# Classifications in Popular Music

## Discourses and Meaning Structures in American, Dutch and German Popular Music Reviews

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Classificaties in populaire muziek
Discoursen en betekenisstructuren in
Amerikaanse, Nederlandse en Duitse popmuziekrecensies

Thesis

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born in *Geleen*

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# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

Popular music is one of the cultural fields – together with film, photography, and jazz – which in the second half of the twentieth century have apparently gained much in status and recognition (Janssen, 1999; Janssen, Kuipers & Verboord, 2009). Popular music has become 'aesthetically mobile' - developing from a devalued form of entertainment to the status of art. This reordering of the position of popular music seems to be an aspect of a more general change in cultural classification systems of modern western societies. DiMaggio (1987, 1991) has argued that the cultural classification systems of western societies have become more differentiated, less hierarchical, with weaker boundaries and less universal. The number of genres has expanded, genres are no longer ranked in a hierarchical status hierarchy, the boundaries between genres have become less potent and less strongly defended and the consensus on how to classify cultural genres has diminished. The hierarchical, universal classification of 'popular' and 'high culture' seems to have eroded and given way to a multitude of genres that cannot be ranked in one hierarchical dimension and broad classifications such as high vs. low seem to have been displaced by more finely grained classifications and distinctions. Although genres such as popular music, jazz, literature and theatre can no longer be placed easily within 'high' or 'low', new hierarchies seem to have appeared within (previously 'popular') genres (Holt, 1997; Baumann, 2001).

In this dissertation, I study the way in which popular music critics create, maintain and contest new and old symbolic boundaries and classification structures within popular music. How do critics within the field of popular music 'make sense' of cultural products? What kind of criteria do they use to evaluate popular music and how do they classify artists into categories? Do they create or draw upon established hierarchical boundaries such as 'art' vs. 'commerce' in making distinctions? Do they classify along other lines? I approach these questions from a comparative perspective. I compare the classification systems of critics across countries (the United States, Germany and the Netherlands), across time and across 'positions' within the field of popular music (criticism). The main research question of this study can

therefore be formulated as how and why do classification systems of popular music critics change over time and vary across national and field contexts?

Why focus on the classification systems of popular music critics? The development of a secondary, critical discourse has often been perceived as an indicator of the 'aesthetic mobility' of cultural forms (Janssen, Kuipers & Verboord, 2009; Peterson, 1972 on jazz; Ferguson, 1998 on gastronomy; Baumann, 2001, 2002 on film). The institution of criticism is seen as traditionally belonging to the domain of high art and when a cultural form becomes associated with secondary discourse this is generally interpreted as providing 'legitimacy' to a rising art form as a 'serious art form'. Critics are, in other words, perceived as performing symbolic 'boundary work' (Gieryn, 1983), in this case between the categories of 'art' and 'non-art'. They make decisions on who is 'worthy of attention' and who is 'not worthy', thereby demarcating the boundaries of the field and contributing to the reputation, status, success, and legitimacy of artists (Janssen, 1997; Van Rees, 1983). The symbolic boundaries of 'gatekeeping' actors situated *at* the boundaries of institutional fields are therefore especially pertinent to the study of how fields have possibly been rearranged and reordered. Although the role and function of critics in cultural fields has often been noted, the study of the qualitative way in which critics draw 'symbolic boundaries' remains a understudied topic (Cf. Griswold, 1987), especially in the context of a popular cultural form such as popular music (Cf. Bielby & Bielby, 2004; Bielby, Moloney & Ngo, 2004).[1]

The aim of comparing the classifications systems of popular music criticism cross-nationally, longitudinally, and across field positions is embedded within the theoretical framework of Paul DiMaggio (1987, 1991). Classification systems consist of the way cultural forms are ordered and categorized in relational systems of classifications both at the *subjective* level of sense making activities of actors and at the *objective* level of structures of production, distribution and reception of cultural goods. This framework therefore, firstly, highlights the importance of studying the sense making activities of actors within art worlds. Inspired

[1] In this context one could point to Lamont (2004, 2009) on symbolic classifications by members of academic review panels, Weber (2000) on the symbolic classification structure of book publishers, and Radway (1997) on the editorial decision making of the Book-of-the-Month Club

by 'practice' theorists such as Bourdieu and Giddens, it incorporates both the interpretative dimension of 'meaning making' as well as the institutionalized structures of art worlds and draws attention to the intersection between the symbolic and the material, the subjective and the objective, the cognitive and the organizational in creating institutional patterns within cultural fields.[2]

Second, because of the relation between 'culture' and 'structure', the framework suggests how and why classification systems might vary across different (levels of) social structures. In his seminal article 'Classification in art', DiMaggio stresses the relation between cultural classification systems and social structure at the macro, societal level. 'Ritual' classification structures are influenced in their hierarchy, universality, differentiation and boundary strength by wider societal structures such as the characteristics of a society's stratification system, the educational system, patterns of geographic mobility, social diversity and other macro-structural factors. DiMaggio's hypotheses can form the basis of cross-national comparative research on how artistic classification systems vary depending on macro-structural differences between countries (Lamont, 1992; Janssen, 2005; Janssen, Kuipers & Verboord, 2009). DiMaggio also contrasts 'ritual' classification systems generated by macro social structures, with classifications systems that can be understood in relation to field-specific structures. In his own work on the institutionalization of high culture in the United States, DiMaggio (1982), for example, stresses the role of organizational forms such as the non-profit organization as providing the organizational basis of the high/popular classification as well as the development of an organizational field (DiMaggio, 1991; Cf. Dowd et al., 2002). The larger

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[2] In the study of culture, the framework therefore also manages to incorporate both the definition of culture in the wider anthropological sense of 'interpretative' classificatory systems, as well as the more narrow definition of culture in the sense of institutional fields such as the arts. In the sociology of culture, a divide has sometimes been perceived between '*cultural* sociology' and the 'sociology of *culture*' (Alexander, 2003; Griswold, 2005). The first focuses on studying 'implicit' cultural schema's, discourse systems, binary oppositions, and narrative constructions in diverse domains of social life (work and organizations, social movements, stratification, gender, race, etc.), whereas the second studies social processes in the production, distribution and reception of 'explicit' culture within the arts, thereby purportedly restricting attention to the 'interpretative' dimension (Peterson, 1979). However, DiMaggio's framework on artistic classification systems resonates with both approaches to the study of culture.

societal 'demand' for classification systems is mediated by the structures within artistic fields themselves. In this research, I will draw on DiMaggio's work in formulating hypotheses on how the cultural classification systems of popular music critics can vary cross-nationally. However, in addition to considering broad social structures, I will also look at internal developments and structures within the field of popular music and their influence on the classification systems that are employed within the field, in this case, by critics. I will, in other words, address different levels of social context in examining how cultural discourses of critics are related to social structures.

Third, the choice for the concept of classification systems also has important methodological consequences. At a theoretical level, the 'culture as classifications' approach derives much of its analytical power from its emphasis on the 'relational' aspect of culture (Lamont & Molnar, 2002: 169). Classifications, boundaries, categories are fundamentally relational concepts. One category cannot exist without another, just as 'clapping with one hand is impossible', as Harrison White would put it. Defining culture as relational classification systems therefore accords well with the assumption of social life as being fundamentally relational (Elias, 1978; Emirbayer, 1997) and has opened up the possibility of studying the intersection of 'culture' and 'structure' through notions of 'boundary alignment', 'dualities' or 'homologies'. People use cultural boundaries to make social boundaries and vice versa. The notion of 'relationality' has made available a rich and diverse toolbox for analyzing classification systems and the mutually constitutive character of culture and social structures (See Mohr, 1998 for overview). Formalization has always accompanied relational analysis – as, for example, in the structural analysis of language and literature (Levi-Strauss, 1963; Culler, 1975; Caws, 1988; Dosse, 1997) - but more recently a growing cross-fertilization between the American social network analysis tradition and European 'structuralism' has resulted in a new research agenda of 'measuring meaning structures' (Mohr, 1998, 2000a). Formal tools for analyzing 'relations' have been shown to be applicable to the study of discourses as relational classification structures and the duality of culture and structure (Martin, 2000; Carley & Kaufer, 1993; Giuffre, 2001; Harcourt, 2002; Mohr & Duquenne, 1997; Mische & Pattison, 2000; Yeung, 2005; Franzosi, 1989; Mohr & White, 2008). A methodological aim of this dissertation is to apply these relational methods of 'measuring

meaning structures' to the analysis of critical discourses and thereby to bridge 'positivist' and 'hermeneutic' approaches.

