand that part of a song's power lies in its ability to deliver a message without "preaching" or lecturing, which is often the case when communicating something political or social without the benefit of music (Sharpe 2008). As both Elizabeth and Garret explain,

> If you sing a message of love and hope, it takes all the preachy aspect out of it, you know. You try to tell somebody about love and hope it becomes this sort of, you know, preachy thing. But if you sing it in a song you can get the message across. (Elizabeth)
>
> I'm kind of social is what, you know—I try to pay attention to what's going on and when things irritate me, I try to nudge people with humor. I try to write songs more humorous. And it is easier to do that then to preach to them. (Garret)

As shown in these excerpts, and in addition to their ability to foster the internalization of information, songs allow for the successful communication of "social" messages without losing listeners by preaching or lecturing at them. This is perhaps one reason why Master Craftsmen insist on the well-known writing technique of "show, don't tell," particularly with "microscopic detail" so that listener can "see the movie."

Moreover, and similarly, the efficacy of communicating through song is further based on its ability to reach large audiences. This is yet another reason why the Editor is so opposed to "diaries," and always works diligently to construct songs that will be heard and felt by a great many listeners. As Jimmy describes it,

> We have a big problem in our world…And the world needs to change their mind as a whole about what's going on, and if enough people change their mind about what's going on and say this needs to stop and I'm going to do something about it, then it will happen. It's an unstoppable force, the majority of humanity, it is an unstoppable force, but if you don't—if they don't have a concept of—so use song and art to say, "Hey, this is what I think maybe needs to happen," or "This is what I see as a problem," and give people—as a method of communication to a *large* audience so that—communicate these concepts and ideas to a whole bunch of people and maybe if a whole bunch of people think about something, there can be a change, or healing, or whatever needs to happen. (His emphasis)

As shown in this excerpt, to deliver a message is not about singular listeners, as this will not affect much of anything supposedly in need of change. In an effort to evoke social change through commentary or protest, songwriters necessarily need to "craft" songs that reach many people. As Joni puts it, "It's a powerful medium. It moves nations. It moves individual hearts. Individual hearts times a million, moves nations."

Because the Master Craftsman is so focused on involving the Audience and delivering a message, the Muse-driven Channeling Artist, who is in much need of the Editor, is a rather self-absorbed, "lazy songwriter," who is unwilling to put in the "work" to make songs palatable to audience members. For Master Craftsmen, songwriters who fail to uphold their responsibility to the Audience by writing "boring," self-absorbed "diaries" similarly fail to keep the listener attentively *listening*, and in so doing, fail to communicate much of anything.

Moral Evaluations: The Editor vs. the Muse

As Marjorie succinctly explains on the relationship between the Muse and the Editor as it relates to Master Craftsmen,

> There's a lot of—um—energy that goes into editing and what makes it a good song is it is interesting to the listener it is not—I think one of my main complaints about songwriters is that they are using the songwriting as a kind of journal therapy, and that's not really fair to the listener. Because the listener did not come to hear you process your own stuff.

"Processing your own stuff" is to focus on one's Self, which is indeed the case in the first story, but in this case, such songwriters are known as "confessional" or "diary" writers, and "no one wants to listen to your diary." In the first story, this is considered authentic writing, at least as long as "confessional songwriting…sounds as if it has been ripped from the writer's chest" (Cairns 2014:22 quoted in Long and Barber 2015:152). In the story of the Channeling Artist,

"confessional songs" are those that present an audience with the songwriter's subjectivity

(Dibben 2006:172), or their true Self.

The Editor would decidedly disagree. Take for example, the following three excerpts

from songwriting expert and author O'Connell (2001): "Remember that you are writing to

communicate and don't write just for yourself" (p. 5); "Unless you are writing a blues song, self-

pity should be avoided. It may be therapeutic for you but it can be very off-putting for an

audience" (p. 4). And finally, his parting words include this rather convenient summary:

> The main difference between the successful and unsuccessful songwriter is in rewriting.
> The former knows that revision and refining are often ninety percent of the effort;
> whereas the latter tends to think the song a gift from the Muse which is somehow sacred
> and should be left alone. Many poor songs could have been excellent if the writer had
> been willing to rework them more…Remember perseverance pays off. (P. 7)

The skill, or "tools," required to "revise," "refine," "rewrite," and "rework" (i.e., "edit"), come

with "time" and "perseverance," aspects of creativity that revolve around "skill," and can be

"learned" with "practice" (Rideout 2014). Master Craftsmen are not born overnight, which is

why almost all of them despise their first songs, finding them most adamantly unsuccessful.

Interestingly, their "favorite" songs are always the "new" ones.

Songs born from initial songwriting attempts are characterized as hyperemotional "puppy

love" songs that were written long before understanding the "craft," befriending the Editor, and

honoring the Audience. Perhaps Archer puts it best when he says of his initial songs,

> I wrote songs when I was a teenager to impress girls but they were—they really sucked.
> They were bad, bad, bad, terrible, God awful, putrid, songs. Songs that oughtta be put in
> a box and buried with lime on top of them. And I didn't really understand anything about
> the craft of songwriting back in those days, it was just, you know, star struck teenager
> jotting down my inner feelings.

Much like "processing your own stuff" and "journal therapy," both of which are associated with

the Channeling Artist, one's "inner feelings," or rampant emotionality that is not edited into

something enjoyable to the Audience, is similarly associated with "putrid" songs. One must "understand" the "craft of songwriting" in order to produce something that does not require lime or a burial.

In addition to keeping the Audience engaged, there is also a responsibility to not depress or upset them, especially through "healing" songs, or those songs written for the purposes of working through troubling emotional experience. This does not necessarily pertain to writing "sad" songs, which can actually make listeners feel understood when done well (Frith 2009; Clarke et al. 2015), but instead about the tendency to consistently write poorly constructed, doom and gloom songs that, to use a common metaphor, make listeners want to "slit their wrists." Take, for example, the following story told by Roger:

> If someone is doing music for a healing reason you might not want to make a CD out of it and try to sell it, because it is too personal. It's not necessarily the kind of laundry that you ought to be airing our in the public, in the sense that I understand that's it is personal, I understand that you have chosen an art form to express yourself, but I don't necessarily want to hear that… You know, people—the spectator comes and wants to be carried away. And if you want to slit your wrists afterwards—that was what was in David Crosby's book "Long Time Gone." He was quoted—or I should say—there was a waitress in one of the restaurants in San Francisco where he would come and play, right? And there were people sitting at a table, and because he was playing the kind of songs that he played – this was truly overheard – that when the waitress came to ask them, "Is there anything I can get you" they said, "Yes. Razorblades."

Again, the audience, not the Self, is of principle importance here, and they want to be "carried away." Unless one wants audience members to commit suicide, songs that are "healing" or "too personal," as one participant put it, can "be hard to get through" and "should be left at home." As Jessica rather concisely puts it, "I disagree with the notion that songwriting is self-expression. Spitting is self-expression."

Despite the moral evaluations that are respectively attached to characters in both stories, the creative process of songwriting, as well as the cultural narratives used to convey and make

sense of that process, accomplish things for songwriters, audiences, and sociologists. In the next section I present the concepts of *songwriting as inquiry* and *songwriting in action* to account for these accomplishments, particular as they relate to songwriters and sociologists, but also in hopes of reuniting the study of music and emotion, together and separately, with *emotion*, process, subjectivity, and musical interaction.

Cultural "Work" of Songwriting as Inquiry and Action

Songwriting as Inquiry

Cultural narratives rarely match lived reality (Loseke 2011). When it comes to the story of the Channeling Artist, and for my purposes, it is not worth the time nor space to enter into a lengthy dialogue with those who seek to debunk this particular songwriting "myth" by investigating what is *really* going on (McIntyre 2008a, 2008b, 2010; Negus and Astor 2015), or to argue with those who find such a process to be "bound up in mythology that precludes detailed investigation" (Long and Barber 2015). I would hope that it goes without saying, at least to sociological audiences, that songs most probably do not fall from the sky, but instead arise from the internalization and embodiment of cultural knowledge. If we indeed take seriously the basic social psychological premise that the Self is a social construct that arises through experience and interaction (i.e., "socialization"), then it seems quite obvious that whatever comes out of that Self is socially, historically, and culturally informed. At the most fundamental level, songwriters must "channel" from, and "pour" into, a great variety of culturally complex, yet recognizable and predictable, templates that are layered and embedded within Western culture, American culture, and folk music culture, not the least of which is language. One could add to this, for a few examples, knowledge of culturally intelligible keys, chords, song structures (verse,

chorus, bridge, etc.), metaphors, poetic devices, musicianship, and so on and so forth ad infinitum.

What is of relevance is that this story has material consequences for songwriters who use it to convey and make sense of their process, and as such, it has theoretical consequences for a sociology of emotions that has lost touch with the lived and embodied experience of emotion. The term *songwriting as inquiry* is used to describe the "channeling" of difficult, "nagging," and "overwhelming" emotions through the body and through the songwriting process, providing a window into a perceivably authentic Self, and an embodied vehicle through which to organize and convey emotions that initially present themselves as impossible to understand. To put it metaphorically, if the process is a window, the song is a mirror; a clear picture of what was once beneath the surface before the song was felt and "channeled" into existence.

Songwriting as inquiry combines the notion that writing is a therapeutic and cathartic exercise in revelation, discovery, and "knowing," especially as it relates to Richardson's (2001) "writing as inquiry," with the emotional (and emotionally embodied) properties of music, thus endowing such a revelatory exercise with more efficacy, intensity, and emotionality. Songwriting approached in this way highlights the importance of lived emotionality, as this is what is "channeled" and organized through song. It is precisely emotion as it is experienced in the unfolding moment that "overflows" into a song, it is emotion that "urges" one to "pour" out a song, it is emotion that is experienced as a "need" in the body, and thus comes through the body with the song.

From a social phenomenological perspective, *songwriting as inquiry* could be understood as a musical form of metamorphosis, a sensual reflection on the body, where the body becomes a vehicle for deeply felt emotional experience (Katz 1999). That songwriters in this story do not

see themselves as actively writing songs as much as they are simply "receiving" them, yet experience intense emotions in and through the body, highlights the importance of how such a process is *sensual*, a feeling, as opposed to cognitive or thought-like. This is not to dichotomize rationality and emotionality, but instead to emphasize that songwriters do not see themselves as thinking or writing, but instead as "channeling" and "feeling." "Rationality" is not a requirement for one to "make sense" out of musical experience (Morton 2005), an experience which is, for most people, a "physical," "spiritual," "sensual," and "cognitive" one (Frith 1996). One does not need to be entirely present to feel and reflect on emotion and the body in ways that bring them to the surface of heightened emotional experience, or to have "an awareness of feelings and bodily sensations" that are an important part of "self-awareness" (Ruud 1997:8). It is the song that records and remembers this experience in ways that are then revealed to its "channeler," who is then afforded a way to express all that was once inexpressible.

Songwriting in Action

In the story of the Master Craftsman, songwriters are completely aware of what they are (culturally) required to do to ensure that their songs resonate with audience members, which, in addition to the accounts of songwriters in this study, is a potent theme throughout the literature. For example, in her article on the function and structure of narrative paradigms in country music, Neal (2007:67) writes, "Fans are intuitively aware of how these narrative paradigms function, as are songwriters, whose manipulation of those expected models is a potent tool for connecting with and commenting on country's tradition." Similarly, Negus and Astor (2015) argue that it is an awareness of listeners and their responses that informs the practices of songwriters. As "architects," listeners shape how songwriters must necessarily "build" their songs. For Hatch and Watson (1974:168), this involves a "membership analysis, i.e. an orientation to 'who the

audience[s] are'….Put another way, lyrics, to be seen as 'authentic' would have to observably index the shared experience, in the sense of (local) cultural knowledge." Said differently, songwriters know that listeners are situated within the same musical community, and that this cultural knowledge must be effectively deployed in songs to reach them and keep their attention.

Narrative paradigms and lyrics, for example, are but two of many "tools" that songwriters use in hopes of successfully "connecting" with audiences and "commenting" on a great variety of important themes embedded within folk music culture. As a musical community that is well known for its political and socially conscious character ((Lund and Denisoff 1971; Morrison 2001; Thurmaier 2006; Helsel 2007; Ingram 2008; Lena and Peterson 2008; Frith 2009), such a "connection" with audiences usually takes the form of a musical exposition of what is supposedly in need of change and how one might go about changing it. In this case, "good" songwriters have a tremendous amount of cultural knowledge surrounding folk music and what it takes to evoke an emotional response in listeners. Eliciting such a response is the entire point (or plot) of songwriting in this story, thereby accounting for the amount of "work" that goes into it. Such "work," "effort," and "time" is dedicated to the successful and musical promotion of social protest, commentary, and change. As one Master Craftsman wrote in a song, "I still believe folk music can change the world."

Songwriting in action, then, is a term used to describe the purposeful selection of "tools" within one's cultural and (folk) musical "tool" kit that are strategically used to emotionally engage large audiences so as to effectively send a specific message. While many of my songwriters "work" to send messages such as "love," "hope," and "peace," other participants have written songs about PTSD, Alzheimer's, and mental illness, the character of politics and political actors, past and present wars, homosexuality and AIDS, sex and drug abuse, pollution,

climate change, the war against drugs, poverty, the consequences of religion, and the mass production of food. As they put it, in order for songwriters to reach audiences, or to "make them bleed," "kick their butts," "break them down," and get them to "wrap their arms around it," they must necessarily "craft" songs that are intelligible and familiar to audiences. The difficulty involved in the accomplishment of this conscious effort is evidenced by the plethora of songwriting schools and books that are precisely meant to teach songwriters the best and most effective way to accomplish this, or to provide them with the "tools" that are necessary to do so.

In this way, songwriters are much like "commonsense ethnographers" (Hatch and Watson 1974), or to use participants' language, the "great observers" or the "great chroniclers" of the world. In many ways, throughout this research, I was struck by how similar such songwriters are to autoethnographers (see Bartleet and Ellis [2009] for a collection of research that beautifully exemplifies such a comparison), as well as researchers, writers, journalists, and the like. For example, they use imagery, metaphor, alliteration, poetic devices, stories, and structures to keep listeners attentively involved. They understand that if songs are too long, too wordy, too complicated, and too confusing, or if songs are not written in certain keys, with certain chords, and within certain structures, they will not be received by audiences at all, much less have the capacity to "touch" them, "move" them, or "connect" with them. Additionally, they are deeply, albeit colloquially, in touch with the some of the most important and prevalent themes within research on music (if not more so) and consistently deploy these understandings throughout the creative process.

Songwriters know that songs are "symbolic acts" (Vambe 2004) that serve as the most powerful vehicle for challenging norms, for the "possibilities of resistance" (Jones 2002), for social critique (Kinney 2012), for enlisting followers (Shelemay 2011), for social movements,

and for social change (Roy 2010; Collin 2013). They know that all of the above has much to do with a songs capacity to inspire in ways that are not overtly "preachy" (Sharpe 2008) and listeners' ability to subjectively position themselves in a song (Frith [1996] 2011; Duffy 2005; Dibben 2006; Long and Barber 2015). They know that inserting stories in songs ("story" songs) render that subjective positioning all the more effective (Neal 2007; Howey 2012), and that lyrics must "index" shared experience within American and folk music culture (Hatch and Watson 1974; Frith 2009). They know that the music and melody itself must tell its own type of story (Feld and Fox 2004), and perhaps most importantly, like Channeling Artist, they know that the transcendent power of music and all that it can accomplish is a direct result of its capacity to evoke and convey emotions in ways that are physically experienced in the body (Sudnow 1978; Bendix 2000; Morton 2005; Ruud 2009; Berish 2012; DeNora 2012; Clarke et al. 2015).

Songwriters have the same "common sense ethnographer" awareness of social problems that is similar to their awareness of the relationships among music, emotion, and social change. In his work on songwriting as activism, Collin (2013) describes how framing theory neglects process and agency. Similarly, it neglects how songwriters perform a "movement identity" through that process, the lived experience of that process, and how both are informed by discourse in and around social movements (as well as the cultural understandings and resources that pertain to them) that foster and maintain collective identity. As mentioned previously, I take issue with Collin's (2013) method of employing discourse analysis, which I do not see as attending to "process," to a single song written by a single songwriter. However, I do agree with his general premise and offer the concept of *songwriting in action* in hopes of extending that premise. *Songwriting in action* indeed refers to a *process*, one that also involves the discourse, or in this case, narratives, around the collective "movement" identity of "songwriters" who

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understand songwriting as a form of "weaponry," an effective vehicle for social change, and strategically write songs in hopes of accomplishing this.