The structure of this dissertation is as follows. In Chapter 2, I will start with the *macro* level and compare the discourse of critics writing for elite newspapers in three different countries, the Netherlands, Germany and the United States. Although in all three countries popular music has apparently gained much in status and artistic legitimacy, I investigate whether critics writing for elite newspapers in different countries vary in the way in which they have contributed to the legitimation of popular music, and if broader cross-national differences in cultural classification systems can account for differences in legitimating strategies. Some have argued that popular music criticism has assimilated the evaluative criteria traditionally associated with high art aesthetics to legitimate pop music as a serious art form, while others have claimed that popular music discourse opposes the evaluative principles of high art worlds in favor of a "popular aesthetic". I compare the critical discourse on popular music in the United States, Germany and the Netherlands to test the hypothesis - derived from DiMaggio's work - that the presence of "high art" and "popular" aesthetic criteria in popular music reviews published in elite newspapers varies cross-nationally due to wider societal differences.

In Chapter 3, I expand the cross-national comparison by also considering field level differences between the organization of the field of popular music in the United States and the Netherlands. I also include the relative positioning of artists within the field of popular music in terms of types of 'field' recognition. By comparing the discursive classifications and the use of commercial, aesthetic and racial logics in the classification of popular music artists in the US and the Netherlands, I aim to assess the relative influence of both macro-structural and field level differences on the symbolic classifications of popular music critics.

In Chapter 4, I focus more squarely on the internal differentiation within popular music in terms of the discourses on genres. Although popular music might have increased in status and legitimacy, internal distinctions in terms of the artistic status of different genres of popular music – distinctions such as 'commercial' pop and 'artistic' rock which are themselves homologous to the hierarchical distinction between fields such as pop music, literature, theatre etc. – might still structure the field. Here I employ a longitudinal comparison of the aesthetic classification

systems consisting of genres and their meanings as employed by newspaper critics in the *Los Angeles Times*, in 1985-1986 and 2004-2005. I conduct a relational discourse analysis of popular music album reviews, which applies the ecological technique of measuring niche spaces occupied by genres in an 'aesthetic discourse space'. Through this analysis, I compare the genre discourse structure of popular music as used by reviewers in their perception and evaluation of popular music for a timeframe in which the field of popular music has been argued to have undergone a process of growing 'isomorphism' of aesthetic principles and a blurring of boundaries between genres (Regev, 2002; Cf. DiMaggio, 1991). Transformations at the field level such as the changing industry structure – the rise of the open system of production – could have stimulated this process of boundary erosion and the waning of hierarchical boundaries between genres in the way that critics make sense of different genres.

In Chapter 5, I examine homologies between structures of the field of critical *reception* and structures of popular music *production*. Here I model a relational 'critical discourse space' (consisting of a diverse set of popular music publications, a semiotic system of aesthetic codes, and a 'ratings' space) to analyze whether the broader field of popular music criticism maintains, reproduces and symbolically legitimizes the production structure of 'restricted' vs. 'large-scale', or 'generalist' vs. 'specialist' production. Bourdieu has suggested that this boundary structures cultural fields not only at the material but also at the symbolic level by institutionalizing the 'art-commerce' boundary. The analysis tries to establish whether this dual structure of production and reception remains symbolically potent and how popular music publications are themselves positioned within a meaningfully ordered institutional space, and which positions, for example, the *Los Angeles Times* and the *New York Times* hold in this critical discourse space. This can provide a field analysis of the positions of the two main newspapers I have drawn upon in previous chapters for the US case.

The chapters in this dissertation are based on three published journal articles and one submitted article under review. Chapter 2 is in press at *Cultural Sociology*. Chapter 3 will appear in the *American Behavioral Scientist 54*. Chapter 4 is published in *Poetics. Journal for the empirical study of the Arts, Culture and Media* 37(4): 315-332. Chapter 5 is currently under review.

# CHAPTER 2

## The evaluation of popular music in the United States, Germany and the Netherlands: A comparison of the use of high art and popular aesthetic criteria

### Introduction

One of the most interesting questions that have resulted from the application of Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital to other national contexts is whether cultural goods are evaluated differently in different national contexts (Lamont 1992; Lamont & Thevenot 2000; Holt 1997). Bourdieu described how in France a hierarchical distinction not only existed in the kinds of cultural goods that were appreciated but also *in the way in which* they were appreciated. According to Bourdieu, legitimate taste is characterized by an 'aesthetic disposition' which valued 'form' over 'function', apprehended cultural goods in a disinterested way, detached from the meanings and references of everyday life, and in general valued 'distance': distance from the 'facile', the simple, the superficial, the immediate sensation and direct and easy enjoyment. The illegitimate taste is on the other hand characterized by a 'popular aesthetic', which in contrast to the 'aesthetic disposition' affirmed 'the continuity of life and art' and exhibited a hostility towards formal experimentation and had a deep-rooted demand for participation (Bourdieu, 1984: 32-34). Studies on the reception of high culture in the US have however questioned whether the evaluative repertoire of cultural elites in the US also is characterized by an 'aesthetic disposition' (Halle, 1993; Long, 1986). These studies found that American cultural elites evaluate high culture in an 'informal' way, emphasizing emotional and experiential dimensions over the intellectual aspects of the aesthetic experience, resembling the way in which Bourdieu described the 'popular aesthetic' in France.[3]

These cross-national differences in the reception of high culture have been interpreted as reflecting cross-national differences in the

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[3] Holt (1997) on the other hand, has criticized the works of Halle and others for focusing on the reception of high culture in the US. Holt argues that the distinction between 'formal' and 'informal' ways of reception can be found in the US within the reception of mass produced cultural products.

characteristics of cultural classifications (Lamont, 1992:120-123). Lamont argues that in loosely bounded, non-hierarchical cultural classification systems a strong distinction between art and everyday life is absent and ways of evaluation are salient that are accessible and not require lengthy intellectual training or educational capital. The distinction between an 'aesthetic disposition' and a 'popular aesthetic' is more characteristic of a cultural classification system with strong cultural boundaries, as Bourdieu found in France, where the autonomy of the cultural field favors the autonomous style of reception of the 'aesthetic disposition'. Moreover, following DiMaggio (1987), Lamont argues that these cross-national differences in cultural classifications are related to cross-national differences in social structural features, in particular the characteristics of their educational systems, their system of stratification, the level of social heterogeneity.

In this chapter I will study cross-national differences in the evaluation of a commercial cultural good, popular music, by comparing the critical discourse on popular music in elite newspapers in the United States, Germany and the Netherlands. In all three countries, elite newspapers have – although to different degrees – been increasingly writing and publishing on popular music (Janssen et al., 2009). This not only provides us with an accessible source of data and an "unobtrusive measure of taste", which Peterson argues could contribute to cross-national comparative research as an alternative to survey methods and interviews. Theoretically, the growth of a secondary discourse has also generally been considered as indicative of the 'aesthetic mobility' of a cultural good (Peterson, 1967). The institution of criticism is seen as traditionally belonging to the domain of high art and when a cultural form becomes associated with secondary discourse this is generally seen as contributing to the 'legitimation' of a rising art form as a 'serious art form' by applying traditional high art aesthetic criteria and providing an intellectualizing discourse (Baumann, 2001; Corse & Griffin 1997; Regev, 1994; Shrum, 1996).[4] Cross-national comparative study of critical discourse on popular music, could therefore contribute to qualifying these

[4] This association of criticism with high art and intellectual and artistic criteria – as Bielby and Bielby (2004) have explained – seems to be part of a tradition in the sociology of culture that equates criticism with high art criticism; criteria with high art criteria; aesthetics with high art aesthetics.

studies of 'legitimation' by investigating whether the cultural resonance of traditional high art criteria might vary cross-nationally due to differences in the characteristics of their respective cultural classification systems. In other words, the 'legitimation' of a cultural form as popular music might vary cross-nationally due to broad national differences in what is considered as 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' art and their respective evaluative criteria. In contrast to previous studies of the content of criticism of rising art forms, which focus more or less exclusively on the occurrence of high art aesthetic criteria in criticism, I will identify and study the occurrence of two sets of aesthetic criteria: (1) traditional high art aesthetic criteria that emphasize a distant and formal intellectual reception of pop music and provide legitimacy to the idea that popular music can be seen as a serious art form (Regev, 1994; Baumann, 2001; Bielby et al., 2004) and (2) popular aesthetic criteria that emphasize functional, emotional and experiential ways of evaluating popular music (Bielby & Bielby, 2004; Bielby et al., 2004; Bourdieu, 1984; Frith, 1996). I will argue that both sets of aesthetic criteria can in principle be found in the critical discourse on popular music. Critics do not exclusively 'legitimate' popular music by drawing on 'high art' criteria but can also make use of a more 'hybrid' set of criteria. However, to what extent critics draw on either set of criteria, I will argue, can be shown to vary according to national differences in cultural classification systems.

## 1. The 'legitimation' of popular music

The mass culture critique of the 1950s and 60s denounced popular music as a cultural form unworthy of the honorific title of art. In the second half of the twentieth century, the orientation of cultural elites towards commercial culture in general and popular music in particular seems to have changed. Academia and music programs have opened their doors for the serious study of popular music (Shepherd, 1994) and specialized academic 'pop music journals' have appeared. This reshuffling and mixing of previously distinct categories of culture has of course often been noticed and the 'new sensibility' (Sontag) or 'postmodern condition' (Lyotard) are only a few of the labels used to describe this re-evaluation of hierarchical cultural distinctions.

On an ideological and discursive level, this 'declassification' of the distinction between 'sacred' high art and 'profane' commercial culture

has been related to a 'legitimation crisis' of the underlying notion of autonomous art (Lyotard, 1984). The distinction between 'high art' and 'commercial culture' centered around the notion of 'transcendence' – the idea that 'autonomous art' is and needs to be distanced from the practical and functional concerns of everyday life. 'Postmodern' cultural critics however have commented on a contemporary collapse of the distance between 'art' and 'everyday life' (Featherstone, 1991) and aesthetic theories are formulated that are not based on 'distance from functionality' but endorse the continuity of art and everyday experiences and thereby include the popular arts and its functional experiences into the domain of what they consider 'art' (Shusterman, 1992).

The question could therefore be raised *how* previously suspect cultural forms have been legitimated. Regev (1994) argues that although the ideology of autonomous art might have been criticized by academics and cultural critics, the 'existing parameters of art' still structure the hierarchy of cultural genres. Regev argues that in the case of the valorization of rock music 'the discourse about rock music […] has gradually constructed distinctions and hierarchies which resulted from the application of the traditional ideology of autonomous art. However, others have pointed to the limits of the acceptance of the intellectualization of popular music among the public, the producers and the critics of popular music[5] and more specifically argue that the discourse on popular music also frequently employs criteria of the 'popular aesthetic' (Stokkem, 1995; Boomkens 1994; Stratton 1982; Jones 2002; Sanjek, 2005). According to Frith (1996), 'art' and 'pop' discourses have both been part of the discursive repertoires – in varying constellations – within the field of popular music and value judgments in popular music have walked a fine line between these competing discourses – on the one hand drawing on popular criteria to criticize artists who were seen as too artistically oriented and on the other hand invoking artistic criteria to denounce the popular artists. Macan (1977) for example described how progressive rock, which incorporated

[5] A survey among American music critics in the 1980s found that – at least American critics – do not 'attribute high aesthetic and philosophical functions to music but understands its primary functions to include diversion, escape and companionship'. Wyatt, Robert O. and Geoffry P. Hull. (1988) 'The music critic in the American press: A nationwide survey of newspapers and magazines.' Mass Communication Review 17, 3: 38-43 cited in Jones, 2002: 5.

elements from classical music in pop music, was dismissed by rock critics as "elitist and a betrayal of rock's populist origins". Progressive rock was, according to rock critic Lester Bangs, "the insidious befoulment of all that was gutter pure in rock". Even in the academic discourse on the aesthetics of popular music (Shusterman, 1992: 214), the argument is often made that the 'ideology of autonomous art' does not adequately capture the discourse on pop music which values 'engaged participation' over 'distanced contemplation' and 'function' over 'form': 'the basic principles of an aesthetic of rock can be derived from turning Kantian or formalist aesthetics on its head' (Baugh, 1993: 26). Moreover, in their extensive study of the history of rock criticism, Lindberg et al. (2005) point to the development towards an 'intermediate aesthetic' that incorporates both 'artistic' as well as 'popular aesthetic criteria'.

It seems therefore fair to assume that the growth of a secondary discourse about popular music does not exclusively entail the legitimation of popular music by invoking the 'existing parameters of art' but might also have led to the legitimation of popular aesthetic criteria. The question I want to address in this chapter is how the reliance on both types of aesthetic criteria can vary cross-nationally because of differences in national cultural classification systems. The question whether popular music has been legitimated as a 'serious art form' by drawing on the 'ideology of autonomous art' or has been 'emancipated' as a form of popular culture due to the erosion of the high art system, can, in other words, be considered as an *empirical* question. As DiMaggio (1987) and Lamont (1992) have argued, the cultural systems of different countries – due to differences in macro structural characteristics – can vary in the extent to which they are organized hierarchically (*hierarchy)*, in strength with which boundaries between cultural genres are ritualized and protected (*boundary strength)* and the extent to which there is consensus on the ranking of genres (*universality)*.

It could therefore be argued that the strategy of the legitimation of popular music as a serious form of art by applying the criteria of autonomous art could have a more limited applicability to hierarchical and universal cultural systems. In hierarchical, universal cultural classification systems where the division between art and entertainment is seen as 'high' versus 'low' and in which the value difference of high culture and popular culture is universally accepted, pop music reviewers writing for elite newspapers could be more likely to display a

commitment to artistic criteria and employ strategies of '*legitimation'* and try to show that pop music can meet the criteria of high art. This strategy is described by Regev (1994) who argues that the struggle to legitimate rock music is waged in a cultural field that is (still) defined by the opposition between 'autonomous' and 'heteronomous' art. He describes the legitimation strategies of critics in a cultural space in which the parameters of the field itself have remained stable and in which critics try to carry a cultural genre along from the heteronomous pole to the autonomous pole by showing that the 'ideology of autonomous art' can also be applied to this cultural genre.[6] In a hierarchical, universal classification system, the criteria of high culture serve as a reference point for critics in all genres, including in (formerly) lower ranked cultural genres like popular music. Moreover, as Bourdieu has argued for a highly universal and hierarchical classification system (France): "the popular aesthetic is a dominated aesthetic which is constantly obliged to define itself in terms of the dominant aesthetics" (1984: 41). In universal and hierarchical classification systems, the 'popular aesthetic' lacks autonomy and is in a sense a 'speechless' aesthetic, unable to formulate autonomous criteria of evaluation, and usually ending aesthetic discussion with apologetic statements such as "it's only entertainment" (Dyer, 1992). If distinctions are made, the principles of differentiation are assumed to be supplied by the dominant high art aesthetic (Cf. Bielby & Bielby, 2004).