This process, like that of Channeling Artists, is similarly emotional; however, such emotion is felt and purposefully "crafted" into the song so as to be felt by others. Both *songwriting as inquiry* and *songwriting in action* are presented in an attempt to acknowledge the character of musical and emotional experience as deeply "felt" in ways that extend beyond the theoretical and conceptual realm of cultural production and into the realm of lived experience.

Discussion

In this chapter, I have attended to two cultural narratives around the songwriting process, as well as what they accomplish for songwriters (and sociologists), particularly as they relate to issues of emotionality, identity, social change, and corresponding notions of authenticity as it relates to those interrelationships. In so doing, I have more subtly attended to other key issues and research questions that I more fully examine in this section. Namely, how such narratives (re)produce folk and festival cultures, how they construct and maintain personal and collective identities, and how participants feel in relation to songwriting.

Given the plot lines of these two stories, their telling relates to issues of personal and collective identity in multifaceted ways. The story of the Channeling Artist is a story about emotionality and the Self, meaning that when songs are "channeled," songwriters have a way of seeing, knowing, and expressing their Self in ways that were previously beyond their grasp and understanding. In this way, such songwriters have a creative, therapeutic, and emotionally embodied window into who they "really" are, or their "real" and "impulsive" Self (Turner 1974), that was just beneath the surface until the song "arrived." In this story, songwriters most commonly feel overwhelmed, often with "nagging" emotions that are confusing or difficult to

organize, interpret, and understand. However, following the "channeling" of a song, or the "spilling" out of emotion from the body, songwriters describe feeling relieved. The story of the Master Craftsman, on the other hand, is a story about "work," "rationality," and the successful promotion of a social message. Personal identities in this case have far less to do with revelations of a "true" self, and far more to do with their understanding themselves as purposeful agents of social justice, commentary, and change.

Describing how Master Craftsmen actually *feel* in this story would be a projection on my part. Master Craftsmen speak of their songwriting process in terms of "analysis" and "craft" because they are far more concerned with the emotionality of the audience than they are with their own. While the word "feeling" consistently appears in my transcripts with channeling artists—for example, "feeling a lot of emotion," "it has to be something that I feel," "I just played those feelings," and "feeling angry"—it rarely appears in my transcripts with Master Craftsmen. This is not to say that Master Craftsmen are totally devoid of emotion, but it is to say that they are considerably less likely than Channeling Artists to describe their songwriting process in emotional terms. Feeling "responsible" to audience members, and ensuring that *they* feel, is the most common "feeling" expressed by Master Craftsmen.

In both cases, participants distinctly claim the personal identity of "songwriter." None of my participants, if they indeed write songs, are cautious of claiming that identity. In this way, one's personal identity as a folk songwriter is linked to a larger collective identity of folk songwriters ("we" who write folk songs, not "pop" songs), all of which are nested in one's authentic membership within the broader folk musical community. However, participants understand and evaluate certain "types" of songwriters as authentic or inauthentic, or as "lazy" and "confessional" vs. "contrived" and "formulaic," which further contributes to personal and

collective identities to the extent that songwriters identify themselves and others based on the moral evaluations respectively assigned to both narratives. Cultural narratives around songwriting, then, construct and maintain personal and collective identities that involve "songwriter(s)" and "folk music membership(s)," but also shared meaning around certain "types" of songwriters who have different interpretations of what songs "should" do, why, and for whom.

Following this, such stories also shape and are shaped by folk and festival culture in a variety of ways, and are thus important to the (re)production of both. Stories that abound at festivals about certain "types" of songwriters (re)produces festival culture, or what all members "need to know" in order to navigate festival life. For example, one would certainly not want to associate with those who are only in it for the money, or sit around and listen to a "diary" all night. This also leads to certain camps that are more or less characterized by certain "types" of songwriters, or at least the widespread perception that such songwriter's are thought to inhabit certain camps. This perception has much to do with how such groupings of people supposedly understand the practice and purpose of songwriting in ways that do not align with others' interpretations. And at the risk of inserting a platitude, people talk. When it comes to songwriting, Kerrville in particular is a proverbial hotbed for gossip among people who take songwriting seriously. Participants that are not actively playing music are sitting around talking and telling stories, many of which pertain to the character of songs, songwriting, and songwriters. These stories feed back into festival culture and further solidify members' understandings of themselves and others as authentic or inauthentic songwriters.

Given the interrelationships between folk and festival culture, and given participants personal and collective identities as folk songwriters and enthusiasts, it is not surprising that

cultural narratives around songwriting, as well as corresponding ideas about authenticity, inform (and are informed by) folk music culture writ large. Despite the moral evaluations of Channeling Artists, I never once encountered a songwriter who was "in it for the money," who was not emphatically critical of the music industry and so-called "Nashville" (even if they lived there), or who appeared devoid of any and all emotion when it comes to music and songwriting. On the other hand, despite the evaluations of Master Craftsmen, I did not come across any songwriters who could simply care less about how listeners receive their songs (or else they would be playing by themselves in their living room), nor did I find any that disagreed with the notion that songs are perhaps the most powerful way to convey a message and should be used as such. I am sure there are folk songwriters out there who could neatly fit into these categories, but I just never met one.

Both stories have been and continue to be situated within folk music culture and thus highlight the systems of shared meaning on which it has been historically constructed and contemporarily maintained. In both stories, songwriters adamantly reject the industrial commodification of songs by taking a strong anti-commercialist stance on most everything music related; they appreciate the capacity of songs to instigate social change; they all find songwriting to be sacred, transcendent, and intensely emotional (although some songs admittedly come easier and are far more emotional than others); and, at one point or another, they are all deeply inspired and they all "tweak" or "polish" their songs, albeit some more purposefully and for much longer. I am not at all presenting an argument for the "reality" behind these stories, but I am arguing that both stories, as well as the evaluations that go with them, are embedded within, and reproduce, folk music culture in the same ways. That is, folk music is socially conscious, emotional, against commodification, and thus "authentic." (One could also easily arrange these terms, or add a

"because it is" in between them, and essentially capture the metaphorical "heart" of "folk music.")

       While the last chapter centered on the cultural and "narrative work" of authenticity "in action" through festival participation and musical interaction, this chapter has focused on the cultural "work" of narratives around the creative songwriting process, particularly as they relate to the interrelationships among emotion, identity, authenticity, and social change. In this next chapter, I continue an examination of these key themes, but in regards to how songs are received by listeners within the folk musical community. Here I describe the cultural "work" of narratives *in* songs that facilitates the widespread cultural consensus around "good songs," or those songs that all viable members of the folk musical community "know" and "feel" when they hear them.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

"YOU KNOW IT WHEN YOU FEEL IT": AN EXAMINATION OF "GOOD SONGS" AS

A CULTURAL CATEGORY

In this chapter, I examine cultural understandings of "good songs" as they are interpreted and "felt" by members of the folk musical community. "Good songs," as it is used in this chapter, is an umbrella term meant to encompass members' varied positive emotional evaluations of songs, as opposed to their specific language, such as "great song" or "amazing song" for example. This chapter extends the work of those who "unpack" the "unspoken rules" of concepts and experiences that are either difficult to articulate, and/or do not necessitate articulation because they represent what members simply "know" (see Clark 1997 for an excellent example regarding "sympathy.") In particular, I am guided by the work of Lutz (1986), who, in conceptualizing "emotion" as a "cultural category," examines "the unspoken assumptions embedded within the concept of emotion" (p. 287), or the "unpacking" of "an amalgam of distinct cultural and subcultural traditions" that allows for a "better understanding" of emotion (p. 289). Here, in place of emotion, I substitute "good song."

Likewise, my goals in this chapter align with the ethnomethodological intentions of Hatch and Watson (1974:162), who

> sociologically describe competent hearers' methods for recognizing a piece of music as being an authentic rural (or country) blues number. To achieve this end we shall outline the 'interpretive' rules in terms of which a competent hearer (member) can arrive at a warrantable – i.e. a publicly visible, 'display-able' and defensible to other members – definition of a piece of music as being an "authentic" example of what is known as the "country blues."

Similar to Luz (1986) and "emotion," I simply use "good song," as it relates to the folk musical community, in place of "country blues." However, for my purposes, to say that "good songs" are, for example, "emotional" and "relatable," says nothing about *how* songs accomplish this, or the process through which songs become identified as "good" based on such characteristics. Said differently, *how* are songs emotional and relatable? If "good songs" are understood to represent the "emotional truth," *how* does this show up in songs in ways that render them "honest" and "real" (i.e., "good")?

Answers to these questions are intricately bound up in folk music culture, particularly as they relate to items of key interest: personal and collective identities, embodied emotion, authenticity, and shared meaning in and around what songs "accomplish" and for whom. In this way, this chapter is largely dedicated to the cultural "work" of narratives and music for listeners (or, as introduced in the last chapter, the character of the Audience). Unpacking the "how" of this "work," or the "interpretive rules" behind "good songs" as a "cultural category," has much to contribute to theoretical and empirical understandings of culture as a system of shared meaning, as both subjective and objective, and as affording and limiting experiential possibilities. The same can be said of emotion as it is informed by this cultural dialectic, as it is felt in the body, and thus felt as "authentic" and "true."

In what follows, I first describe how "good songs" can be conceptualized as a cultural category based on a widely shared "knowing" and "feeling" that leads to a cultural consensus. In this section, I turn briefly towards how members learn how to "know" and "feel" in ways that are representative of authentic membership. Second, I "unpack" the basic cultural conventions and techniques underpinning "good" music as it relates to Western and folk music culture. In this section, I outline the necessary fundamentals for songs to be bearable, intelligible, and interesting

to large audiences. Third, and highly related, I examine recognizable song structures and forms, particularly as they relate to "story songs." Here I describe how stories in songs meet all of the qualifications of stories outside of songs: They have settings, temporal orders, plotlines, characters, and morals.

Fourth, I "unpack" the unspoken assumptions embedded within "good songs," such that they are emotional, embodied, "emotionally true," highly relatable, and thus "do good" for large audiences. Throughout this section, I subtly attend to the "how" of "good songs." For example, songs are emotional because they are highly relatable, and songs are highly relatable because they convey widely shared experiences that are "emotionally true" and thus felt as "real," "honest," and "authentic." The fifth section that follows is more fully devoted to a discussion of "how," such as "how do songwriters access and convey the 'emotional truth'?" The answer to this question is twofold: The first is that the access of "emotional truth" is largely based on narratives around the songwriting process and their relationship to *songwriting as inquiry* and *songwriting in action* as analyzed in chapter six. The second is that narratives *in* songs increases the emotional, relatable, and communicative properties of both stories and songs, and thus greatly facilitates the cultural "work" that "good songs" accomplish for listeners.

I now turn to how "good songs" can be conceptualized as a cultural category based on "knowing," "feeling," and widespread cultural consensus.

"Good Songs" as a Cultural Category

"Good songs" are difficult to talk about. What is and what is not a "good" song is determined by taken-for-granted cultural knowledge embedded within the folk musical community and thus deserves little to no explanation. Everyone just "knows" it when they "hear" and "feel" it. As Maxwell says of this shared understanding, "All you gotta say is 'Oh, you know

that song by so and so?' and they go 'Oh yea!' and instantly you've got a fellow soul." As a sociologist interested in cultural understandings of "good songs," this presents itself as an interesting problematic, one that cannot be resolved by simply asking participants, "In your opinion, what is a good song?" I did, of course, ask this question, which resulted in a great many responses that resemble the following examples Jessica, Joseph, and Fred:

> Well, I can't actually say too much about that, because it's in a territory that it isn't all that useful to talk about in the language that we have available to us (Jessica).

> Whether or not the musical setting, the tempo, the harmonic elements - minors are a little sadder, majors are a little brighter—all those kinds of things, and yet we start getting into this whole witches brew—unexpected—I mean, whatever the elements are that pull that together. A lot of it's just coming from a kind of a vibrational humming, seeking place. (Joseph)

> There's something—the symmetry, the beauty of a simple triad that you know just – there's a harmony there and something—I don't know. I can't—I can't define it, but I know good music when I hear it. (Fred)

Or as Harper put it, "I like the whole - It's like the 'Beyond' section in Bed, Bath, and Beyond." Others have different ways of saying it (or not saying it), such as "it's that marriage of sound," "it's a bigness you can't say," or "I just hear a song and I think I like it." As shown in the above example, participants just "know good music when [they] hear it," or as Jessica simply says, "You know it when you feel it." (As in the last chapter, quotes around words and phrases, as evidenced by the previous sentence, are meant to distinguish members' language from my own, unless cited as a scholarly source or used in reference to "good songs.")

One might think that perhaps another route to examining these cultural understandings would be to examine the antithesis of "good" songs: "bad" songs. Yet, what makes a song "bad" is also situated within systems of shared meaning in and around folk music culture and is thus known and felt in ways that are similarly difficult to articulate. The question, "In your opinion,

what is a bad song?" led to responses such as, "you can tell right off the bat, they're just not there," or "my ear didn't like it." My personal favorite answer comes from Fernando:

> Wow. I don't know. Difficult. You can just recognize—it's like—if you go to the HEB grocery and you buy some—if you like 7 Up, but they don't have 7 Up, or you're a little low on the cash situation—can't afford the 7 Up—so you get this lemon lime soda that's on sale, but it's like 6 Up, it's not 7 Up. Some songs are like that to me, like it's a 6 Up song, or it's just not very well written. A good song you just know it, just like a teacher— every English teacher I ever had said, you know, the A paper is the easiest, you know, they just rise to the top, there's no question about it. It's the B's and C's, or C's and D's, that, you know, you're putting so much effort into it.

Responses such as these only bring about more questions: What is not "there" about it? What did your "ear" not like about it? What does "not very well written" mean? These questions are similarly difficult to answer.

Clearly, then, attending to what makes a "good song" means looking beyond participants' verbal descriptions following a direct question about "good" and "bad" songs. For the purposes of this research, it meant attending Songwriters' School and song critiques where songwriters are taught by professionals how to write "good songs" and better "bad" ones, attending the New Folk performances, where winners and finalists were selected because they wrote "good songs," talking to judges and screeners about how they went about selecting those winners and finalists, talking to (and gossiping with) participants about how they felt about those selections, and closely observing participants' verbal and non-verbal responses following the performance of songs. It also meant asking different questions, that, unbeknownst to me at the time, partially enabled me to access the character of "good songs," such as asking participants to describe their favorite songwriter and their favorite songs, or asking songwriters what they want listeners to take away from their songs, or asking what they thought their songs, taken together, had to say about (or what they wanted them to say about) their personal identities, or who they were as people and as songwriters.

The similarities among responses to such questions, as well as the consistency that resulted from my participant observations, were rather striking. This consistency, or cultural consensus, represents the first of two ways that "good songs" can be understood as a cultural category, which is how the classification of what is "good" is based on systems of shared meaning embedded within the folk musical community. Widespread and tacitly shared agreement about a "good" folk song is drastically different than a subcultural consensus, say, about what makes a "good" rap song.

The second and highly related way that "good songs" can be understood as a cultural category is that to say a song is "good" is to say a great many additional things about songs and their perceived character that are tightly packaged within that determination. As Lutz (1986) notes in regards to emotion as a cultural category, to say that one is "emotional," for example, is also to say that one is behaving in an "irrational" and "feminine" manner. The reverse is also true; to say that one is "irrational" is also to say that one is "emotional." The same can be said of "good songs." Said differently, to say that a song is "good" is also to say that it is "emotional" and "emotionally true," as well as written according to Western and folk music convention, without actually saying it.

Participants may have a hard time describing what a "good song" is, but that does not mean they do not share that indicative knowing and feeling with a great many others who "know" and "feel" the same way (i.e., in accordance with folk music culture). They also "know" (consciously or otherwise) that when someone attaches a positive evaluation to a song or musical experience, whether it be "good," "great," "amazing," etc., such a song or experience encapsulates additional shared meaning that is already built into such an evaluation. Unpacking

this encapsulation of meaning is the principle concern of this chapter; however, it is first worth

attending to the cultural consensus component of "good songs."

Cultural Consensus

There are many ways in which participants exemplify a widespread agreement about

"good songs," but the New Folk Competition at Kerrville serves as a particularly salient

example. During the New Folk process, there are 40 screeners who are initially responsible for

narrowing down a thousand or more submissions to 32 finalists who will then perform at

Kerrville in front of three judges. Following these performances, the three judges will select six

winners from the final 32, who are then afforded another opportunity to perform a larger set for

audiences. All performances from the 32 finalists and six winners occur on Threadgill, a large

stage within the campgrounds, and are open to any and all campers who so choose to attend.

Upon interviewing two screeners and two judges, I was nearly disappointed to discover that there

were no dark rooms filled with gatekeepers and critics who were violently arguing about who

should comprise the 32 finalists or the six winners. Instead, there was a tremendous amount of

agreement about who should populate these categories. For example, the below fieldnote excerpt

was recorded following an informal interview with a screener who was involved in narrowing

down the 1,077 submissions, which included two songs each (2,154 songs), in 2014:

> I asked if there was ever any disagreement among screeners about the final 32, to which
> he said that it is usually "pretty unanimous"—that screeners often have similar rankings
> and similar listings of their final 32. He went on to say that sometimes he disagrees, but
> there are enough screeners that if someone didn't make it into *his* final 32, but made it
> into however many others, than they would still make it, much like an average. But
> mostly it's a pretty shared agreement with the occasional bout of disagreement.
> (Emphasis in original)

From a sociological perspective, it is rather interesting to consider how a group of 40

people somewhat easily came to an agreement about the best 32 submissions out of 1,077. And

such a process is not at all conducted in a willy-nilly fashion. This particular screener was kind enough to show me his notebook which was packed with the notes he had made while listening to all 2,154 songs, most of which were written in shorthand and admittedly looked like Greek to me. Perhaps even more interesting is how quickly three judges came to a consensus about which six would win out of the final 32. As a New Folk judge explains of the process one year;

> I said to [the other judges] "Look, we could be here forever if we just start with one and go through 32 so I have an idea. Why don't we each separately, before we talk – start a conversation – put down *your* – on a piece of paper—for six names, put down your top eight names." And the good news is here that they don't have to be in order. You're just picking six people out of 32, you're not picking one first, second, third, fourth. So, it was very interesting. It was a good way to do it because on our list of eight, there were four names that were on everybody's list out of 32. The four were not only on our list of eight, they were our favorite four. All three judges. But that left only two positions…And it came down to those songs and obviously just our opinion, but it's very interesting how three people could come up with four names. That says something. (Their emphasis)

When asked if there was ever any serious disagreement between judges, this participant responded, "It's only ever happened to me once over the years of doing it." Such a response is all the more telling given that his experience includes judging four or five contests a year over the course of 15 years. The other three judges of songwriting contests that I interviewed, which included two men and one woman, similarly referenced the civility and ease of arriving at a broad consensus. Of these three, one had previously judged New Folk and, like the judge above, found it to be an agreeable and enjoyable experience.

While screeners and judges exemplify the type of shared meaning around "good songs," the same can be said of festival attendees. Hundreds of campers gather to watch these performances, many of whom attend all 38 sets (finalists and winners), and take the competition quite seriously. The emphasis that listeners place on New Folk, along with the notoriety that accompanies being a finalist and/or winner, works to circulate stories of songwriters and songs. For example, during my final year at Kerrville in 2014, there was one particular song showcased

by a New Folk winner who *everyone* was incessantly talking about. For example, Leon began

describing this particular song during an interview, to which I excitedly interrupted with "Yes! I

remember that!" He continued,

> Of course you do! Because everybody on the ranch was talking about it! And people were talking about it that didn't even like that kind of music maybe, you know what I'm saying? What a song! You couldn't help but be moved by it. It's a song that I will remember two months from now, maybe not every word but the whole idea of it—Oh—it was just like, if *that* doesn't move you, you might as well just bury yourself right there under that tree, you know. (His emphasis)

Leon's exaltation alone points to how "good songs" are "emotional," but this is compounded by

how others, myself included, clearly remember that emotional experience.

For another example, Jessica, without provocation, had the following to say about the

same song:

> *That* song is—you know—the guy I was sitting next to, pretty well constructed, masculine, button-down guy, was *weeping*. And I—I am impressed by that. I can tell you what I heard as beautiful songwriting—perfect, beautiful songwriting. And I think [they] had a couple perfect songs. In my book, perfection. Oh, my gosh! That's nuts! That's nice to be a witness to. (Her emphasis)

Like Jessica, Leon, and myself, many participants I spoke with would emphatically argue that

this song was one of the best songs on the ranch that year and perhaps in Kerrville history.

Similarly, another one of the winning performances during that same year absolutely spun me

into such an emotional breakdown that I had to distance myself from other audience members.

Much like Jessica's story, a rather burly male friend of mine from Songwriters' School had a

similar experience during that performance, where he stood in the back "crying like a baby,"

thankful for his sunglasses and a cowboy hat that mostly obscured his face.

These experiences point to widespread indicators of "good songs" as they are interpreted

by listeners, such that they are emotional, embodied, appeal across social categories (gender, in

this case) and are thus experienced as "universal." Also, both songs were "relatable," as one song

was about "memories" accumulated over the course of being married to someone who had developed Alzheimer's disease, and the other was about the acknowledgement of a much needed breakup. In this way, both songs were "true" for the many who had experienced such events, and "emotionally true" for those who had not. As I describe more fully in a later section, both songs were "emotionally true" to the extent that listeners who had not personally experienced those situations felt what they *should* and therefore perceivably *would* have felt if they had.

New Folk aside, there are many instances of nearly unanimous agreement about "good songs." There have been plenty of times where I found myself crying unabashedly with others upon hearing a song, there have been a plethora of songwriters who generated the yearly "buzz" around those who must be heard, and there have been countless stories told about unbelievable musical experiences that resulted from "good songs." Similarly, when asked to name their favorite songwriters, the same names popped up with a regularity that can only be described as predictable: John Prine, Bob Dylan, Townes Van Zandt, Hank Williams, Woody Guthrie, Guy Clark, Joan Baez, Leonard Cohen, Neil Young, Patty Griffin, Bruce Coburn, and Joni Mitchell, all of whom represent pillars of folk music culture and tradition, and all of whom have been, and still are, repeatedly listened to as cultural and emotional representatives of songwriters who write "good songs."

The above exemplifies "good songs" as a cultural category to the extent that such songs are culturally informed and informing, or how widespread perceptions of "good songs" are nested within systems of shared meaning that are reflected and perpetuated by members of the folk musical community. This is not to argue that *all* members completely agree about *all* songs *all* the time, as listeners' subjectivities necessarily play an essential role in rendering songs "good." For example, when it came to the results of the New Folk Competition in 2014, one

participant says, "Were they all my top six? Well, no." For another participant, "There were a lot of good ones, but you hear them missing it sometimes." In my case, I was nothing short of shocked to discoverer that the aforementioned song I was quite seriously emotionally affected by was not among one screener's top 32. As he put it, the song was "too long."

However, "good songs" are those that an impressive majority of members will define as such, and thus exemplify the type of perceived unanimity described above, despite the occasional outlier. This is perhaps why the 32 finalists were the 32 finalists, the winning six were the winning six, and most participants I spoke with adamantly agreed with those decisions. Said differently, and as previously mentioned, two people positively evaluating a song out of 20 listeners does not, from a cultural perspective, make a "good song." It is worth mentioning that when I refer to an "impressive majority of members," I am not just referring to experts, professionals, and other songwriters. I am simply referring to people who love folk music as members of the folk and festival community. It is also the case that winners and finalists of New Folk and Winfield's "NewSong Showcase" are not big names in folk music nor are they accomplished professionals. Instead, both contests are dedicated to highlighting and celebrating unknown, emerging songwriters.

This is consistent with the overall character of folk music as antithetical to the "popular," as well as the character of musicians' festivals as musically interactive, which is why so many participants prefer to play music in the campgrounds instead of attending mainstage performances. While there are a plethora of songwriting experts, instructors, authors, judges, and professionals at Kerrville, and just as many award winning instrumentalists and accomplished working musicians at Winfield, there are plenty, if not more, attendees who are not expert

songwriters, musicians, instrumentalists, etc., at both festivals. Such attendees are drawn to festivals because they love folk music and the festival community (Cobb 2011, 2014).

For my purposes, and from a sociological perspective, one can learn about "good songs" at Songwriters' School, song critique circles, or by reading songwriting books, but these activities, while important to some, are more about constructing "good songs" than they are about learning to know and feel them. Learning what is and is not a "good song" takes place long before one chooses to take part in schools, circles, and festivals. Essentially, it is a love of music, specifically folk music, that draws participants to festivals in the first place. Before I attend to "unpacking" the basic cultural conventions and techniques of "good songs," it is first worth briefly turning towards the ways in which participants come to recognize and feel "good songs."

Learning to Know and Feel "Good Songs"

Like all things related to social life, one's ability to know and feel a "good song" when they hear it is based on a wide array of cultural competencies that develop through socialization. "Good songs" are first informed by primary socialization (Berger and Luckmann 1966), or, in this case, the process of learning what Western music is and is not supposed to sound like (road noise, for example, is not music). This is followed by secondary socialization (Berger and Luckmann 1966), or the process through which one obtains, internalizes, and displays the cultural knowledge indicative of cultural membership. Much like Becker's (1953) marihuana user, interactions and observations of others within the folk musical community, as well as the shared meaning and experience that results, is a process of learning and internalizing how "good songs" are supposed to feel. In this way, one's ability to feel "good songs" is indicative of having been socialized into the folk musical community. That feeling, then, represents the type of authentic membership that is shared and validated by other members.

One's ability to know and feel the "emotional," "relatable," and "authentic" properties of "good songs" is first informed by one's ability to know and feel when songs do or do not align with the predominant cultural conventions, structures, and musical techniques that are widely expected, recognizable, and predictable to Western and folk music audiences. I now turn to these fundamental characteristics of "good songs."

Cultural Conventions and Techniques of "Good Songs"

Unpacking the unspoken assumptions of "good songs" must first begin with the very basics that render them bearable and intelligible to large audiences. Similar to the overall character of "good songs," one knows if and when the basics have been breached or fulfilled when one hears and feels it. As with all things related to creative production, there are a great many successful songwriters who have broken the rules (Marade et al. 2007). One could, and probably should, read the rules presented below while imaginatively inserting "although not always" in between each rule. In this case, "good songs" are "governed less by precise rules" and more by "convention" (McIntyre 2008a:46), or as Cooper puts it, "they are loose absolutes." As "loose" as they are, "hearing" is socialized, meaning that such rules are informed by Western systems of meaning in and around the fundamentals of "good" folk music and what that is supposed to sound like.

Cultural Conventions: The Basics

The following list broadly represents the fundamental "interpretive rules" underpinning "good songs":

1) "Good songs" are in tune (this may be the only absolute). There is perhaps nothing worse for listeners, particularly if they are musicians themselves, to hear a song that it is out of tune. There are a vast array of "guitar-tunings" (Hatch and Watson 1974) available to

songwriters, although most use "standard tuning," where the strings on the guitar are tuned to E, A, D, G, B, E. However, whatever tuning system one chooses to use, one's instrument *must* be in tune.

2) "Good songs" are written in major and minor modes that are familiar to Western audiences. I am admittedly far from being a music theorist and explaining such modes is not the purpose of this research. Suffice it to say that there are a plethora of scales, modes, and tones around the world that are unfamiliar to the Western ear and are thus likely to be uncomfortable.

3) "Good songs" incorporate the right modes in the right ways. Oftentimes modes are symbolically associated with certain types of emotion, such that sad songs typically involve minor modes and happier songs typically involve major modes. While perhaps now a tired musicological cliché, it is widely understood nonetheless. The relationship between modes and emotion is evidenced by the below advice, from one songwriter to another, in a song critique following a song about Vietnam veterans.

> All patriotic songs are written in major keys, but all songs of loss are written in minor keys, and you need to decide whether this is a patriotic song or if this is a song about the cost. And if it's patriotic, then keep it in your major key, but if it's a song about personal loss and cost, I would think about putting it in a minor key.

Following this advice, the songwriter immediately changed the mode of the song and played it again. Everyone in the circle agreed that such a mode change best "served" the song and the emotion that it was intended to evoke.

4) "Good songs," while they might include a mode change for dramatic effect, typically stay within the same mode, and follow the appropriate chord progressions determined by that mode. For example, songs that begin in G typically conclude, or "resolve," in that mode.

5) "Good songs" must have the right tempo for the song. The right tempo also seems to align with emotion, where sad songs are typically slower and happier songs are typically faster.

For instance, not only was the above songwriter asked to change to a minor mode to more fully convey the experience and emotion of Vietnam veterans during the war, but they were also asked to slow the song down considerably, which further communicated the sense of loss and tragedy the songwriter had initially intended to achieve.

6) "Good songs" with the right tempo must always remain steady. The rhythm of a song should not be confusing to listeners who are moving with the song in some way (toe tapping, dancing, or swaying, for example). One cannot have an embodied emotional experience indicative of "good songs" if the rhythm of the song changes in ways that are jolting and unpredictable.

7) "Good songs" are played by competent musicians who follow the above rules. Such musicians are "competent" to the extent that they can play their instrument without hitting the wrong chords and alarming listeners. One does not have to be an impressive instrumentalist to play "good songs," but one definitely needs to be the type of musician that consistently and rhythmically plays the correct chords and notes.

8) "Good songs" are played by competent musicians who follow predominant instrumental techniques. As Lyle notes, "The way you play an instrument can really affect a song." For example, guitar players employ recognizable strumming patterns, which involves hitting all chords simultaneously, or fingerstyle patterns (aka, "picking patterns"), which involves hitting individual strings in a continuous arrangement. Such patterns are, of course, played rhythmically, steadily, and somewhat predictably.

9) "Good songs" are sung by "competent" vocalists, or those who follow the above rules: They sing in tune, they use familiar modes in the "right" ways, they keep a steady tempo, and they are "competent" to the extent that they consistently sing the right notes and stay on pitch. As

Frith (2009) notes, this is more about *how* they sing, which is equally important to what they sing when it comes to determining one's relationship with a song. Because both lyrics and melody represent the most important components of songs, (McIntyre 2008a; Rideout 2014; Stewart and McAlpin 2015), vocalists should not only sing in tune, but also clearly enunciate so that the lyrics can be easily understood. As one participant put it, "Now, if the music doesn't work you won't hear the lyrics."

10) "Good songs," as I more fully describe below, follow culturally sanctioned structures, forms, and patterns that are recognizable and predictable to listeners (Neal 2007). The most common are AAA, also called strophic songs (verse-verse-verse), AABA (verse-verse-bridge-verse), and ABABCB (verse-chorus-verse-chorus-bridge-chorus). There are plethora of variations, such that a song might include a pre-chorus or a final verse following a chorus, but these variations are also recognizable. It is well understood that there should be what Joseph calls "an appreciable difference" between each section in the song, as each part serves an important function.

Following these basic cultural conventions, perhaps the most important characteristic of "good songs" is that they are always interesting to listeners, vocally, melodically, lyrically, and/or instrumentally. If a "good song" falls short in one of these categories, it is typically repaired by emphasizing another. For example, Bob Dylan is an all-time favorite for most participants; however, he is not at all well known for being a dynamite vocalist or instrumentalist, and his melodies are typically repetitive and lack range. Instead, he is known for his ability to write exceptional lyrics. Songs that are not interesting are definitely "bad songs," which are often described as "boring," "unremarkable," "rudimentary," "immature," and "not memorable," because they "go nowhere," they've "been heard before," or they're "too

repetitive." By far, the most common characteristics of "boring" songs is that they're "too long," "too complicated," and "too confusing."

In addition to fulfilling the basics, an important step towards evoking the emotional response that is characteristic of "good songs" is to ensure that listeners are attentively engaged. Thus, the following techniques are often employed to keep songs interesting:

Techniques: Keeping it Interesting

1) "Good songs" are those that "sing well" and in which "every word fits." In other words, "good songs" have good prosody, which can broadly be defined as the marriage of lyric and melody, or how the words and the music rhythmically fit together. Songs that do not have good prosody (i.e. "bad songs") are often described as "clunky," "needlessly wordy," "busy," "a mouthful," and "too complicated."

2) "Good songs" have good range, meaning that there are both mountains and valleys within the song, or variations of "tension and release," "build up and pay off," and there is always a "climax," or "dramatic moment" that is distinct from other parts of the song. Good range is directly related to the emphasis on melody, where range serves to keep the song melodically interesting.

3) "Good songs" make good use of "poetic devices," such as allusion, metaphor, imagery, and the golden rule of "show, don't tell." For example, the below was recorded in my fieldnotes following a song workshop (much like a song critique) during Songwriters' School.