As others have indicated, Bourdieu's argument against the possibility of an autonomous 'popular aesthetic' might be adequate for a strong universalistic cultural system, but not for loosely bounded societies as the US (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). We could argue that in less universal, less hierarchical classification systems, the cultural hegemony of high cultural values and criteria will not be as pervasive, which would leave room for 'other than intellectual and artistic criteria' in the evaluation of high cultural forms but especially for popular cultural forms. Evaluations that emphasize the experiential and functional aspects of the reception of popular music might then have an opportunity space for displaying their own tastes as valuable in itself without seeing those as less worthy or less valuable. Laermans (1992) has, for example, argued

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[6] Regev therefore argues that 'the cultural field is currently characterized not so much by an abandonment of the belief in hierarchies based on this ideology, but rather by a struggle over the content of the hierarchies.'

that the rise of mass media has created an opportunity space for the legitimation of popular culture *as* popular culture. According to Laermans, the educational system has lost much of its power as the central consecrating institution, thereby making room for a polycentric cultural space in which no dominant culture can diffuse its classification throughout society and in which not-yet-legitimate art forms have had the opportunity to exhibit their own aesthetic criteria with a certain ostentatious defiance of high culture and explicit affirmation of their own illegitimacy.[7]

Furthermore, Lamont has argued that the permeability of cultural boundaries can vary across nations (Lamont, 1992). According to Bourdieu, the cultural field is structured according to binary oppositions. In other words, a positive choice for high culture necessarily implies a negative distanciation from popular culture. However, as Peterson has found, the cultural repertoires of Americans seem to be rather more *inclusive* than *exclusive*. The 'omnivore' combines high and low culture and thus Bourdieu's zero-sum assumption has to be questioned (Peterson & Kern, 1996). With regard to processes of evaluation, we should therefore be aware of not opposing 'entertainment' and 'art' as two mutually exclusive options and not only consider the possibility of cultural forms moving from one position to the other, but as being evaluated with registers of high art and popular art at the same time.

## 2. The classification systems of the United States, Germany and the Netherlands

How can the cultural classification systems of the US, Germany and the Netherlands be characterized? To typify our countries in terms of the hierarchy, universality and boundary strength of their respective cultural classification system, I will focus on three possible factors that can be argued to influence the way in which cultural goods are categorized. Firstly, I will follow DiMaggio (1987) in identifying differences in social structural arrangements. Secondly, as Lamont (1992) has argued, certain historical national repertoires also contribute to the characteristics of cultural boundaries. Thirdly, the size and position of our countries in the global cultural system can also influence the strength and universality of hierarchical distinctions (Bevers, 2005; Heilbron, 1999; De Swaan,

[7] Cf. Shusterman, 1992: 180-181.

1995). This review is of course not exhaustive and other factors might be necessary to include. Cross-national research should for example also systematically study field level specifics such as the professionalization of the field of pop music criticism, educational background and social trajectories of critics, the morphological state of the journalistic field, and the autonomy of the journalistic field from external pressures, since these could all 'constrain and enable' the use of different rhetorics of evaluation (Benson, 2005). However, for now, I make use of the fact that these field level factors are "themselves woven into a larger cultural fabric that varies from country to country" (Weber, 2000: 129).

**Table 1. The United States, Germany and the Netherlands: structural and cultural comparison**

| | **United States** | **Germany** | **Netherlands** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Educational system | Unstandardized and unstratified | Standardized and stratified | Standardized and stratified |
| Stratification system | Open | Rigid | Open |
| Size and position | Large; central in popular culture; peripheral in high culture | Large; peripheral in popular culture; central in high culture | Small; peripheral in popular culture; peripheral in high culture |
| Historic national repertoire | Pragmatism; anti-intellectualism | Idealism; *Kultur und Bildung*; intellectualism | Pragmatism; commercialism; US-oriented |

*Structural features: education and stratification*

The educational system is of prime importance as a disseminator of cultural classifications and producer of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984; Lamont, 1992: 139-141). However, the educational systems of the Netherlands, Germany and the US vary on two key dimensions, which, according to DiMaggio, influence the universality and hierarchy of cultural classification systems: stratification and standardization[8] (Allmendinger, 1989). In the US, education is considered a state and local affair and curricula differ not only between states but to a considerable degree from school to school, which hinders the development of a unified definition of high culture and thereby weakening hierarchical cultural

[8] I will follow Allmendinger in using 'standardization' instead of 'central organization' as a dimension for cross-national comparison.

distinctions. In Germany the degree of standardization is relatively higher than the US. Although educational policies remain the responsibility of the federal states (the Laender), and therefore are not centrally organized, cooperation through the *Kultusministerkonferenz* ensures that structures, institutions, curricula and certificates are comparable in all federal states. The educational system of the Netherlands is also highly standardized (Hannan et al., 1996).

In the Netherlands and Germany, the educational systems (primary and secondary education) are more strongly stratified than in the US. Selection and differentiation in educational levels starts early in the schooling trajectory and only a proportion of a cohort attains the maximum number of school years (Allmendinger, 1989). In the US however, secondary education does not select students to different tracks of differing length of training and is stratified to a lesser degree, which would make cultural hierarchies in the US less likely than in the Netherlands and Germany.

Differences in cultural classifications can also be related to variation in social stratification systems. As high levels of social mobility and intergroup interaction are likely to erode prestige differences between cultural genres, the level of 'openness' or 'rigidity' of a country's stratification system is an important structural factor (DiMaggio, 1987). Although the literature on the classification of countries as 'open' or 'rigid' should be approached with some caution, agreement exists that the Netherlands, Germany and the US can be considered to vary on this dimension (Breen & Jonsson, 2005: 232). Germany tends to represent the rigid pole in such ranking. The US has a higher degree of fluidity, and would resemble one of the most 'open' countries in Europe, Sweden. The Netherlands has become considerably more open the past quarter century.

*Size and position*

The strength with which hierarchical and universal differences are drawn can also be related to the size and position of a country in a cultural world system (DeSwaan, 1995). It has been argued that smaller countries are more open and international in their cultural orientation and therefore tend to join in what is new instead of nourishing traditional cultural hierarchies (Bevers, 2005). Smaller countries also tend to occupy peripheral positions in the world culture system - the extent to which a country's cultural production or its production in a particular cultural

field functions as an example for producers or public in other countries (Heilbron, 1995). Unlike a larger European country as Germany, with its stronger cultural past and heritage in more traditional high culture genres (especially classical music), a small country as the Netherlands is more receptive towards American popular culture[9] and is more prone to processes of dehierarchization. Small countries might then also be more likely to use registers of evaluation that emphasize the 'liberating', informal and non-hierarchical aspects of the experience of popular consumption (Fantasia, 1995; Shusterman, 1992). Because of its large size and centrality in the popular culture industries, the US is expected to exhibit a positive approach towards the popular arts.

*National historic repertoires*

Historically, as Lamont has described, 'pragmatism' and 'populism' have an important place in the national repertoire of the US. Pragmatism is not meant here as a philosophical doctrine but as a general "see if it works suspicion of dogma, of doctrine and of the rigid adherence to abstract principles of theories" (Lamont, 1992: 137). Both themes "have shaped the place of high and literary culture in American society by widely diffusing the view that they constitute superfluous niceties" (Lamont, 1992: 137).

Relative to the national repertoires of the US, Germany has historically been on the opposite side of the spectrum. Many have argued that 'idealism' and anti-modern, anti-utilitarian, anti-commercial (and anti-American) currents have characterized the cultural repertoire of Germany. As a result of the relative late modernization of Germany, particularly strong rejections of modernity, mass society and mass culture have occurred among the educated elites, which according to Kalberg (1987) have persisted well into the second half of the twentieth century. Moreover, a well known condition for the specific direction in which the German cultural system moved is the relation of the university and the *Bildungsbürgertum* towards the aristocracy and the way German *Kultur* was opposed to French *Civilisation* which has left an imprint on German culture in, for example, the cultural value placed on theory, 'seriousness', displays of erudition and complexity (Elias, 1939).

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[9] Which can also be found in the import/export ratio of popular music.

In the case of the Netherlands, the absence of a court society and historical dominance of a commercial bourgeois elite seems to have worked in the direction of a more pragmatic orientation than in Germany. Because of its small size, and its history as a nation of trade, a model of tolerance has historically characterized the Netherlands (Goudsblom, 1988) and has been more transatlantic in its orientation than Germany.

**Table 2. Classification systems of the United States, Germany and the Netherlands**

| | United States | Germany | Netherlands |
|---|---|---|---|
| Hierarchy | - | + | ± |
| Universality | - | + | ± |
| Boundary Strength | - | + | ± |

Taken together, these different factors point in the following direction of the idealtypical characterization of our countries with respect to their cultural hierarchy, universality and boundary strength. Because of its structural and cultural characteristics, the US can be expected to be less hierarchical, less universal and weakly bounded. Germany tends to be more hierarchical, universal and strongly bounded. The categorization of the Netherlands is less straightforward, with different factors pointing in different directions, and I have classified the Netherlands as occupying a median position. Our expectation of cross-national differences in the use of high art and popular criteria in the evaluation of popular music due to differences in classification systems is (1) in Germany high art criteria will be relatively more salient than in the Netherlands and the US. (2) In the US popular criteria will be relatively more salient than in Germany and the Netherlands (3) In the Netherlands popular criteria will be relatively more salient than in Germany.

## 3. Data and methods

In order to compare the prevalence of high art and popular aesthetic criteria cross-nationally, I analyzed reviews of popular music albums published in American, Dutch, and German newspapers between October 2004 and March 2005. To enhance comparability, concert reviews and other editorials about popular music were excluded from this analysis. The *New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times* were the sources of album reviews in the US; *De Volkskrant* and *NRC Handelsblad* provided our reviews in the Netherlands; and in Germany, reviews were collected from

*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. All six newspapers are widely circulated and considered to be opinion-leading news publications in their respective countries. I identified and collected popular music album reviews using Lexis-Nexis. The countries, newspapers, and time period were also selected to correspond with and complement the findings of a larger project, which involves quantitative content analysis of arts and culture coverage in French, American, Dutch and German newspapers from 1955-2005 (Janssen, 2002).

The results I present in this chapter are based on analyses of 122 album reviews from the six newspapers in the three countries (See Appendix 1 for a complete list of the albums and artists). Ideally, for the sake of comparison, the albums reviewed in each country would have been the same. While that was not possible, the albums selected for review in each newspaper resemble one another in terms of genre and popularity.[10] Therefore, I do not expect that differences in the albums reviewed will account for cross-national differences in the way the albums are reviewed, but I will test for such a possibility. For each album review, I recorded the author and source of the review as well as the length of the review in words. The average length of the 122 album reviews is about 268 words. The total number of reviews analyzed and the average number of words per review are reported by country and newspaper in Table 3.

**Table 3. Popular Music Album Reviews**

| Country & Newspaper | # of reviews | Words per review |
|---|---|---|
| **USA** | **47** | **278.5** |
| *Los Angeles Times* | *24* | *208.8* |
| *New York Times* | *23* | *351.2* |
| **Netherlands** | **43** | **152.0** |
| *De Volkskrant* | *22* | *121.6* |
| *NRC Handelsblad* | *21* | *175.5* |
| **Germany** | **32** | **410.0** |
| *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* | *14* | *566.5* |
| *Suddeutsche Zeitung* | *18* | *288.3* |
| **Total** | **122** | **268.4** |

[10] In each country, various types of rock music are the most commonly reviewed albums, but newspapers in each country also reviewed world/ethnic, country, electronic, rap and R&B music. A higher proportion of albums reviewed in the US were on the popular charts (51.1%) than in Germany (21.9%) or the Netherlands (23.3%), but additional analyses suggest this did not impact our findings.

In order to explore the criteria critics draw upon to evaluate popular music albums, I assessed the presence or absence of various indicators of "high art" and "popular" aesthetic criteria as well as other aspects of evaluation in the reviews.[11] Among the indicators of criteria typically associated with high art worlds that I considered are the following:

1) CONTEXT: Discussion of context positions the critic as an expert by providing the mediating knowledge needed to properly understand and appreciate the album (Shrum, 1996; Bourdieu, 1993). Does the review situate the album in its broader social, cultural, political, or biographical context? Is the album or artist placed in the context of popular music history? For example, a Dutch review of a Nancy Sinatra album discusses the connection between her music and the liberation of women.
2) CREATIVE SOURCE: Is the performer or performing group under review clearly identified as artist(s) or as the 'creative' force behind the music? Akin to the way auteur theory in film led to the identification of the director as the creative agent (Baumann, 2001), explicit mention of performers as composers, artists, or creators may similarly valorize popular music (see also Regev, 1994). A review of a Carlos Vives album, for example, credits the Colombian "singer-songwriter" for drawing on his "inexhaustible creative wellspring" to create an album that "reclaims his stature as one of Latin America's most important songwriters" (Agustin Gurza, *LA Times*, 3 October 2004).
3) CONNECTION TO HIGH ART: Does the review explicitly compare or connect the artist or music to high art works or creators? Linking popular music to more established art forms can be seen as a legitimation strategy. For example, an American review of Leonard Cohen's album, *Dear Heather*, focuses on his use of poetry by Lord Byron and Frank Scott. Similarly, a German review of Thin Lizzy credits the creative inspiration of James Joyce.

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[11] In this I follow the research designs of Bauman (2001) and Bielby et al. (2004). I have adapted some of the indicators they used for film and television reviews in our analysis of music reviews.

4) HIGH ART CRITERIA: Does the review invoke evaluative criteria based on the originality or innovation of the artist or album? Complexity or ambiguity of the artist or album? Seriousness or intelligence of the artist or album? Timelessness of the album? Originality, complexity, and seriousness are all valued by the "aesthetic disposition" described by Bourdieu (1984) and timelessness invokes the belief that true works of art should "last" (Becker, 1982).[12]

On the other hand, I looked for the following indicators of a "popular" aesthetic in the album reviews:

1) NEGATIVE STANCE TO HIGH ART CRITERIA: Does the review clearly oppose high art criteria such as originality, complexity, seriousness, or timelessness? Such positions relate to Baugh's (1993) assertion that popular music criticism seeks to turn Kantian aesthetics on its head.
2) PARTICIPATORY EXPERIENCE: Does the review focus on the degree to which the music invites the listener to engage with or participate in the musical experience? Descriptions of music as "rousing", "catchy", "irresistible" or "hypnotic" all fall under this category. Does the review evaluate the artist or album in terms of the amount of amusement the music provides? Discussions of "pleasure" or "joyful" reactions to the music are included here. Does the review use energy as an evaluative criterion? Albums described as "energetic" or "vibrant" are examples of this category. All such measures are related to an emphasis on the experience of listening in popular music reviews (Frith, 1996; Shusterman, 1992; Bielby et al., 2004).
3) USER ORIENTATION: Does the review make a prediction about what type of audience will enjoy the music? For instance, one review suggests the music caters to a "young teen audience", while another writes that an album will appeal to those who "like their pop served with a dry twist". Does the review mention the

[12] A review is coded as using high art criteria whether or not the criteria is used to assess the album positively. For example, an album that is praised for being 'original' and an album that is criticized for lacking 'originality' are both coded as invoking the high art criterion of originality.

functional uses of the music or situations the album is particularly suited for? One critic writes that an album makes perfect "background music for your homework or morning commute". Such measures indicate a more audience-oriented approach to reviewing, as described by Frith (1996). The evaluation is aimed at the question if and which kind of audience *will* like the album, not if they *should* like it.