> [Following a participant's song about being bullied as a child, the instructor] asked him, "When you were seven, what did you look like? What did you weigh? What kind of books did you read? What kind of shoes did you wear?" The point was that [the participant] was bullied when he was a kid because he was the biggest nerd ever on the planet. But instead of saying "I was the biggest nerd ever on the planet," [the instructor] encouraged him to say "by age 10, I had gone through seven pairs of glasses and I loved to read more than everyone else," and that information would paint the picture that conveyed to the audience that he was the biggest nerd on the planet without actually

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saying that. [The instructor] then went on to say that instead of telling the audience, spelling things out exactly, that using imagery is more effective to convey emotion and information. The audience knows precisely what you are saying, what you are getting at through imagery.

4) As shown above, imagery and metaphor are useful devices for conveying emotion (Helsel 2007; Rideout 2014), particularly when telling a story. However, songwriters should not overuse these devices or, "beat the metaphor into the ground beyond where it's charming," lest the song feel "written" or "remarkably song like," another characteristic of "bad songs." In this way, "good songs" are not "contrived," "stretching it," "songwritery," "overworked," "dishonest," and "not believable," all of which decreases the likelihood that songs will be perceived as "authentic" and thus "emotional" (Neal 2007).

5) Following this, "good songs" are short (typically between two and four minutes). As Joseph says of song length, "It's like dancing. 'Come and dance with me.' Well okay, but at some point I'm going to want to sit down, you know." In this case "bad songs" are those that "wear out their welcome," or "just will never stop," and good songwriters "know when a song is over" and "get in there, tell what they want to tell, and get out." Songs that are too long will quickly lose the interest of listeners, and thus fail to fulfill the emotional offices of "good songs."

6) "Good songs" are simple and clear, which serves to increase their widespread relatability, another characteristic of "good songs." The "simplicity" of "good songs" also ensures that large audiences will find it interesting, as opposed to confusing. As Garret notes, "I write simply. I'm not highly educated so my vocabulary isn't as big as others, so I write *simply* and I try to weave it in and make it understandable for everybody" (his emphasis). Many participants love Woody Guthrie, for example, because of the "simplicity of the lyrics," which is but one way his songwriting has heavily influence folk music culture (Ingram 2008).

7) "Good songs" have "good lyrics," which is to say they have interesting lyrics. Good lyrics are those that "say something," and have "social significance," a "philosophical meaning," "breadth," "depth," "weight," and can be heard on "several levels." Such lyrics "influence the way you think and see the world," "present the listener with some new interesting things," "twists you out of your normal point of view," "make you think about something you've never thought about before," represent "food for thought," and are "thoughtful," "moving," and "enlightening." As Lola says of good lyrics, "they are taking me somewhere and teaching me something."

Good lyrics that "say something" are an important aspect of "good songs" because they keep listeners interested and engaged, but also because they are largely responsible for rendering songs "good" in a variety of additional ways. For example, lyrics are responsible for a song's "relatability" (Fox 2004; Hatch and Watson 1974), perceptions of its authenticity (Frith 2009), and "demand an emotional and political reaction from the listener" (Matheson 1008:62). The latter of these lends insight into participants' descriptions of "good" lyrics, such that they are enlightening, socially conscious, and influential, as much as it highlights an important thread within folk music cultural in general.

In essence, the basic cultural conventions of songs ensure that they are, first and foremost, bearable and intelligible, while techniques such as range and prosody are employed to keep songs interesting. Both are necessary to ensure that a listener can attentively get through a song long enough for it to be relatable and emotional. There are other devices that songwriters employ, consciously or otherwise, that facilitate a songs likelihood of being apprehended as "good," but one of the most important of these is the way a song is structured. When it comes to

folk songs, narrative structures, or "story songs," are often found to be the most interesting, the most relatable, and the best way to get one's point or message across.

Song Structure and "Story Songs"

During my interview with Jessica, another participant wandered up and took a seat (a common occurrence during interviews at festivals), and immediately began complaining that the woman he was to accompany later in the day simply would not play songs that he could follow. Worse, he continued, she would not listen to his complaints and suggestions to play in ways that were familiar to musicians that were expected to play along. In response to this story, Jessica advised the following:

> If somebody comes to you and says, "I want you to accompany me," one of the things you could say is, "Well, in order for me to be able to accompany you, I have to know what the pattern of this is, and if you don't deliver it to me in a patterned form, you have not presented me with something that I can recognize as a song that I can play with." You could clue her that, "No, there is a terminus to your song, which is a listener. And with any communication, there is A and B and let's talk about the B. Let's talk about the audience and the ears that are hearing this thing, you know, and how you are reaching across space and reaching them." And if they can't recognize the signal because—because it for whatever reason—it may wander or have too many random elements or not enough repetition or whatever, or structure. And again, yea, structuring things into patterns is a craft activity, but it's a crafting activity of the same form that—that you're setting this down in order for—for something from you to reach and communicate.

Indeed, listeners cannot attend to songs, much less be interested in and emotional about them, if they are not written in structures, patterns, and "norms of song form" (Neal 2007:49) that are familiar and thus recognizable, expected, and predictable. "Good songs" are certainly not "boring" and "unoriginal," but that does not mean they are unpredictable. As one instructor puts it, listeners can predict, or "anticipate" (Neal 2007), the next part of the song, and when that part arrives, they should always think, "Oh good! It's this part again!"

As mentioned above, there are several song structures available to songwriters, but the most common of these follows the pattern of verse-chorus-verse-chorus-bridge-chorus, a

structure that perfectly suits the telling of a story in ways that are intelligible to large audiences. Many folk songwriters purposefully write story songs, or at the very least understand their songs as stories, which is not altogether surprising given that folk music is well known for its "story songs." As Carl says of his songwriting, "I tell stories and stuff that's happened to me mostly. And that's how I approach it pretty much always. There's a story involved." For Archer, "They're all little stories. And I think I deliberately tell very short ones." Others remark similarly, such as "a song comes out that happens to be in story form," "they are stories I'm telling and assuming voices and roles and faces," "I like to tell a story no one is telling," and "I'll write story songs and try to get you to listen to the whole thing." Getting listeners to "listen to the whole thing" is exactly the point, which is why storytelling through song is an effective way of keeping their attention.

As Frith (2009:91) notes on "ordinary language" in music, words set to music endow both with "new resonance and power." Precisely the same can be said of stories *in* songs, a combination that increases the emotional power and cultural "work" of both. As Pedro notes of stories without music, "there is just something different when someone is just telling a story." And story songs actually are *stories*, a point that, with few exceptions (Neal 2007; Howey 2012) is mostly neglected by those interested in music and/or narrative. I conceptualize stories in songs the same way I conceptualize stories outside of songs, and as such, they incorporate all of the elements of storytelling without music: Setting, temporal order, plot, characters, and morals.

Story Elements

Setting

Story songs have physical and/or emotional settings that emplace and/or inform the unfolding of the plot. The physical settings described in story songs are countless; I have heard

songs that took place in heaven, planes, graveyards, attics, kitchens, bedrooms, trains, gardens, bathrooms, interstates, and so on and so forth. These settings are often constructed through the use of detailed imagery so as to be seen and "felt." For example, "I was looking down at the clouds from 30,000 feet," as opposed to, "I was on an airplane." It is also the case, however, that settings are not always physical locations, and can instead take the form of certain moods that characterize the emotional atmosphere of the story. This, too, is portrayed using imagery and/or metaphor, such that it might be "rainy," "cloudy," or "sunny" outside, for instance. Take, for another example, the opening lyrics to "Close your Eyes" by James Taylor: "Well the sun is surely sinking down, but the moon is slowly rising." In this one line, listeners are provided the time of day, as well as the general emotional state of the main character, who, in losing the "sun," optimistically emphasizes the rising of the "moon." Listeners, however, do not typically sit around and deconstruct lyrics and metaphors. Instead, much like a "good song," the overall emotional setting, particularly when combined with melody, is "felt."

Temporal Order

Story songs are temporally structured and include the story's beginning, middle, and end somewhere in the song. As Jessica notes of Leon's expertise with story songs:

> That's what Leon prizes, which is telling stories— beginning, middle, end—and they do this narrative trajectory and that's really—there's a different timeline associated with country music and folk music than there is with pop music and so on and so on.

Neal (2007) would similarly argue that the "timeline" of narratives presented in country music represent an important and distinctive aspect of its genre identity. This is particularly true in terms of the "Time-Shift narrative," or those stories that "project the segmentation of and passage of time." (p. 42). Despite the differences between country and folk, this seems to hold true for storytelling songwriters in this research. As Bill says of his songs, "There's always a

beginning, middle, and end." And as Sigmund promises, "When I get out my guitar at this festival [Kerrville], you can bet that my songs will have a beginning, they'll have a middle, and they'll have an end."

Lucas, who finds it "easier to write a story song," is perhaps the best example of a songwriter who often incorporates a "Time-Shift narrative:"

> One thing is that, you know, you can tell stories for instance based on length of a relationship, you know—first date, middle age, old age—that kind of thing. Now I have to watch about that because then I get hooked into time stuff, because it's easy to do 'now, little bit later, and then end.'

As Lucas alludes, the temporal ordering of songs also works to advance the plotline of the story, and the same can be said of how songs are normatively structured (verse-chorus-verse, etc.) Here, each section of the song has a different part to play in contributing the larger story.

Plot

Story songs have plot lines that thicken over the course of the song. As Marjorie explains, how a plot unfolds is largely connected to the conventional structure of songs:

> I think the song has to have a story line to it. Like verse one, you're getting introduced to the subject, verse two, you get a little more information, and the final verse, which is usually verse three, is kind of that 'why it matters' verse, the "Ah ha!" moment, and that's *why.* And then you go to the chorus and that's the message of the song. But, you know, usually its verse one, intro, verse two, and then verse three, and 'that's why I think I'm an alcoholic' [laughs], whatever the chorus is. The chorus is generally the lift of the song and it's less wordy than the verses.

Like Marjorie, Neal (2007:41) argues that each section of a song's form represents "functional parts of its storyline," and thus the way a story is told is just as important as the theme of the story told. According to Neal (2007:44), for example, verses "advance the basic plot," the chorus reflects "on the main point of the song" (one that must remain relevant after verses advance the plot), and bridges typically offer "an alternative outlook on the storyline." While structure and

temporal ordering advance a story's plotline, so do the main characters. In this way, characters represent another essential element in storytelling and thus story songs.

Characters

Story songs involve one or more characters who are introduced using different points of view (first person, second person, third person, etc.). For Howey (2012:14), songs are "dramatic monologues" that "reveal each character's mental and emotional responses to her or his world." The process through which one "reveals" characters can take myriad forms: One can position themselves as "narrators," as "different characters," or as "identifiable" characters in "particular situations" (p. 4), the latter of which is most commonly told in first person. For Lola,

> They're all stories. They're someone's story. Really they are. And I like looking at that as a third person but telling it in the first. I do some third person stories as singing, but not so much. A little bit of second, but mainly first. It's just the way I'm able to communicate better.

While some songwriters, like Lola, prefer to write in the first person and represent themselves and/or others as main characters in the story, some are more likely to generate fictitious characters to help them get their point across. As Leon says, "I start falling in love with my characters so that by the time I've written the song it's not like fiction to me."

Others speak of "giving the character some anger," "speaking in character," "penetrating the character's heart," and ensuring "the listener cares about the characters." For Joseph, "storytelling is the songwriters' medium," where listeners "hang their emotion" on the "characters." This means that songwriters must supply enough information about the story's characters to ensure that listeners can understand and care about them. To harken back to some previous examples, several of my songs were critiqued in song circles and Songwriters' School because they included so little information about my own characters that participants interpreted them as "suicidal" and addicted to "heroin." This is problematic for a handful of reasons, but one

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of the most relevant is that the average listener is not apt to care or "hang their emotion" on either of those characterizations. As one participant put it in a critique of my "message" and "characters,"

> And you've handled it in such a way that they're all consistent in the way they support the message, but the danger is that you could lose the message because of the story elements. And we're talking about story being a part of it, but the temptation would be to have the character speak in character, which would be I think a step too far you know.

In addition to the emphasis placed on characters and point of view, the above excerpt also evidences the importance of delivering a "message," one that should not be lost in the "story elements." To lose the "message" of a story is also to lose the moral of the story, which is an important part of both story songs and folk music culture.

Morals

Like in all stories, there is always a "moral" to story songs. This is when, as Dylan says, "you make your point." The moral to the story can be positive ("get back up again" or "love one another," for example) or negative, the latter of which most often comes in the form of social commentary: "And that's why corporations are bad," "that's why we should treat veterans better," or "that's why religion is a problem," for a few paraphrased examples. Such morals align with the qualities of "good" lyrics mentioned above, or those that "say something" and thus "influence" one's perspectives about what is and is not "important" in social life. Folk music has always centered on a message (Roy 2002), one that often promotes civil rights and social justice through songs of political protest (Lund and Denisoff 1971; Ingram 2008; Shelemay 2011). Messages of social protest are all the more interesting and effective when communicated as stories, which is perhaps why folk music has been traditionally founded and contemporarily maintained by "story songs."

While not all "good songs" are stories, storytelling through song serves as a vehicle through which "good songs" come through, or through which they are further endowed with the qualities that render them "good." Stories *in* songs, or the synthesis of music and narrative, renders songs more emotional, embodied, relatable, and facilitates the amount of cultural "work" they are capable of accomplishing, particularly as it relates to personal and collective identity, the interpretation and expression of embodied emotional experiences, and the provocation of social change and protest. I now turn towards "unpacking" these characteristic of "good songs."

Unpacking the "Truth" of "Good Songs"

"Good Songs" are Emotional

"Good songs" are those that evoke emotional responses in listeners. When asked to describe their favorite songs, participants most commonly point to those that make them "emotional," or songs that "make me cry," "make me feel something," "touches me the right way," "hits me the right way," "hits the heart," or "makes me clutch my heartstrings." Likewise, when it comes to other songwriters, participants' favorites include those who "make me cry about every other song," or those who write "songs that really move people," "songs that really reach people," songs that are "heartfelt," and songs that "make the audience feel the emotion." As Gale succinctly says of one of her favorite songs, "It's a great song. It evokes a lot of emotion. A lot of power." Similarly, when asked what they want listeners to get out of their songs, songwriters again point to the importance of invoking emotion, or how they "want to make somebody feel something," "to move somebody deeply," to "resonate emotionally," and write songs that "shake you to the root." As Lola replies, "It is very powerful. It's always very important to me to connect emotionally with my audience…I like it when people say, 'You make me cry.' I get that a lot. That's where the emotion connects."

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Like Lola, many participants describe songwriting and performance as "the most powerful way to communicate" with others, a type of "instantaneous connection." This is especially the case when it comes to "connecting emotionally," "sharing emotional experiences," "experiencing each other's feelings," and forging "emotional connections." The "power" of songs to communicate emotion has much to do with their capacity to be deeply *felt* within and through the body.

"Good Songs" Evoke Embodied Responses

To feel in and through song is to feel in and through the body. For Phoenix, it was the experience that one particular song offered the body that ultimately led him to become a songwriter:

> When I was probably 12 or 13 years old, I got goose bumps from a song for the first time and I—it was so profound for me that I was like, "I want to do this. I want to give that experience to somebody else." And it was a physical experience…I want to give people goose bumps. What a cool thing to be able to give people. You know, like, just to create something that's going to have a profound effect.

Similarly, Jacob loves playing music and writing songs because listeners "can *feel* it and they'll be drawn to it…I've had people come up—in just a night, a gig—and come up and go, 'Man, that harmonica just like touched me in my soul. Like, no really. It went right through me and I *felt* it'" (his emphasis).

To illustrate the importance of emotionally embodied responses as they pertain to "good songs," the below fieldnote excerpt was written following my previously mentioned heightened emotional reaction to one of the winning New Folk performances:

> That song absolutely RUINED me. Without going into what I will always know and thus don't need to write down to remember, I think there is something to be said here about what music does to the body. There is something about the way [they] do harmony. It doesn't even matter what they are singing. It literally goes directly through the body—It permeates it, fills it, vibrates around in there for a while, and then comes jetting back out in a continuous stream. It forces me to close my eyes and clutch at my chest, and for a

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brief moment in time, I forget to breathe. Not that [they] don't have incredible lyrics and prosody, but they really don't have to have words to penetrate the body like they do. The music does that by itself, kind of like Garret's example of going to an opera, not knowing the words, and just weeping through the whole thing. It still flows through you. It's a filling of the body with music, but somehow once it gets in there it turns to emotion. It is no longer music. It is music that goes in, but it is emotion that pours out.