4) ORAL: Does the review describe the music with reference to oral or food-related metaphors that emphasize 'primary' tastes? Such a description would oppose the Kantian "aesthetic disposition" that Bourdieu discusses. For example, reviews used metaphors like "the sugary, well-crafted melody" or "a voice as smoky as slow-cooked barbecue".

Each of the above indicators is a dichotomous measure; in other words, reviews were coded '1' if the criterion was present in the review and '0' if the criterion was absent. However, "high art criteria" is comprised of four dichotomous measures indicating the presence or absence of originality, complexity, seriousness, or timelessness as evaluative criteria. Likewise, "listening experience" and "user orientation" are comprised of multiple indicators. For "listening experience", the presence or absence of audience participation, amusement, or energy constitute three dichotomous measures, while "user orientation" includes the presence or absence of predictions about audience response to the music as well as assessment of the functional uses to which the music might be put. As a result, each review can potentially exhibit up to seven "high art" and seven "popular" aesthetic criteria.

After coding the reviews into dichotomous measures, the indicators of "high art" criteria were summed and indicators of "popular" criteria were summed, creating two ordinal measures ranging from zero to seven. In addition to descriptive measures, I used ordinary least squares (OLS) regression to test for differences between countries in the prevalence of high art and popular aesthetic criteria, while controlling for the length of the reviews. Because the dependent variable is ordinal, the magnitude of the effects should be interpreted with caution; however, regression analyses frequently use ordinal variables and I am confident it provides a good approximation in this case (see Allison, 1999). The length of the

reviews is a continuous variable based on the number of words used in the review, while dummy variables (coded 1, 0) are used to represent each country.

In addition to estimating the relative prevalence of "high art" and "popular" aesthetic criteria across countries, I am also interested in comparing the strength of the boundaries between the two types of aesthetic criteria in each of the countries. Therefore, I created three dichotomous measures for each review based on whether the review contains at least one "high art" and one "popular" evaluative criteria, whether it draws exclusively on "high art" criteria, or whether it relies solely on "popular" aesthetic criteria. Because each of these dependent variables is dichotomous, logistic regression is the most appropriate technique for statistical analysis. In the results, I report exponentiated coefficients for the regression models, which are commonly called odds ratios. Odds ratios greater than 1 indicate a positive relationship between independent and dependent variables, while odds ratios less than 1 indicate a negative relationship.

## 4. Results

*High art criteria*

In general, German reviews tend to exhibit the most "high art" approach to popular music albums, while high art criteria are less common in the US and least common in the Netherlands. Table 3 shows that, although fewer album reviews are published in the German newspapers, their reviews tend to be much longer than American and Dutch reviews. Lengthier reviews allow for more elaborate analyses and may suggest a more serious approach to music reviewing (Baumann, 2001). Such a tendency is reinforced by Table 4, which reports the percentage of reviews from each country that contains each of the "high art" and "popular" aesthetic criteria. About 60% of the German reviews situate the album in its broader context, while roughly one-fourth of the reviews in the US and only seven percent of Dutch reviews do the same. Nearly 70% of reviews in Germany and about half of the American reviews clearly identified the performers as the creative source of the music, but this was rarely done in the Dutch reviews. In the US and the Netherlands, explicit connections to products or producers in elite art worlds were rarely made, but more than one-fourth of the German reviews made such a connection.

In terms of the four categories of "high art" criteria (originality, complexity, seriousness, timelessness), nearly two-thirds of German reviews contain at least one such criterion, while about one-third of the Dutch and American reviews do the same.

**Table 4. High art versus Popular Aesthetic Criteria in Popular Music Reviews**

| | **USA** | **Netherlands** | **Germany** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **High art aesthetic** | | | |
| Context | 23.4% | 7.0% | 59.4% |
| Creative source | 51.1% | 11.6% | 68.8% |
| Connection to high art | 4.3% | 7.0% | 28.1% |
| High art criteria | 34.0% | 34.9% | 65.6% |
| *Originality/Innovation* | *21.3%* | *27.9%* | *34.4%* |
| *Complexity/Ambiguity* | *10.6%* | *7.0%* | *25.0%* |
| *Seriousness/Intelligence* | *6.4%* | *0.0%* | *15.6%* |
| *Timelessness* | *2.1%* | *4.7%* | *12.5%* |
| | | | |
| 1 or more high art aesthetic elements | 72.3% | 46.5% | 96.9% |
| 3 or more high art aesthetic elements | 14.9% | 7.0% | 40.6% |
| Mean – high art criteria per review | 1.2 | 0.7 | 2.4 |
| High art criteria per 1000 words | 5.2 | 4.3 | 7.5 |
| **Popular aesthetic** | | | |
| Negative toward high art criteria | 8.5% | 4.7% | 3.1% |
| Listening experience | 66.0% | 55.8% | 46.9% |
| *Audience participation* | *53.2%* | *37.2%* | *37.5%* |
| *Amusement* | *17.0%* | *18.6%* | *12.5%* |
| *Energy* | *14.9%* | *16.3%* | *12.5%* |
| User orientation | 17.0% | 14.0% | 0.0% |
| *Audience prediction* | *4.3%* | *4.7%* | *0.0%* |
| *Functional use* | *12.8%* | *9.3%* | *0.0%* |
| Oral | 14.9% | 20.9% | 15.6% |
| | | | |
| 1 or more popular aesthetic elements | 70.2% | 79.1% | 53.1% |
| 3 or more popular aesthetic elements | 17.0% | 7.0% | 6.3% |
| Mean – popular aesthetic criteria | 1.3 | 1.1 | .8 |
| Popular aesthetic criteria per 1000 words | 6.4 | 8.3 | 2.6 |

The cross-national differences are further reflected in the fact that all but one of the popular music reviews I analyzed from Germany (96.9%) contained at least one of the high art categories I considered as did over 70% of American reviews; on the other hand, more than half of the Dutch reviews included none of these criteria. Further, 40% of the German reviews contained three or more of these high art aesthetic elements, while about 15% of reviews in the US and seven percent of

Dutch reviews invoked three or more of our high art categories. As for the average number of high art aesthetic categories in each review, German reviews contained 2.44 of our criteria, American reviews 1.19 elements, and less than one in the Netherlands. However, part of this difference may be artifactual given that German reviews are considerably longer than their Dutch and American counterparts, giving them more opportunity to exhibit any type of criteria. Therefore, I control for word count in the regression analyses reported in Table 5. Indeed, our results show that word count is positively related to the number of high art criteria used, yet German reviewers use significantly more high art criteria per review than do Dutch or American reviewers, even when word count is included in the analysis[13]. When the length of the review is held constant in this way, the difference between Dutch and American reviews in their use of high art criteria does not reach significance.