As evidenced in the beginning of the above account, heightened and embodied emotional experiences are often described using metaphors related to pain, such that "good" songs "ruin," "slay," "wreck," "kill," "murder," "break" people "down" and "kick" people's "butt." Such metaphors are not used to describe an unpleasant, painful sensation, but instead meagerly deployed in an attempt to capture the experience of being emotionally overwhelmed in ways that "ruin" the body. As Brandon describes of one song, "It's ruined my day so many times. Not because I don't like it, but because I'm in love with it. Have you ever had a song ruin your weekend?...When somebody sings a song that kills you, it matters. It changes everything."

To evoke this type of experience in listeners is perhaps the most important goal for songwriters. As Joni says of her desire to induce such a response,

I'm holding myself to what the Dutch often call chicken skin. Chicken skin is when your body physically reacts to the truth. You go, "*Whoooo*!" and the hairs stand up and - how does that work? Well we have this knowing and it's not about—it transcends all things that politicians tell us that separate us. It radiates through all those things and just goes "*UHHHH*!" to everybody. We feel it and we know it and when we hear it we cannot stop this from happening. Until I give myself that experience at least with one line in the song, I don't feel like it's quite there yet. (Her emphasis)

Like Joni, many participants describe songs as a more "authentic," "honest," "real," and "true" form of emotional communication, and suggest that this knowing is felt within the body. For example, as Jessica says of one's personal "truth," "We can tell if you are telling *your* truth, because your gestures and your intentions and the way your body is physiologically responding by being in the presence of what *you* think is true is going to show up in your physicality." Similarly, Phoenix says, "There's the understanding the lyrics that – that sometimes gives me

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shivers. Like when I hear a phrase turned a certain way it just kind of smacks me across the face with truth and I feel it - like a physical moving." As shown here, the body is not only connected to emotional experience, but also to knowing and feeling the "truth."

Feeling the "truth" is an important aspect of "good songs," or those songs that "tell the truth," "dig deeper into the real truths," "point out something that's true about life," and "go out in the world and help people see what's real." As Fred says of one his favorite songs, "It captures a lot of how I feel about life. So I feel it's something very honest." Others, too, state of their favorites, "It's three and a half minutes of life," "its three chords and the truth," "they are slices of life," and "you can tell it's about a real person and real experiences." Given these responses, the question then becomes "How does one know what is real and true?" As showcased by the above examples from Joni, Jessica, and Phoenix, the answer is that such "truth" is felt in the body as an emotionally embodied way of "knowing." One simply "feels" the truth when they hear it, or in Phoenix's case, is "smacked across the face" by it.

This "feeling" has much to do with shared meaning around certain life experiences that most of us "know" and "understand." For example, what it "feels" like to have a broken heart, what it "feels" like to miss someone, what it "feels" like to lose a family member, and what it "feels" like to be in love. Even if one has not had the unfortunate "feeling" of losing a beloved family member, one at the very least "knows" how that *should* feel. As Phoenix, who earlier spoke on the embodiment of truth, says of culture, shared meaning, and experience,

> I think that there are certain experiences that we've—as a culture we've talked about them enough that we can identify with some part of it. And that's what this is all about anyway. Like when I say something, you are going to hear it and interpret it a certain way, and hopefully you are going to interpret it in some way close to the way I've intended.

Lucky for songwriters, culture does indeed provide a vast amount of shared meaning necessary

to showcase the "truth" about "life" that can be "felt" by listeners in ways representative of

"good songs." This feeling is most often referred to as the "emotional truth."

"Good Songs" are "Emotionally True"

What is perhaps the most ironic about the "truth" and "honesty" in songs is that many

songs are not at all "true" and many songwriters are not at all "honest." Instead, songs are only

"emotionally true." As Bill says of one particularly emotional experience,

> I mean a false story can resonate. I remember hearing a country artist at a workshop, or you know, a monthly thing we had, a get together - he sang a song that was just heart wrenching about playing pirates with a friend, another boy, and they grew up and traded pirate hats, and he comes back with his pirate hat when he's in his twenties, but Billy has died. And I'm like *crying*, like "Is this a true story?" "No, I just made it up, man. Don't stress out." (Laughs). Well, I mean it *could* be. That can be powerful too. (His emphasis)

Listeners do not often get the opportunity to ask about the "truth" or "reality" behind any given

song. To have an intense emotional reaction to songs represents its "truth" to the extent that it is

felt in the body and thus "felt" as "truth." As Cooper laughingly says, "That's why the joke is

always, 'That's a true story.'" Similarly, Carla advises, "When you write a song about a specific

story, sometimes it's better to not tell the story. You just tell an emotion about the story." In an

attempt to get listeners to "feel" and "know" in embodied ways, songwriters admittedly take "a

lot of artistic license" and "many, many liberties" to get at the "emotional center" of an

experience. As Arlo puts it, "A great writer never lets the facts get in the way of the truth." Such

a sentiment is shared by Leon, who says of the "facts,"

> They don't matter. The notion that—some people say "write about what you know"—I agree with that, except that what I know is not always factual, it's emotional. The truth is an emotional truth. It's a bigger thing, why you are telling the story. It doesn't matter if you paid 827 dollars for the old car or 714. Whichever one rhymes with what you need (laughs). We do not get a lie detector test every time—when somebody comes up to me and goes, "Is that true?" Well, yea! The point is, it *is* true. It's *all* true if it's pointed at a truth that's bigger than a fact you know. There's an amazing freedom that you have, if

you allow yourself to have it, to write about stuff that seemingly is not about your life at this moment. (His emphasis)

As previously mentioned, one of the most predominant characteristics of "bad songs" is that they are "boring" and/or they are "diaries." Diaries might represent the "facts" of what has happened to a person, or what they are feeling in the moment of writing, but they rarely get at the "emotional truth" of situations and experiences in ways that resonate with a great many listeners. As one participant put it, "Nobody's life is that interesting!"

"Good songs" are "authentic" songs, which are "real" songs, which are "emotionally truthful" songs. Lola, who seeks an "emotional connection" with audiences, says "I write about things I see in life, or that I've lived or maybe somebody close to me has—I take a piece of that and go off on my own, take a left turn, a right turn." In this case, taking a "left turn" from what "really" happened has nothing to do with what is "real." As Joni describes it,

Oftentimes the line has to be an utter lie, but it's true underneath. Emotionally, it's true. So I can lie to get to the truth. That's what art does a lot of the time. What I'm looking for is real. In my world, is this real? Or am I just making some shit up to try to get applause, or land a rhyme, or look good, sound good, sound smart? I gotta—I'm always going for real, real, real. Is it real? And it's shocking to people. People come up to me and say, "Oh my God it's so real, you know." Like, yea it's real! People are so used to being sung bullshit, when they get real they're like "Whoa! Good!" The shock of recognition, that's what I'm going for. And I think *that's* what's transformative. (Her emphasis)

In this case, being "real" has little to do with a positivistic brand of objective "reality," but instead about the "feeling" of authenticity that is experienced by both songwriters and audience members. This feeling arises from staying "true" to the Self, the audience, and to the "transformative" power of "good songs" that communicate the "emotional truth" of lived and shared experience. As Jessica says of this type of authenticity and "good" songwriters, "They are writing from their heart, and they are writing their experience, and they are really getting down into what they really know. That authenticity is just so wonderful and unmistakable and

attractive to people." Authenticity, in this case, is "wonderful" and "unmistakable" because "what they really know" is what we all "know." Such is the "shock of recognition" that comes with the sudden emotional realization that there are other people in the world that "get you."

"Good Songs" are Relatable and "Universal"

What makes songs emotional, embodied, and "honest," is that all "good songs" are about *you*, the listener. When someone writes a song about losing a family member, or a song about a broken heart, they are singing about *your* family member and *your* broken heart. Having someone sing about *your* experiences in a way that rings true to *you* is what "ruins" people in emotionally embodied ways. It could also be said that someone could be singing about the experiences of someone you love, or about something you could potentially experience, or about something you will inevitably experience, and all of these are similarly "ruining." For listeners, "good songs" are always about them and their experiences, never the songwriter's.

As I have argued, this does not mean that "good songs" are a highly subjective, hit and miss phenomenon. Instead, it takes a lot of people who feel the same way to make a song "good." As Marjorie says, "If it works with everybody then you know you have a winner." Others say that "good songs" are those that get at the "heart" of "universal human truth." Such songs, then, are "universal" enough to allow a great many listeners to subjectively "see themselves" or "put themselves" in the song and subsequently experience the embodied emotional reaction that results from "feeling" the "emotional truth." For Joni, the importance of this universality is the reason why "diaries" are a problem;

> There's a discomfort when somebody sings a diary song, where you are just telling personal details and not going *deeper* into the universal. You can penetrate the personal and get to the human experience. You gotta go *past* the personal though. It's incredibly intimate. It's not just *you* anymore, it becomes us. On the other side of "I" and "Me" is "We." And we carry the "We" inside of us. We are all part of the "We." (Her emphasis)

Indeed, I believe social psychologists would certainly agree that the "We" is "inside" all of "us," which means that songwriters have a sturdy platform of shared meaning in which to connect with audiences in profound ways. Jessica remarks similarly when she says, "You wanna write the "we" songs…Have them resonate with you emotionally and have them go "Oh, yea. I'm not the only person who feels this way." For Marjorie, "I think good songwriters pick something that everybody can relate to and turn it into a – like they process their own experiences but make it a universal message not just like this is what happened to me. "

The character of "we" as "relatable" and "universal" is part of what renders "good songs" so "true" and so "real" for listeners. As Leon says of the "truth,"

> Here's where the truth lies: when somebody says something that hits you, it hits *you* for a reason, the way it hits you, and *that's* where your truth, your life, your experience comes into play. It's the same way if you read a book and a phrase comes through and you do a highlighter pen and somebody else keeps reading, you know. So that's the part of *you* that's in the equation. (His emphasis)

Similarly, for Lola and her listeners,

> It's just a connection that, yea—I get a lot of, "You just told my story," or that's—"I've been through that. That's part of me. How did you know?" You know. Some people say it's kind of like letting them in on a secret, you know. I tell secrets. I've been told that I tell the truth and I like to think that—that is kind of a powerful thing for me. I like to sing things that don't necessarily get talked about a lot.

Having one's personal narrative, or "my story" and "my secret," validated by the larger collective has much to do with how listeners "feel" the "truth." Such feelings of truth that are characteristic of "good songs" result from listeners' having been there, imaginatively positioning themselves there, or actually and presently *being* there. In this case, "good" songwriters are those who understand listeners and their experiences well enough to write a song about them. "Good songs," then, are perhaps the best case of how personal, subjective, and emotional experience is

informed and validated by the collective, whether it be the collective of "folk music" or social life in general.

As Veronica puts it, "It's cool to hear something that you've experienced being capsulated in beautiful words that speak to you." During our interview, she elaborates on this character of "good songs" and its relationship to heightened emotionality:

> I heard this song there and it made me cry and I heard it hear and it just made me—it makes me cry every time I hear it, because it's a very, very simple song about a son telling his mother that he's found the girl he's going to marry and that her heart is like a red, red rose. It's an old style, kind of old English feeling song. And I have a son, and it's just- there's just something about that song that *slays* me. I mean it makes me cry—I mean tears just like squirt out of my eyes when I hear that song because it addressed an extremely specific emotion, relationship, part of a relationship in my life. My relationship with my son, and that he's not a baby anymore. He's grown up and he's in the world and he has a girlfriend and—I remember him walking down the street ahead of me with his girlfriend not long ago, and he had his arm just gently around her and it just made me so proud that he was sweet, and courtly, and loving to another woman, and that made me feel like my job was well done. And that song is kind of—kind of—it doesn't say any of that, but it expresses it exactly—that moment of what I felt and so I just love that song. Because I feel this incredible empathy with the song, for some reason it makes me cry. Why? I don't know.

This above account identifies several properties of "good songs," such that they are "very, very simple," interesting ("kind of old English feeling"), and hyper-emotional (they "slay"), but it also indexes a common emotion that is associated with a common relationship—how mothers feel (or are supposed to feel) about their children. Thus, the song is highly relatable.

Other participants, myself included, have similar stories to tell about songs that "slay" us. For example, the fieldnote excerpt below is an example of one such experience I had at Kerrville my final year. Excerpts such as these are plentiful following "good songs," as many of the heightened emotional experiences I had that year were colored by being separated from a best friend, Anderson, who I loved dearly and one who had seemingly dropped off the face of the planet for reasons that were unclear. This particular song was sung by a young couple, a man and

woman, during "Ballad Tree," much like open mic, in a small clearing near the perimeter of the

ranch called "Chapel Hill."

> She told a brief story about where the song came from, and I was sitting a little ways
> back, so it was hard to really hear exactly what she was saying. But it had something to
> do with a photograph or a photographer—or maybe both—but something along those
> lines. The song was just incredible. I just sat there quietly, grateful to be wearing
> sunglasses. But the song was not at all about a photograph or a photographer for me. The
> hook was "or have you forgotten me"—and I sat there and thought of Anderson. It was a
> sad song. A very "typical" folk song, lulling and swaying, harmonious. The chorus was
> something like, I sit at the bar and stare at the wall, trying not to think of you at all, and
> wondering if you are as tortured as me, or have you forgotten me. Something like that.
> The reality of it was that, for me, I have no idea what the song was "really" about—a
> lovely photograph, a break up, whatever—but for me, it was about Anderson. It reminded
> me of him. How I feel forgotten and left out and not memorable. All the nights I've spent
> drinking and thinking and missing. How he doesn't miss me after all these years. And it
> totally got me. But it wasn't just the words of course. It was the whole picture. It was the
> way he played the guitar—finger-picking mostly—and I think it was probably in G, C,
> and D or some common variation of it. It was the pitch of her voice—feminine, light, but
> really strong in the chorus—perfectly in key—high and bright and full. It was their
> harmonies. It was the way she stood there swaying with her face turned up to the sky with
> her eyes closed. I could tell she was nervous at first, a little jittery and unsure of herself,
> but then she worked into it and owned it during the first chorus. And it was all those
> things. It was the scenery at Chapel Hill and the wind blowing through the trees. And I
> sat there and thought of Anderson. Not photographs.

This excerpt reveals much about the character of "good songs": I note how it was a

"typical" folk song that followed many of the conventions and techniques above—it was played

in recognizable keys (G, C, and D) in recognizable ways ("finger-picking"), it was sung

"perfectly in key" with beautiful harmonies, and I briefly mention the structure of the song, or

the "hook" (a catchy phrase repeated through the song) and the "chorus." Additionally, however,

the song, whatever it was *really* about, encompassed feelings and phrases that large audiences

can broadly relate to, such as missing someone, feeling forgotten, and feeling alone. As Veronica

noted above, the songs do not necessarily have to "say any of that," they just have to encompass

the feeling of any given experience.

As shown above, "good songs" are informed by listener's subjectivities and identities, or what many participants refer to as "personal experience," as much as they are informed by shared meaning around a great variety of things that are more or less "relatable." As Billy notes of "good" songwriting, "Where each person is going to have their own personal experience, but they're going to hear everything and feel everything in the moment. That's what you want." Similarly, Monica says, "There's a lot of our personal experience that enters into it and how we consider ourselves, who we think we are, how we think we ought to be." In many ways, then, when one hears a song that encompasses their personal experiences and identities, it is validating, or as Maxwell puts it, "It's the validation of where you are at this point in this moment in your life. If you are suffering and you hear a song about suffering, you'll gravitate to that because it gives your suffering validation."

"Good songs" are "real" and "relatable," which renders them emotional, embodied, and "emotionally true" to large audiences whose personal and emotional experiences are "validated" by others who feel similarly. All of the above endows songs with "power," or what Joni would call the "transformative" property of songs. Like Maxwell says of "validation," many others point to a song's capacity to make one feel less alone, or to make one feel as if they are part of the "human family," often because songs feel as if they were written for the listener and thus make them feel understood. As Gale says of songwriting, "you never know what you are to someone else." In this way, and taken together, "good songs" do "good" for listeners, a point I more fully examine in the discussion.

So far, I have unpacked the unspoken assumptions embedded within "good songs" as a cultural category, and have subtly attended to questions of "how" (i.e., "good songs" are emotional and invoke embodied responses because they are "emotionally true" and thus highly

relatable.) In the next section, I more fully describe how these emotional qualities of "good songs" are accomplished, particularly the "emotional truth," through *songwriting as inquiry*, *songwriting in action*, and story songs.

The "Emotional Truth": Vulnerable Liars and Storytellers

It could be said that songwriters are the most honest and sincere liars in the world so as to be "authentic" and "real" enough to emotionally engage listeners with "good songs." This is perhaps why Townes Van Zandt is so often quoted as having said, "Trust the songwriter, not the song." Lying about the "facts" so as to access and convey the "emotional truth" is a specific and effective "tool" that is often deployed to ensure that songs are "good." In this case, *songwriting in action* comes in the form of consciously and strategically manipulating the empirical reality of experience as a way of conveying the "truth" of that experience. Songwriters "know" and "feel" that "good songs" should be emotional, embodied, and relatable so that those songs can accomplish the "socially conscious" intentions of the "messenger." If one seeks to promote social change, commentary, and protest through songs, then one must necessarily generate songs that are purposefully fictitious so as to be "emotionally true" to a great many audience members. Thus, songwriters are prone to lie about the "facts," but it is also the case that "good" songwriters who write "good songs" never "lie" about emotion and what emotion feels like.

Lies or otherwise, "good songs" are never "bullshit," as Joni would say, which is to say that getting at the "truth" and being "real" often means that songwriters must be "vulnerable" enough to examine and showcase aspects of their "true" selves in ways that are difficult to deal with and to openly share. For example, writing and performing a song about your wife having Alzheimer's disease, and doing so in a way that "kills" everyone, also involves the "bravery" to "kill" yourself in the process. As one participant put it,

I found that I didn't have the emotional cajones to write the songs, because I knew there would be an emotional cost. So what's a guy that can't take the emotional risk do? Writes a funny song. People who can't take emotional risks write funny songs.

"Good songs" are "emotionally true" to the extent that they are an honest and courageous display of emotional martyrdom, courtesy of "vulnerable" songwriters. Many songwriters are quick to discuss the "emotional risk" or "emotional commitment" that comes with "re-breaking your heart every time you sing it," "putting it on the line," "showing your inner self," "applying your guts to it," "putting your heart and soul out there," "throwing it out there for judgement," and "singing from the heart and showing people." In this case, songwriting is "hard" for a variety of reasons, some of which involves the "work" that goes into songs and their "emotional truth," but also because "good songs" are equivalent to the emotional performance of one's inner Self, one that is consistently under evaluation. Take, for example, the following excerpt from Jimmy, who is well known for writing "good songs" at Winfield, songs that have also won him the songwriting contest:

> Everything I make – you know, I try and be true to myself, which is hard, you know it's hard. That's where I'm trying to come from, it's just that - I want my stuff to come from a base true to things, what's really going on. It's hard. You know, it's so hard, because you're saying this is—if you're—you know a lot of people fake it you know. But I wanna like reach inside myself and put myself on display but I know—because that's what's right, because I think that's what makes better music, you know, is to be from the heart. But then again to say, "Oh, I've got this problem or this problem or this is how I *really* feel about something," you know, put it out and say, "Okay, you look at it and tell me what you really think," you know—very vulnerable, you know. It's like being in relationship with everybody around you, you know, and allowing them to be able to hurt you with it. That's scary. Man, it freaks me out.

As mentioned in the last chapter, *songwriting as inquiry* involves the "pouring" out of an "authentic" Self, and with it, lived emotional experience that often presents itself as overwhelming, confusing, "chaotic," and difficult to "order." The performance of songs that result from this process, then, is also the performance of that "inner self" and that emotional

experience. As Jimmy mentioned, if "better music" is "from the heart" then one is performing one's heart, or "reaching inside" oneself and "putting out" things for "display," things that would typically remain "hidden," even to one's self.

In this way, to be "vulnerable" and "honest" is to share experience and emotion with listeners, as what is inside the Self is informed by social experiences that listeners, as members of social life and folk music culture, can relate to and understand. The idea here is social psychological: If songwriters are "vulnerable" enough to actually write "from the heart," then what comes out will be recognizable to audience members who share the same meaning, experience, and emotion. Those who share meaning as it relates to folk music culture are further likely to find it "emotionally true," relatable, and emotional. That listeners recognize this shared meaning and experience means that songs are "honest," because they, too, "know" and "feel" the same way; thus it represents the "truth."

Whether one is vulnerable, a liar, or both, it is also the case that story songs greatly enhance a song's potential to be felt as "emotionally true." Story songs provide a platform on which to showcase the imagery and microscopic detail that increases the songs capacity to be relatable and to be felt. The relationship between stories, imagery, and relatability is evidenced in previous examples of settings and constructing emotional atmospheres, and particularly in the example of the imagery used to characterize the "nerdy" boy who was bullied as a child.

Storytelling also allows songwriters to use characters and "points of view" to distance themselves and yet still convey emotional material that is uncomfortably vulnerable and "emotionally true," once again helping with the construction of "good songs." Telling one's personal story through song can be a hyper-emotional experience, particularly when one is "vulnerable" and "honest." As Farley describes it, "I was just crying my eyes out about it over

and over and over, and going through these songs and trying to get these stories out the best I could, trying to be honest about them, you know." Constructing characters, then, and approaching this experience from their point of view can assist in such a process. For Gale,

> "'I' is really quite a strong word, because it's very vulnerable for the songwriter but also relatable for the listener and so that's - If a song is really just too vulnerable for them even if it's about them, they might decide to create a character to make it about so they don't have to use I."

Or as Vicky simply puts it, "Of course, every song is about me, but I just tell what I seem to want to tell in somebody else's story." For another participant, "I made up a character for 'me' simply for me to have an easier way to tell the story." Likewise, if one is telling someone else's story, using 'I,' or first person, works to endow the song with additional relatability and emotional power.

In addition to the "emotional truth," storytelling through song also assists the songwriter in delivering their "message," or the "moral" of the story, in ways that are not perceived by audiences as "lecturing" or "preaching." As one participant put it, "I embed the message in a story." For Samson, "I think a good song is a story. I think people can get very disinterested if everything is written in the first person, 'I, I, I.' I like it better if you are telling a story or trying to create a scene, not being too preachy." Or as Jessica says, "The story or the view point will be persuading the listener of the chorus, the truth of the chorus, and motivating them." And as Marjorie said earlier, the chorus "is the message of the song."

As DeNora (2013:337) writes,

[M]usic and narrative are mutually referencing, indeed they are fused. Both offer media that enhance and make possible the others effects; they are part of the multi-modal array of communicative action that crafts an on-going sense of place—who we are (together) and what we (can) do, and what we can change.

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Narratives without music evoke and convey emotion, represent a primary vehicle through which we make and communicate meaning, and are used as strategic and persuasive devices for circulating certain messages. When narratives are combined with music in the form of story songs, they become all the more emotional, communicative, relatable, and persuasive (Fox 2004; Neal 2007). In this way, storytelling through song is a productive and highly recognizable way of ensuring that songs are known and felt as "good" to large audiences within the folk musical community.

Discussion

In this section, I describe the cultural "work" of "good songs" as they relate to the (re)production of folk and festival culture, personal and collective identities, and how participants' "feel" in relation to "good songs." First, "good songs" are only "good" to the extent that members of the folk musical community define them as such. As those who comprise the "competent hearing membership" (Hatch and Watson 1974:163) within folk music culture, listeners cannot attach anything to a song that renders it "good" if such a song does not roughly adhere to the "interpretive rules" underpinning "folk music" writ large. This means that "good songs" are, by definition, products of folk music culture. The cultural conventions on which "good songs" are built, the importance placed on "story songs" and "protest songs," the character of songs as driven by lyrics that "teach" and "say" something all point to the ways in which "good" songs shape (and are shaped by) folk music culture.

Because folk musicians' festivals are mirrors of folk music culture, the same can be said of how "good songs" (re)produce festivals. However, "good songs" contribute to festival cultural in additional ways. Musicians' festivals revolve around musical interactions, many of which involve "good songs," and "good songs" are emotional and evoke embodied emotional responses

in listeners. "Good songs," then, are largely responsible for the heightened emotional atmosphere at festivals, as well as the shared meaning within festival culture pertaining to the experience and expression of emotion. Also, musicians' festivals are places where members of the folk musical community share (musical) interactions, experiences, and stories, which leads to the circulation of shared meaning around "good songs" that works to (re)produce both cultures.

These shared interactions and experiences at festivals are but one way that cultural understandings of "good songs" inform (and are informed by) personal and collective identities. One's ability to know and feel good songs has much to do with one's personal identity as an authentic member of the folk musical community, one that is validated by other members who share that knowing and feeling. It is also the case that determinations of a song as "good" also depend on whether listeners can subjectively position themselves in the song and feel related to it. Thus, one's identity and personal experiences are confirmed and shared when others within the folk musical community relate to the song and thus share "feeling."

Sharing emotion with others who perceivably have similar personal and emotional experiences has much to do with how cultural understandings of "good songs" shape how participants feel. In addition to cultural (re)production and identities, one of the principle functions of "good songs" is that they help people feel "less alone," "understood" and part of a "human family." Good songs are relatable, which means that listeners are afforded a musical and emotional connection to others who seemingly and "honestly" understand what they are going through, what they have been through, or what they will perhaps, or inevitably, go through.

In the next chapter, I conclude this dissertation by summarizing my main points and responding to my research questions.

CHAPTER EIGHT:

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, I have argued that folk music represents a productive platform on which to examine authenticity as it relates to American identity. However, from an interpretive perspective, this is only the case when the study of folk music is reunited with the contemporary and everyday perspectives of those who make and receive it. I have also argued that the production and reception of original folk music is a cultural, musical, emotional, and embodied *process*, one that involves (re)creating, shaping, and attaching meaning to personal and collective identities, emotional experience and expression, and social change. In attending to the importance of process and meaning-making, I have examined the process through which one accomplishes authenticity as a folk and festival member, the process of songwriting, and the process through which listeners experience and interpret "good songs." I have also explored these interrelated processes as they inform (and are informed by) "authentic" identities, emotions, and cultural understandings of social justice.

Systems of shared meaning in and around the folk musical community regarding identities, emotions, authenticity, and social justice are representative of the cultural "work" accomplished by the interrelationships among music and narrative. Thus, I have examined these interrelationships as they "work" *at* festivals, *around* songwriting, and *in* songs. I have offered the concepts (and processes) of *songwriting as inquiry* and *songwriting in action* to account for how these interrelationships "work" for songwriters and listeners, but also for sociologists,

particularly in terms of including the (mostly neglected) lived and embodied dimensions of emotional experience.

In this final chapter, I first return to my research questions, which are listed below. I then attend to those questions in three overarching sections: "The (re)production of folk and festival culture," "personal and collective identity," and "emotional experience." Each section is further organized into subsections. "Personal and collective identity," for example, is subdivided into how such identities shape (and are shaped by) the "(re)production of festival culture," "narratives around the songwriting process," and "cultural understandings of good songs." Last, I describe the limitations of this research, outline its empirical applications, and conclude with suggestions for future research.

The research questions that have guided this study are as follows:

1) What are "folk music" and festival cultures and how are new members initiated? How are folk and festival cultures (re)produced through festival participation, narratives around the songwriting process, and cultural understandings of "good" songs? More specifically, what are the cultural norms and standards surrounding the production, performance, and reception of original folk music?

2) How do participants' personal and collective identities inform the (re)production of folk and festival culture, narratives around the songwriting process, and cultural understandings of "good" songs? Conversely, how do such cultures, narratives, and understandings inform participants' personal and collective identities?

3) How do participants *feel* in relation to producing, performing, and receiving (i.e., listening) to music, and how do these feelings relate to, and (re)produce, folk and festival cultures, narratives around the songwriting process, and cultural understandings of

"good" songs? How do these emotional experiences shape participants' personal and collective identities?

I now turn to answering the above questions, beginning with the (re)production of folk and festival culture.

The (Re)production of Folk and Festival Culture

Before attending to how folk and festival cultures are (re)produced through festival participation, narratives around the songwriting process, and "good songs," it first worth attending to the initial question, "What are folk and festival cultures?"

Folk Music Culture

As I have noted throughout this dissertation, folk music culture is complex and often contested; however, as a system of shared meaning, there are some common threads that run throughout the folk musical community. Folk music is typically understood as the musical voice of everyday people—the proletariat, the working-class, the "common" folk— and thus it circulates political and/or socially conscious messages of a "truer" America, often from the political left. A "truer" America is populated by "authentic" American identities, or "we" who "resist cultural standardization," promote egalitarianism, and feel strongly and speak (or sing) loudly about a variety of social issues in need of repair, such as race, class, poverty, the environment, mass consumption, and capitalism, among many others. This characteristic can be evidenced by the many historical and contemporary "protest songs" that have been, and still are, used as "weapons," or as the most powerful way to communicate a message.

Additionally, "folk music" is set in opposition to the "popular," particularly "pop music," as it is precisely the "popular" and its music that represents the type of "cultural standardization" adamantly resisted by the folk musical community. Pop music represents the commodification

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and mass consumption of music via the music industry, and because it is packaged to appeal to the masses, says nothing about the contemporary state of social life. As such, pop music reflects, perpetuates, and neglects social problems. Folk music, then, is "traditional," not "popular," played on acoustic instruments, is often set against modernity, and centers on community. Because folk music has much to "say," songs are lyrically driven, and such lyrics are typically clear and simple so as to be easily heard and understood. Common threads also include the prevalence of folk music festivals and the blurred lines between performers and audience members, where many listeners are also musicians due to folk music's "do-it-yourself" character.

Taken together then, folk music culture is also characterized by several paradoxes. It is a stretch to define folk music as the voice of the "common" people when it's demographic is largely male, middle class, heterosexual, and almost exclusively white. Given this, "protest songs" about race, for example, despite being socially conscious, are relatively colorblind. The same can be said of folk music's strong stance against commercialism, capitalism, and mass consumption when it has so clearly enjoyed a tremendous amount of industry success. It has also served as a productive platform on which advertisers and businesses can pitch and sell their products to people who wholeheartedly reject the pitching and selling of products. Furthermore, active participation as a member of the folk musical community is expensive, especially when it comes to purchasing and maintaining instruments and attending festivals. All of the above complicates the distinction between the "traditional" and the "popular," particularly if the latter is understood as commercialized and lacking social consciousness. Additionally, folk music often musically merges the traditional and the popular, where at times it becomes difficult to make a clear distinction between what is exactly "traditional" and what is exactly "popular."

Festival Culture and Participation

All of these common threads, including the paradoxes, are prevalent and showcased at musicians' festivals. The demographic of festival participants, the time and expense associated with festival attendance, the commodification of festivals (where available commodities range from $10 turkey legs to $5,000 instruments), and the exclusivity demonstrated by certain camps and certain groves all works to (re)produce the many contradictions embedded within folk music culture. In spite of said paradox, festival culture centers on community (i.e., festival "families"), (acoustic) musical interaction and participation, and blurred lines between performer and audience. Songs heard at festivals, whether traditional covers or creative originals, are often lyrically driven and usually include morally laden messages. Broadly speaking, festival culture is understood as convivial, interactive, community oriented, and egalitarian. Also, the duration of festivals, the meaning and experience shared over the years, and the prevalence of music and musical interaction generate a heightened and liminal emotional atmosphere (Cobb 2015), where participants feel and openly express feeling in ways that are distinct from the emotional displays of everyday life. In other words, festival culture, much like a "good song," is emotional.

These characteristics of festival culture directly mirror, and thus (re)produce, common threads in folk music culture. However, this (re)production occurs in more indirect ways. For instance, at Winfield, the predominant type of musical interaction takes the form of "jams," which highlights the egalitarian, communal, and participatory aspects of folk music culture. Jams also represent the "folk-idealism" valorized by the musical community, as they involve long-standing, traditional folk music covers that all viable members know. Kerrville, on the other hand, is more indicative of the shared meaning around folk songwriters, creativity, solo

performance, and the quality of original songs (i.e., "good songs") presented in "songs circles," all of which similarly represent important aspects and values of folk music culture.

Said differently, folk music prizes both tradition and originality, particularly the type of originality that falls within the boundaries of tradition. Winfield celebrates the former, whereas Kerrville celebrates the latter. In this way, (re)producing folk music culture at both festivals occurs through musical interaction. One's ability to appropriately and intelligibly participate in this regard has much to do with learning and following the interpretive rules underpinning song circles and jams. Much like cultural knowledge pertaining to festival traditions, "moods," and certain camps, knowledge of the interpretive rules of musical interaction are specific to the culture of festivals, yet necessary for the (re)production of folk music culture writ large.

Learning the interpretive rules of musical interaction, as well as the shared meaning around festival life in general, is a process of becoming a member of festival culture. While all of my participants were long-time members of folk music culture, festival initiation is site specific. However, despite its specificity, successfully accomplishing authenticity as both a folk and festival member depends on learning the "do's" and "don'ts" of festival life. These "do's" and "don'ts" represent unspoken assumptions embedded within festival cultural and are thus not clearly articulated to new members. Instead, one learns about shared meaning through stories of those who have breached the rules or through accidently breaching those rules oneself.