**Table 5. OLS regression: Effects of country and word count on use of "high art" criteria**

| **Variable** | **B (standard error)** | **B (standard error)** |
|---|---|---|
| Word count | .0015** | .0015** |
| | (.000) | (.000) |
| USA | .349 | Reference group |
| | (.224) | |
| Germany | 1.396** | 1.047** |
| | (.264) | (.243) |
| Netherlands | Reference group | -.349 |
| | | (.224) |

** p<.01, two-tailed, *p<.05, two-tailed

*Popular aesthetic*

In terms of the "popular" aesthetic, an overtly negative stance towards the high art criteria of originality, complexity, seriousness, and timelessness is rare in each country (see Table 4). Among our categories related to the listening experience, discussion of the degree of audience participation invited by the music was the most common in all countries; in the US,

[13] I also considered whether the results are due to differences in the albums reviewed. However, ANOVA results showed that the criteria used to evaluate the albums did not vary by genre or by the popularity of the album (i.e. albums appearing on the pop charts vs. albums not on the pop charts). Therefore, I am confident that the differences are due primarily to cross-national variation in the approach to popular music reviews.

more than half of the reviews include this element, while a little over one-third of Dutch and German reviews contain the same. The amount of amusement provided by the album was mentioned in 18.6% of Dutch reviews, 17.0% of American reviews, and 12.5% of reviews in Germany. Similarly, energy was an important evaluative principle in 16.3% of Dutch reviews, 14.9% of reviews in the US, and 12.5% of German reviews. In total, about two-thirds of American reviews and more than half of the Dutch reviews made reference to the listening experience, while nearly half of German reviews did as well.

In terms of a user-oriented approach to reviewing, I found that predictions about what type of audience might like the album appeared occasionally in the US and the Netherlands, but were entirely absent in Germany. Likewise, the functional uses of the music were mentioned in about 13% of the reviews in the US and 9% of the Dutch reviews, but were never discussed in German reviews. Finally, metaphors relating the music to food or oral sensations were used in over 20% of reviews in the Netherlands, and about 15% of German and American reviews. The highest proportion of reviews containing at least one of our popular aesthetic categories was found in the Netherlands (nearly 80%), with about 70% of American reviews and half of German reviews including the same.

In the US, 17% of the reviews incorporated three or more popular aesthetic criteria, while fewer than 10% of Dutch and German reviews contained three or more elements. On average, American reviews used 1.26 of our popular categories, Dutch reviews used 1.12 and German reviews contained less than one of the popular aesthetic criteria. When controlling for the length of the review, regression results (reported in table 6) confirm that reviewers in both the Netherlands and the US draw significantly more on popular aesthetic criteria than do reviewers in Germany. Dutch and American reviews are not significantly different in terms of the prevalence of popular aesthetic criteria, once the length of the review is accounted for.

**Table 6. OLS regression: Effects of country and word count on use of "popular" criteria**

| Variable | B (standard error) | B (standard error) |
|---|---|---|
| Word count | .0015** | .0015** |
| | (.000) | (.000) |
| USA | .640** | Reference group |
| | (.307) | |
| Germany | Reference group | -.640** |
| | | (.225) |
| Netherlands | .691** | .051 |
| | (.244) | (.207) |

In sum, German reviewers appear to invoke high art criteria in their popular music reviews more often than reviewers in the US and the Netherlands, although most American reviews do contain at least one of our high art aesthetic elements. Our results also suggest that Dutch and American reviewers use the most popular aesthetic principles in their album reviews. The overall pattern holds even when I control for differences in word count between German, American and Dutch reviews.

Aside from these general differences in the prevalence of high art and popular aesthetic criteria between countries, it is also important to consider how the relationship between both types of criteria within each country varies. As an indicator of the boundary strength between high and popular culture, Table 7 considers the degree to which reviewers in each country draw on both types of criteria simultaneously in their evaluations of an album and the degree to which they draw exclusively on high art or popular aesthetic criteria in their reviews. Over half of the American and German reviews draw on both high art and popular aesthetic criteria to some degree, and about one-third of the Dutch reviews do the same. Yet over 40% of German reviews draw exclusively on one or more of our high art criteria, while the same is true of relatively few American and Dutch reviews. On the other hand, over 40% of the reviews in the Netherlands solely use popular aesthetic criteria, whereas only 15% of reviews in the US and none of the reviews in Germany do the same. Few reviews I analyzed in any of the countries do not use either type of the criteria in their evaluations.

Logistic regression results are likewise suggestive of this pattern. As shown in Table 8, American reviews are about 80% more likely than

Dutch reviews to draw on both high art and popular aesthetic criteria in the same review and, although it does not reach significance, reviews in the US are about 50% more likely than German reviews to transgress this boundary. Meanwhile, German reviews are about four times more likely to contain exclusively high art criteria relative to American reviews and about seven times more likely than Dutch reviews to draw solely on high art criteria (see Table 9). Reviewers in the Netherlands, on the other hand, are over 3 times more likely than reviewers in the US to focus entirely on popular aesthetic criteria while none of the German reviews contained only popular criteria.[14]

**Table 7: Boundary between high and popular aesthetic criteria in popular music reviews**

| | USA<br>N=47 | Netherlands<br>N=43 | Germany<br>N=32 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Both types of criteria used | 55.3%<br>26 | 34.9%<br>15 | 53.1%<br>17 |
| Only high art criteria used | 17.0%<br>8 | 11.6%<br>5 | 43.8%<br>14 |
| Only popular aesthetic used | 14.9%<br>7 | 44.2%<br>19 | 0.0%<br>0 |
| Neither type of criteria used | 12.8%<br>6 | 9.3%<br>4 | 3.1%<br>1 |

**Table 8. Logistic regression analyses (odds ratios): Word count, country, and the likelihood both types of criteria used in the same review**

| **Variable** | **Odds ratio** | **Odds ratio** |
|---|---|---|
| Word count | 1.002* | 1.002* |
| USA | 1.514 | 1.853† |
| Germany | Reference group | 1.224 |
| Netherlands | .817 | Reference group |

** p<.01, one-tailed, *p<.05, one-tailed; †p<.10, one-tailed

[14] Because no German reviews drew exclusively on popular aesthetic criteria, its standard errors are artificially inflated, rendering its coefficients uninterpretable.

**Table 9. Logistic regression analyses (odds ratios): Word count, country, and the likelihood that only high art criteria are used in a review**

| Variable | Odds ratio | Odds ratio |
|---|---|---|
| Word count | .999 | .999 |
| USA | 1.677 | Reference group |
| Germany | 7.007** | 4.179** |
| Netherlands | Reference group | .596 |

** p<.01, one-tailed, *p<.05, one-tailed; †p<.10, one-tailed

**Table 10. Logistic regression analyses (odds ratios): Word count, country, and the likelihood that only popular criteria are used in a review**

| Variable | Odds ratio | Odds ratio |
|---|---|---|
| Word count | .994† | .994† |
| USA | .302* | Reference group |
| Germany | .000 | .000 |
| Netherlands | Reference group | 3.309* |

** p<.01, one-tailed, *p<.05, one-tailed; †p<.10, one-tailed

## 5. Discussion/Conclusion

These results suggest that newspaper critics in the Netherlands, Germany and the US indeed draw on high art and popular aesthetic criteria to a different extent. In contrast to studies of 'artistic legitimation', which seem to assume that critics of elite newspapers more or less exclusively draw on high art aesthetic criteria as a means of granting artistic status to 'rising' art forms, I have found that critics who review popular music for the most prestigious newspapers of the Netherlands, Germany and the US do not all draw on traditional art criteria to the same extent.