For example, stories about others who "kill the mood," who are demeaning, who "monopolize" the jam or circle, or who accidently "bust" a musical memorial are all stories of inappropriate behavior that directly point to appropriate behavior. The same can be said of one having been "shushed" during a song circle or slowly abandoned during a jam. Such stories point to the appropriate ways one should navigate festivals, but they are also site-specific enactments

of shared meaning within folk music culture, for example, respecting emotional experience, community and egalitarianism, and active listening. Stories such as these circulate widely among participants, serve as teachable moments for newcomers, and solidify shared understandings for veterans. In this way, the process of initiation through breaches and storytelling is also a process of (re)producing folk and festival culture.

Narratives around the Songwriting Process

The two cultural narratives around the songwriting process (re)produce folk music culture in a variety of ways. The story of the Channeling Artist is a story about honesty, emotionality, staying true to the Self, and not "selling-out" to the music industry. The story of the Master Craftsman is a story about keeping the attention of large audiences so as to deliver a socially conscious message that "speaks" to the culture. These two stories only make sense when contextualized within folk music culture, which means they highlight the systems of meaning embedded therein, and thus (re)produce those systems. In both stories, songs *should* be emotional, communicative, and honest (i.e. "authentic"), which is why the music industry ("Nashville") is villainized for profiting off of music that has been robbed of its emotional and communicative power. This is perhaps most evident in the moral evaluations of the Editor, who has sold his soul for fortune and fame. On the other hand, moral evaluations associated with the selfish and quasi-neurotic Muse showcase the importance of successfully delivering a social message of protest, commentary, and change. Both stories and their respective moral evaluations underline and (re)produce folk music culture: It is staunchly against the music industry and commodification, it is a "weapon" of social change, and it is written and felt as emotional and honest (i.e. "authentic").

These moral evaluations are attached to embodied songwriters who (perceivably) tell one story over the other and thus perpetuate the material and symbolic consequences of that particular story. In this way, both cultural narratives around the songwriting process construct symbolic boundaries around certain types of songwriters who congregate in certain types of places, which works to (re)produce both the real and imagined inclusivity/exclusivity dynamic of festival culture. Given the shared meaning around mass consumption and "selling out," Channeling Artists are not likely to spend much time with others who are thought to have sold out. Similarly, given the emphasis on politics and social consciousness, Master Craftsmen are unlikely to hang around narcissists. Moreover, musicians' festivals are all about playing and listening to music and no one wants to listen to contrived, emotionally devoid, formulaic "hits," nor do they want to listen to "diaries" and "journals" that induce sleep or suicide. This is not about the "truth" of either story, nor is it about the relationship between widespread perceptions of certain songwriters and the actual likelihood of having to suffer through either type of song for hours on end. Instead, it is about how such stories are believed to be true, how they guide participants' interpretations of themselves and others, of songwriters and songs, and how these interpretations (re)produce and reflect folk and festival culture.

Cultural Understandings of "Good Songs"

"Good songs," as I have defined them, are those that a majority of members of folk music culture will evaluate as such. Widespread agreement about "good songs" is achieved through learning, sharing, and embodying systems of meaning within folk music culture surrounding how folk music should sound, how it should "feel," and what it should accomplish for listeners. In this way, "good songs" are defined by folk music culture and thus (re)produce it in a variety of ways. For example, "good songs" are those that necessarily adhere to the cultural conventions,

techniques, and structures of "folk music," or they will not be apprehended as "folk music,"

much less as "good" folk music. Also, the cultural assumptions "packed" within "good songs"

are similarly informed by folk music culture: "Good songs" are emotional, they invoke embodied

responses in listeners, and they are (or perhaps *because* they are) relatable to large audiences.

Listeners' embodied responses to "good songs" often result from "feeling" the "truth,"

which is indicative of folk music's emphasis on authenticity as it relates to being "honest" and

"real" about experience in ways that resonate with "everyday" people. Similarly, because of

these qualities, "good songs" always accomplish "good" outcomes for audiences: They help

others heal, feel less alone, and feel understood, as much as they broaden perspectives and teach

listeners "new," and perceivably better, ways of looking at the world. When experiences of

hearing and feeling a "good song" are shared with others, when stories are consistently circulated

about those experiences, and when one hears award winning songs, and "feels," along with

others, that such songs were indeed worthy of an award, cultural understandings in and around

"good songs" are (re)produced, and with it, folk music culture.

Because folk musicians' festivals are mirrors of folk music culture, because folk music

culture defines what is and what is not a "good song," and because the principle point of such

festivals is to play music, festival participants hear, know, feel, and play a lot of "good songs."

These songs (re)produce festival culture to the extent that they are indicative of "good" folk

music, but also because "good songs" are emotional. That "good songs" are emotional

contributes to the heightened emotional atmosphere that characterizes festivals, thereby

(re)producing shared meaning around the experience and expression of emotion in festival

culture. These emotional experiences also serve to teach new members what "good songs" are

supposed to feel like, as much as it validates those feelings for veteran members. "Good songs,"

then, (re)produce festival culture in ways that are both site-specific and reflective of folk music culture writ large.

Personal and Collective Identity

(Re)producing Folk and Festival Cultures

Participants at folk musicians' festivals were folk music lovers before they ever attended festivals. One clearly *has* to be quite the enthusiast to perform and listen to folk music non-stop for weeks on end. Most participants heard of one or both festivals via other members of the folk musical community (at a "pickin' party" or a house concert, for instance), decided to check it out, and continue to return every year. This means that outside of the festival context, personal identities, or those self-identified traits that are distinguishable from most others, are informed by systems of shared meaning in and around folk music culture. It could also be said that, depending on the degree of one's involvement in the musical community beyond festival life, such a personal identity is validated by a collective of others who feel similarly about folk music and folk music culture.

The personal identity of "folk music lover," (i.e., "folkie"), takes a different shape when one begins regularly attending musicians' festivals. Familiar sayings such as "I can't, I'm going to Winfield," which is on t-shirts, bumper stickers, heard in songs, and circulated in the campground, highlight the importance of annual festival attendance for participants. This, of course, is further evidenced by those who move, quit their jobs, or save their vacation and/or sick days all year so as to ensure that they can attend festivals for an extended period of time. One's personal identity as a "folkie," then, merges with that of a festival-goer. In the case of Kerrville, for example, one is a "Kerr-vert." To continue with this example, one's personal identity as a "Kerr-vert" is validated by the larger collective of "Kerr-verts," or "we" who are "folkies" and

attend "Kerrville." At both festivals, one's personal identity as a "folkie" and festival attendee is confirmed by others within the folk and festival community. This confirmation constructs a collective identity that is distinct from other groups, one that is maintained through continued (musical) interaction and participation at festivals.

While folk and festival cultures inform participants' personal and collective identities, it is also the case that those identities inform folk and festival cultures. "Folkies" bring with them cultural understandings of folk music, which are then shared, validated, and solidified by other festival attendees. As I have argued, systems of meaning within folk music culture are heightened, circulated, and articulated at musicians' festivals, which is to say that participants are quite actively (re)producing folk music culture via myriad interactions with like-minded others (which then works to maintain and confirm personal and collective identities.)

However, as argued above, while one might initially attend festivals as a "folkie," one does not first arrive as a seasoned festival veteran. Developing a personal identity as a festival attendee is a process of initiation, one that depends on others who are well-versed in festival culture. "Virgin" attendees learn the unspoken rules of festival participation through stories, interactions, and shared experience with veteran participants. Once one learns the unspoken rules of festival life, one then knows the site-specific ways in which to accomplish "authenticity" as a member of folk music culture, and have one's personal identity as a "veteran" attendee confirmed by the collective. Said differently, it takes a collective of knowledgeable "veterans" to teach "virgins" how to appropriately navigate festivals, thus (re)producing festival culture, as well as the personal and collective identity of festival attendees.

Narratives around the Songwriting Process

Narratives around the songwriting process construct symbolic boundaries around certain types of songwriters who (perceivably) write certain types of songs for certain types of reasons. In this way, narratives inform participants' personal identities to the extent that songwriters self-identify as a certain type of songwriter who is distinct from other types. This identity is then validated by songwriters who tell the same narratives and attach the same moral evaluations to "other" songwriters. Such narratives, then, construct collective identities among those who are perceivably distinguishable from "other" songwriters ("we" who do not write "diaries" like "they" do, or "we" who have not "sold out" like they have). In this way, there is a third layer to the construction and maintenance of personal and collective identity: "folkie," "festival veteran," and "songwriter" (i.e., Channeling Artist vs. Master Craftsman).

Additionally, narratives *construct* songwriters' realities of what songwriting "does," why, and for whom, which contributes to personal and collective identity in different ways based on the story told. Channeling Artists, for instance, understand songwriting as the process of "pouring" out an authentic Self, one that is revealed and understood through song. In this way, songwriting is a process of "coming to know" the Self; thus songs, as products, are mirrors of one's "real" identity, one that was once hidden below the surface of conscious awareness. Master Craftsmen, on the other hand, are less concerned with Self-revelation and more concerned with evoking such revelatory experiences in others. Master Craftsmen strive to write "good songs," or songs that reunite listeners, particularly those who are "lost" and/or "traumatized," with the "universal" collective, or "human family." Similarly, they "work" to circulate a message of change, protest, commentary, and social enlightenment in an effort to do "good" in the world. In many ways, the emphasis placed on "helping" and/or "teaching" an extremely broad collectivity

of others has much to say about how they understand themselves as songwriters—their personal identities—and how they understand their place and their role as messengers within the broad collectivity for which they are fighting to help and change.

Cultural Understandings of "Good Songs"

"Good songs" inform (and are informed by) personal and collective identity in myriad ways. That "good songs" are defined by widespread cultural consensus means that one's personal and collective identity as a knowledgeable "folkie" and festival "veteran" is confirmed when others within the folk and festival community hear, know, feel, and evaluate songs similarly. Moreover, "good songs" are relatable, which means that in order for a song to achieve the cultural consensus that renders it "good," a great many members must be able to "see" themselves in it and feel accordingly. This leads to cultural understandings of "good songs" as "universal," because they musically represent the commonality of shared experience.

As such, "good songs" relate to, and thus resonate with, a wide range of listeners' personal, subjective, and emotional life experiences. These personal experiences are validated by "good songs" that "speak" to them in ways that ring "true" and "honest" to who they are, or those that emotionally resonate with their personal identities. Such a process of validation through "good songs" makes sense given that said identities have been informed by Western culture, and more specifically, folk music culture, in the first place. A song's relatability hinges on its ability to index widely shared experience, but it also centers on listeners' cultural knowledge of "good songs." Thus, "good songs" are those in which one can place and see oneself, which validates personal identity and the subjective and emotional experience that shapes (and has been shaped by) that identity. However, this personal validation is only possible

if one shares meaning with the broader collective, or those whose personal and collective identities are similarly validated by "feeling" a "good song" when they hear it.

Emotional Experience

Producing Folk Music

The ways in which participants feel about the production of original folk music often depends on the type of story told around the songwriting process. Channeling Artists most often feel overwhelmed with emotion, particularly those that "nag" at the body in ways that are confusing and difficult to express. Songwriters in this story have difficulty writing "happy" songs, as the songwriting process described by Channeling Artist is one of examining, ordering, and interpreting the Self and lived emotional experience. Put plainly, happiness and contentment do not usually "nag" at the body in ways that require "channeling" and examination. Following the "channeling" process, or the "spilling out" of emotion, songwriters must commonly experience relief.

As I argued in chapter six, any attempt on my part to describe exactly how Master Craftsmen "feel" in relation to songwriting would be speculation at best. Given that both stories do overlap at times, I imagine that there are some "feelings" related to "channeling" for Master Craftsmen, but because they are so focused on listeners' emotional experiences and not their own, they are unlikely to discuss their songwriting process in emotional terms. If anything can be said about the "feelings" of Master Craftsmen, they revolve around feeling "responsible" to the audience for whom they are "working" to make "feel."

Narratives are intricately tied to both identity and emotion, which means that narratives around songwriting shape (and are shaped by) participants' personal and collective identities, their emotional experiences, and how they interpret the interrelationships between those

identities and those emotional experiences. How Channeling Artists "feel" is directly related to who they are as Channeling Artists and the same can be said of Master Craftsmen. The reverse is also true; who they are as songwriters informs how they feel, or "should" feel, during the songwriting process. These feelings are shared among songwriters who tell the same story, thus one's personal identity as, say, a Channeling Artist, as well as the feelings that are related to it, are situated within a larger collective of songwriters who "feel" similarly about their process. In this way, how one "feels" about songwriting is tied to the narrative around it, and both the feeling and the narrative, together and separately, work to maintain personal and collective identity.

Receiving Folk Music

"Good songs" evoke emotional and embodied responses, but they should *never* evoke the wrong type of emotional response and affect listeners negatively. Songs may elicit painful memories, but they should never in and of themselves be painful. Even the saddest of songs should make listeners feel less alone in their grief, trauma, and pain. "Good songs" feel as though one is sharing meaning, emotion, and experience with others, all of which should feel "real" and "honest" in ways that are "known" and "felt" in the body. Listeners then, upon hearing a "good song," feel understood.

"Feeling" "good songs" is often described using metaphors related to pain ("kills," "wrecks," "ruins"), but the experience is one of being overwhelmed with emotion that "slays" the body, as opposed to being in pain. In many ways, "good songs," much like songwriting, also involves the "spilling out" of emotion and subsequent feelings of relief and understanding. "Bad songs" do not typically evoke upsetting or painful emotions (i.e., the "wrong" response), as such songs do not keep the listener engaged long enough to be relatable and emotional, but they are

certainly felt in uncomfortable ways. Instruments that are out of tune, or vocalists who sing off pitch, for example, are painfully unpleasant to the socialized ear. In this way, listeners can and do "feel" songs that are "bad," though they should never have to.

As mentioned above, and in relation to issues of "feeling" and identities, personal identities are validated through a song's relatability which evokes and emotionally embodied response. Sharing that emotional experience with others who "relate" and thus "feel" similarly evidences a collective identity among those who "know" and "feel" "good songs" (i.e., the folk musical community). The same can be said of "knowing" and "feeling" "bad songs." In this way, the "feelings" that are associated with the reception of "good songs" shapes (and is shaped by) both personal and collective identities.

Limitations

This section, I believe, represents an honest and reflexive response to the question, "Had I to do it all over again, what would I have done differently to better the research?" The answer:

I would have interviewed more female songwriters. To be sure, there are more men than women at both festivals, but there are more women musicians and songwriters at Kerrville than there are at Winfield and this is not reflected in my interview data. I would have also interviewed more young "folks." Again, both festivals are largely populated by an "older" crowd, but there is indeed a younger generation of festival-goers whose experiences and perspectives are not fully represented in this research.

When it comes to Winfield, I would have interviewed more people who camp in the Walnut Grove. "Bluegrass," and all the shared meaning in and around it, is an interesting and dynamic sub-category of "folk music," however, participants emphasize their differences far more than their similarities. The geographic and cultural separation between groves is a direct

result of the emphasis placed on purist bluegrass in the Walnut Grove. It would have been interesting and productive to examine how different articulations of "folk music" are felt and experienced based on shared meaning in and around those various articulations.

On a more analytical note, I would have spent more time writing autoethnographically. To be a young, female, songwriter who, in a limitations section, laments the neglect of young, female, songwriters, means that I have rather glossed over some extremely fertile methodological ground. That being said, I did employ a tremendous amount of sociological introspection throughout the entire research endeavor—data collection, analysis, writing—but I should have spent the time, and the emotional and intellectual energy, to write the results of my introspections in ways that more closely aligned with the analytic and evocative character of autoethnography.

While I have not encountered any openly non-heterosexual people at Winfield, I have interviewed, spoken with, and witnessed performances by lesbian women at Kerrville. This *means* something. This meaning could pertain to Kerrville as a place, or Winfield as a place, or different types of musical interaction and the shared meaning around it (original songs vs. traditional covers), or how sexualities are interpreted and performed based on any or all of these site-specific components of folk and festival culture. Examining sexuality as it relates to folk music culture, and how authentic folk music membership is accomplished according to specific musical interactions within a specific festival context, would have been a fruitful analytical addition to this research.

Additionally, I would have been more open to different narratives around the songwriting process earlier in the research process; I would have taken more personal videos of jams and song circles to capture emotionality and shared experience of "good songs;" I would have

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conducted a narrative analysis of "story songs" so as to more fully convey their narrative and emotional accomplishments; and, had time and finances allowed, I would have attended the Planet Bluegrass series of folk musicians' festivals and schools that take place annually in Lyons, Colorado from late June to late August: Telluride Bluegrass, Rocky Grass Academy, Folks Festival, and Song School.

Empirical Applications: Suggestions for Future Research

Songwriting as inquiry describes a process of healing and emotional understanding and *songwriting in action* describes a process of invoking social protest, change, and justice, both of which can be empirically applied in a variety of settings for a variety of reasons. I am currently working with Dr. Lori Holyfield on a book project that combines her research on veterans with PTSD (Holyfield 2011) with my research on songwriting and emotion. In this book, the synthesis and application of our research is dedicated to ethnographically examining and assisting burgeoning non-profit organizations that teach veterans how to write songs so as to heal the wounds of war and/or invoke social protest and change around those wars. These applications could easily and productively include other mental illnesses, such as depression and anxiety, in ways that could assist those undergoing such struggles.

Future research could fill the gaps mentioned above and attend to these empirical applications. Also, future research could involve an examination of how the cultural "work" of music and narrative compares or contrasts with other genres, festivals, and (sub)cultures. Similarly, in addition to authenticity, identities, emotion, and social change, it would be interesting to examine other forms of "work" accomplished by music and narrative, how that "work" can be compared across genres, festivals, and (sub)cultures, and how it might correspond with other topics of sociological interest, such as race, class, gender, and sexuality, for example.

Stories and music, as well as stories of and in music, take place around the globe, and the cultural "work" of their synthesis has not been examined or applied in any social setting outside of those presented here. In this regard, the avenues for future research are seemingly endless.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter

USF
UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH FLORIDA

DIVISION OF RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND COMPLIANCE
Institutional Review Boards, FWA No. 00001669
12901 Bruce B. Downs Blvd.. MDC035 • Tampa, FL 33612-4799
(813) 974-5638 • FAX (813) 974-5618

July 12, 2012

Maggie Cobb,
Sociology
805 Regal Palm Ct.
Brandon, FL 33510

RE: **Expedited Approval** for Initial Review
    IRB#: Pro00008294
    Title: Singing the Self: Music and Narrative Identity at Folk Festivals

Dear Ms. Cobb:

On 7/12/2012 the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and **APPROVED** the above referenced protocol**.** Please note that your approval for this study will expire on 7/12/2013.

Approved Items:
Protocol Document(s):
Singing the Self

Consent/Assent Documents:
Updated Informed Consent Form .pdf   7/12/2012 9:47 AM   0.01

It was the determination of the IRB that your study qualified for expedited review which includes activities that (1) present no more than minimal risk to human subjects, and (2) involve only procedures listed in one or more of the categories outlined below. The IRB may review research through the expedited review procedure authorized by 45CFR46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110. The research proposed in this study is categorized under the following expedited review categories:

(6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Please note, the informed consent/assent documents are valid during the period indicated by the official, IRB-Approval stamp located on the form. Valid consent must be documented on a copy of the most recently IRB-approved consent form.

Appendix A (Continued)

As the principal investigator of this study, it is your responsibility to conduct this study in accordance with IRB policies and procedures and as approved by the IRB. Any changes to the approved research must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval by an amendment.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,

John A Schinka, Ph.D.

John Schinka, Ph.D., Chairperson
USF Institutional Review Board

Appendix B: Autoethnographic Reflections on Songwriting

"Take it Away": Autoethnographic Reflections on Songwriting

I wish I could take it away…

I sing the words quietly to myself while weeping softly, holding my guitar close to my body, rocking back and forth on my ragged brown couch. I position my shaky fingers in the G major position and begin strumming slowly before moving to D… then A minor. The dark, haunting tone of the minor chord strikes me – Yes. Perfect.

Like the chord, I am dark. Haunted.

My tears drop silently on my '78 Guild, the same guitar th at Eva cradled a few short years ago. The same guitar that connects us to each other, to music, to our version of God. Our carefully crafted wooden connection. It is how we gain strength, love, and escape, how we share joy and devastation beyond words, how we experience ourselves and the world, how we share each other.

I release the darkness of the A minor with a seamless transition to C major – Yes. It contradicts, but brightens. Perfect. I follow up with G and finish the short and simple chord progression. G, D, A minor, C, G – Yes. Right. It is both love and loss, hopeful and hopeless. It is slow, but it is steady. It moves. It is moving.

I sit quietly and play the chord progression over and over. Eyes closed. Waiting.

I wish I could take it away…

The music speaks and words fall evenly from my mouth. As I move my fingers across the strings, I think of Eva. Her baby grandson has died, a "borrowed angel" she calls him. With "broken wings."

I feel her die with him. I feel I'm dying with her.

I'd grow heavy under the weight

I know that you'd do the same for me

Yes, of course, she would do anything for me. And yet here I sit, so helpless.

 Useless.

My hands play the chords without me as a thick, stinging sorrow courses slowly through my veins. I think of how fortunate I am to have Eva in my life, to know her, to love and be loved by her.

I know now it's not everyday

Someone like you might come my way

My chest fills with a crushing knowing, my hands quiver under the heavy burden of expression. The words and melody flow effortlessly from our bodies, the guitar's and mine. We sing to each other, for Eva.

And I know you're taking it

Day to day to day to day

She is stoic and quiet, strong for her daughter. She strides bravely and cautiously through her own grief, comforting others with open arms, inconspicuously managed smiles. I love those arms. Those smiles. I wish I could see her, smell her, hold her, cry with her. I wish I was brave enough. I wish I was like her.

I'm not.

But I wish I could take it….away

TODAY

The chorus finished, the Guild and I stop. Waiting.

The room is still and silent as I cradle my face in my hands, my body wrapped tightly around the Guild's. Tears overflow my fingers, leaving tiny, salty rivers winding gracefully down the front of our guitar. I do not wipe them, hoping they leave a mark. A stain.

In this quiet moment, I leave myself. I remember everything.

I remember the first time I saw her in an introduction to sociology course, and finding myself totally transfixed by her contagious enthusiasm and passion.

I remember how she excitedly gave me a high five when I told her, after that first class, that I wanted to be a sociologist; that *this* is who I *really* am.

I remember what that felt like, to finally know.

I remember long talks in her office, decorated with stained glass, artifacts from her many travels, and pictures of her beautiful daughter. She has Eva's smile.

I remember our many celebrations as I slowly became who I am now. What we made of me.

I remember when she first told me she was a musician, when I first heard her sing. I stared at her with such envy, such…*amazement.*

I remember how these experiences changed the course of our relationship, of my life, forever.

Well the road

That I'm traveling

It was paved

By your hands

You always taught me life

Is what happens

When you're making other plans

I remember how over the years she became a mother and I became a daughter. How I started calling her "mama," how we said "I love you."

I remember when she taught me to play guitar on the very Guild that I now clutch tightly to my body, and how we've shared such beautiful music together, how we've sung part of our lives together, her harmony with mine.

You always spoke to my soul as it grows old

I am inspired and overwhelmed. Memories, love, music. Eva, gratitude, pain. The words seem to come from outside of us and move quickly through us, as if we are giving voice to something that had always been there, waiting to be discovered.

Well, the least that I could do

Is write a song for you

When you're feeling blue.

The least that I could do indeed.

But I wish I could take it away…

Immersed in memories, I sing loudly, the Guild and I echoing through the empty room, my raspy voice bouncing off the windows, breaking at the high notes as I struggle for breath, for air, glad to be alone. I find myself singing the chorus, I hear it filling the room, swelling in and around me.

I wish I could take it away….

How could I ever express how I feel for her? How I grieve for her loss, how inexplicably it overflows and drowns? How could she ever know how *broken* I am for her? How *helpless*?

I'd grow heavy under the weight….

I remember the first time I saw her grandson; he was a newborn, cradled by his mother, his little body curled up in her arms, sleeping soundly. I can see him so vividly now. I can feel his soft, thick black hair, his tiny little toes, tiny little fingers. Oh, how precious he was as his mother swayed with him slowly, how little time they had left together.

Eva spent every moment she could with him, singing to him, holding him, whispering in his little ear how special he was, what a gift he was. She was and is the perfect mother and grandmother, always helping her daughter with tubes and oxygen, with endless surgeries and appointments, with long nights in hospitals, medical bills, caregivers, tears, dinners. Everything.

I know that you would do the same for me….

Now he is gone, leaving behind cribs, toys, baby smells and baby clothes, oxygen tanks and baby food, broken mothers, fathers, grandmothers, grandfathers, pictures. Funeral arrangements. Expenses. The dreadful busy work that death assigns.

And here I sit. A coward. How does one live through such a loss? How does one comfort a daughter who has lost her baby? How could I possibly comfort *her*? There is nothing to offer. A grandmother and grandson, a mother and daughter, an unimaginable, unbearable tragedy. I imagine what I might say to her and everything sounds trite and cheap. Patronizing at best.

"I'm sorry" is a total joke. And a mean one.

Well there are famous clichés

I imagine what people might be saying to console her: "I'm sorry." "We're praying for you." "This too shall pass." "Time heals all." Everything that is clichéd, tired, and meaningless.

Like silver linings

One door closing

While others are opening

I suddenly find this not only inadequate, but infuriating. Words come pouring from my mouth. Heated from anger, they boil over.

The truth is

THAT'S INSULTING

When it always starts to sting

When you're trying to breathe…

I close my eyes and sing towards the ceiling. The next line comes suddenly, direct and powerful.

I've always been one

TO HIDE

From the pain of other's grief

Well I always FEEL WEAK

A coward, but an honest coward. That's it. And that's better.

Yes, I do hide from grief. I do feel weak, helpless. Uncomfortable. There are no words…

So maybe I'll try to sing it

I wish I could take it away

I move into the chorus, the sound filling up the room, my voice echoing through the emptiness, my fingers sweeping across the Guild, the image of Eva and her grandson seared in the wooden fibers of our guitar. It is a transcendent moment. It is utter, blistering loss and love. It is letting go, losing control. It can no longer be called singing.

After another chorus, I stop abruptly. I allow instability. I wait.

My hands begin playing the first verse, my mouth finishes the song the way it began. The lyrics emerge like a whisper or a prayer. It feels right. It is a musical reminder to Eva, as if to say "I love you. You have changed my life. You taught me to be strong, and now I will be strong with you, *for* you."

I slowly pick the guitar after the final lyric before giving it a final, quiet strum, signaling both the end of the song and the beginning of its new life. I spend the rest of the afternoon playing the song over and over, remembering, running my fingers across the Guild, seeing Eva's smile and imagining what she might be doing, *how* she is coping, if she is okay. If she will *ever* be okay again. Maybe not.

The song is the only thing I have. The only thing I can say. The only thing I can give.

A meager offering from an honest coward, fearful of platitudes.

But an offering nonetheless.

Reflections on "Take it Away" (2013)

Writing and writing *about* "Take it Away" drew the two of us ever closer, further solidifying how important, *how essential*, she is to me. "Take it away" allowed me to say what I couldn't say with words like "I'm sorry." It resounded more fully, reached more deeply than words like "I love you." It taught me about my fear of others' grief and enabled me to confront

Appendix B (Continued)

that fear when I felt useless, weak, and patronizing. In the quiet moment when the song unfolded, I allowed myself to be overcome with emotion, to sit with it, to explore it, to channel it. And when finished, I was relieved; I had written my heart as gift of healing and knowing for us both. We now share the song whenever we get the chance to play music together. Sometimes she will weep silently, sometimes she will sit proudly, sometimes she just smiles lovingly. But she always sings with me, because it is *ours* now. The song and the story have given us both so much. Such is the power of writing, of music. Of songwriting.

My Songwriting Story (2016)

I have always been excited about combining my personal interests with my sociological research, but there is a small problem when it comes to writing about my process: I am never present for it. Songs always come without me, often uninvited. Upon much reflection, I came to the conclusion that, for me, songs come from emotional experiences that I simply cannot express through language alone. In many ways, I have to be overwhelmed or speechless to write a song, and sometimes I have to be confused as to why I'm speechless and overwhelmed. As a sociologist, this presents itself as problematic: How am I supposed to write about something I needed a song to express in the first place through a process I don't remember? In the past, I have often felt like I needed music to write about music, that I would have to write a song about songwriting and emotion to actually convey songwriting and emotion (which, as a side note, I eventually did, the lyrics to which are included in Appendix C). Alas, outside of songwriting about songwriting, the above autoethnography is simply the best that I can do. My hopes are that there is a degree of truth in the idea that "it is in the telling that the romance of songwriting emerges" (Long and Barber 2015:146).

That being said, it wasn't until quite recently that I realized my autoethnography had much to contribute to my current interests, which, of course, took years to finally take a more concretized shape. The struggle I endured when it came to writing about songwriting was largely due to my attempt at explaining or demystifying a notoriously and culturally clichéd musical mystery, as opposed to fulfilling the interpretive sociological agenda of attending to how other songwriters *themselves* made of sense of it. And with that, it finally dawned on me that I have always told, and continue to tell, the story of the Channeling Artist. I am a Muse person, or one that channels emotionality in and through song without much recollection of the process. The above story is indeed a recollection, but one that took an entire semester to write, feel, and attempt to slowly piece together. And perhaps it is only emotionally true. It's hard to say.

The important point is that the songwriting process conceived of in this way accomplished things for me; it provided a vehicle through which I could say what I knew and felt to be unspeakable, through which I could organize my emotions as they flooded me in the very moment, through which I could understand parts of my Self that remained beneath the surface, namely my rather strange phobia of speechlessness around loved ones who are deeply grieving, which leads to my phobia of being around them in general. Feeling useless and helpless in that regard quite literally frightens me and leads me to abandon those that I love who are in need. I know that about myself now, but it took writing that particular song to know it. It took writing to see it (Poulos 2012). Perhaps most importantly, such a process accomplishes similar things for other songwriters who tell the same story.

Appendix C: Lyrics to Prayer to Music

Lyrics to "Prayer to Music"

If you can say what I can't say, say it now
If you can know what I can't know, tell me now
If you can help me sing my soul
Help me find it on this road
To breaking
Down

I hear that you tell stories of true Selves
Well help me wield a pen and I'll write mine down
Speak to me like those
With whom you've spoke before
I'm listening now

Speak to me like those
Behind the rusted door
I'm listening now

Help me show the world from within you
Without you
Humble me with things I never knew
Open my eyes to beyond this frail disguise
I'm listening now

And I won't avert my eyes
When confronted with my life
I'm listening now

Speak
So I can speak
So I can speak
So I can know

Know
So I can know
So I can know
So I can speak

I'm listening now
I'm listening now
I'm quiet now

If you can say what I can't say, say it now
If you can know what I can't, tell me now

Appendix D: Interview Guide

Interview Guide

The following interview questions pertain specifically to songwriters; however, questions were modified based on the participant (songwriter, musician, non-musician, contest winner, instructor, etc.) and the presentation of new information about the participant in the interview (i.e. a conversation).

1. How long have you been coming to the festival? How did you get into it?
2. What draws you to back to the festival each year?
3. What is your favorite festival memory?
4. How do you feel about song circles/jams? What do you think makes a good song circle/jam?
5. How long have you been a musicians? How did you get into it?
6. Do you write songs at the festival?
7. What if anything do you think the festival has to add to your songwriting?
8. How long have you been a songwriter? How did you get into it?
9. How many songs have you written?
10. How often would you say you write songs?
11. Why is songwriting important to you? What would you say you get out of it?
12. What types of songs would you say write? (Funny, emotional, philosophical, etc.)
13. Would you mind telling me a little about your songwriting process? How do you normally go about writing songs?
14. How do you typically feel when you write a song?
15. How do you know when it is time to write a song, or is there a specific time?
16. How do your songs usually make you feel after they are written?
17. Why do you choose to write songs as opposed to, say, a letter or poetry? Why music?
18. Do you write songs for yourself or for others?
19. What do you think your songs say about you?
20. What do you want listeners to get from your songs?
21. What do you personally think makes a good song?
22. How do you think the judges of New Folk/Songwriter Showcase decide what's a good song and who wins? Do you attend those performances? How do you feel about who wins?
23. Do you think anybody who writes songs is a "songwriter"? In other words, can one become a songwriter or is one born a songwriter?
24. How do you think one becomes or learns to be a songwriter?
25. Who is your favorite songwriter? Why?
26. Do you have a favorite song that you've written? Why is it your favorite?
27. Would mind playing it for me? Or any one of your favorite songs?

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