German critical reception of popular music seems to best fit the model of the legitimation of pop music in and through an artistic and intellectual discourse. Compared to the US and the Netherlands, German reviewers tend to be more exclusively oriented towards high art criteria and draw mostly on the 'existing parameters of art' in evaluating popular music. This accords with our assumption that Germany has the most hierarchical and universal cultural classification system of our three countries and in which boundaries between high and low culture seem to be relatively strong. German elite newspapers could be viewed as

patrolling the boundary between high art and popular art and when they do pay attention to popular music, they do so in a high art way.

The results for the US and the Netherlands suggest that, in general, the popular aesthetic can have a prominent presence in the evaluative repertoire of elite newspaper critics. Moreover, the popular aesthetic seems to be more pronounced in the two countries that, based on their social and cultural characteristics, could be expected to have less hierarchical and universal cultural classification systems. The difference between the Netherlands and the US is however interesting. On the one hand, it might indicate that the high culture system has even a more universal hold over the evaluative repertoire of genres as popular music in the US than in the Netherlands. The *combination* of high art and popular criteria in the US and the exclusive focus on popular aesthetic criteria in the Netherlands might however suggest that the difference might be explained in terms of the categorical distinction between the two aesthetics. Cultural boundaries between high art and popular art might be less strongly drawn in the US than in Europe also with regard to their respective sets of evaluative repertoires. These results therefore appear to be in line with Lamont's (1992) and Peterson's (Peterson & Kern, 1996) findings on the relative *permeability* of cultural boundaries in the US. In the Netherlands, perhaps because of its recent but extensive process of social dehierarchization, the either/or logic might still structure the evaluative repertoire of reviewers. Popular music is perhaps (still) seen as an oppositional category to traditional high art and is valued because of its informality as distinct from the formal evaluation of high art. Shusterman's argument might be specifically appropriate for the Dutch context, when he notes that 'this insouciantly rebellious attitude embodied in American popular culture is, I believe, a large part of its captivating appeal and genuine value for Europeans, particularly for the young and culturally dominated. For it provides an invaluable tool for their growing liberation from a long entrenched and stifling cultural domination by an oppressive tradition of disembodied, intellectualist philosophy and high courtly art.' (Shusterman, 1992: 197) Popular music criticism in the Netherlands might indeed have established an aesthetic distance towards high culture discourse. Dutch reviewers, even more so than American reviewers, might be resistant to the intellectualization of popular music. As Dutch pop scholar Mutsearts (2004) has argued – 'fun'

and ‘excitement’ may have become the standard in Dutch popular music reviewing.

In sum, our findings contribute to and complicate the literature on processes of artistic legitimacy by showing that the mechanisms of legitimation are, in part, contingent on the cultural classification systems in which they operate. Within a more hierarchical, universal and strongly bounded system like Germany, with its central position in high culture and a historic national repertoire that values idealism and intellectualism, “high art” discourse appears to be a potent means to achieving legitimacy. By contrast, in a country like the Netherlands that has experienced rapid declines in hierarchy and universality and that features a more transatlantic orientation as well as a history of pragmatism and commercialism, the popular aesthetic can act as a legitimating source of critical discourse. Finally, in the relatively “open” system of the US that features less hierarchy, universality, and boundary strength as well as a central position in popular culture and pragmatic historic repertoire, the boundaries between “high art” and “popular” discourse are more easily transgressed in critical discourse. Indeed, American critics may embody the omnivorous mode of reception, moving fluidly between both types of aesthetic criteria in evaluating a popular music album. Thus, cross-national differences in classification systems appear to be associated with contrasting repertoires of critical evaluation and divergent mechanisms of artistic legitimation and aesthetic mobility.

# CHAPTER 3

## Classifying Popular Music in the United States and the Netherlands

### Introduction

Journalistic art criticism is a particularly fertile ground for the cross-national comparative study of how people construct and use classification systems in their process of sense-making (Lamont & Thévenot, 2000). Critics in national newspapers classify and evaluate cultural goods, and they do so publicly. Newspaper criticism, therefore, provides an accessible source of data and an "unobtrusive measure of taste" (Peterson, 2005: 272), which can contribute to cross-national comparative research as an alternative to survey methods and interviews (Janssen, Kuipers & Verboord, 2008). Moreover, the study of classification systems used by newspaper critics in their sense-making of cultural goods can bring to the fore cross-national differences, not only in *what* kind of cultural forms are reviewed, but also in *how* they are discussed.

In this chapter, I focus on the classifications of popular music by newspaper critics in two different countries: the United States and the Netherlands. In both countries, judging by the increase of newspaper coverage, popular music has increasingly come to be looked upon as a cultural form "worthy of critical attention" (Janssen, 1999; Janssen, Kuipers & Verboord, 2009; Schmutz, 2009). Yet, the ways in which newspaper critics discuss and classify popular music may show profound national differences (van Venrooij & Schmutz, 2009). This chapter seeks to extend such research on qualitative similarities and differences in the classification of popular music by newspaper critics. Drawing on the "mentions technique" developed by Rosengren (1987), I address the following questions: (1) How does the "frame of reference" used by US and Dutch reviewers compare in terms of the legitimacy of the artists addressed? Do US and Dutch reviewers differ in the extent to which they "mention" artists having different kinds of legitimacy? (2) Does the social category of race structure the comparisons of American and Dutch reviewers in similar ways?

## 1. Critics, Comparisons and Classifications

Although the role of critics as institutional gatekeepers in cultural industries has long been acknowledged (Hirsch, 1972; van Rees, 1983), recent work has highlighted the symbolic function of critics as meaning-makers. Baumann (2001), for example, studied how critics provide a legitimating ideology of film as art, and thereby contribute to the intellectualization of film and its acceptance as an art form. Glynn and Lounsbury (2005) studied a shift in the attention of music critics from an "aesthetic logic" to a "market logic" as a result of a strike among the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, indicating how the meaning-making of critics is related to broader "institutional logics." Van Venrooij and Schmutz (2009) investigated how popular music critics writing for elite newspapers in the Netherlands, Germany and the United States emphasized different "aesthetics" due to broad national differences in popular music's position in the cultural hierarchy. Binder (1993) showed how journalists "framed" the danger of two musical genres – rap and heavy metal – differently by drawing upon broader societal – in this case, racial – beliefs. These studies examine the meaning making of critics in order to understand how critics' symbolic constructions are affected by their embeddedness in institutional fields (Glynn & Lounsbury, 2005), social-structural differences (van Venrooij & Schmutz, 2009), wider societal beliefs (Binder, 1993) or how critics facilitate and diffuse the acceptance of particular classifications (Baumann, 2001).

One of the fundamental ways in which critics make meaning is by classifying. Through categorizing and grouping artists, critics – and others – try to order and make sense of the field that they are in (van Venrooij, 2009). In popular music, for example, artists are routinely asked questions regarding the kind of music they make and their main influences. Familiarity with styles, genres, their conventions and main representatives is the "stock of knowledge" of competent art world members. Or, in the words of Simon Frith (1987: 148): "To know how to listen to pop music is to know how to classify it. One thing all pop listeners do, whether as casual fans or professional critics, is to compare sounds – to say that A is like B."

Comparing artists is one of the most obvious instruments critics have at their disposal for classifying. Perceiving similarities, suggesting influences, relating one artist to another, are discursive techniques critics employ to group artists together. The pervasiveness of comparisons in

critical discourse can be understood from two perspectives. On the one hand, such classifications fit a "commercial logic" of reviewing, in which critics offer consumer advice in the form of recommendations (if you like A, then you might also like B). Comparisons reduce uncertainty and relieve the selection process for consumers, as they create a sense of familiarity and provide a reference point in making decisions. On the other hand, comparisons can be part of an "aesthetic logic" by facilitating an intellectual approach and an in-depth analysis of cultural works (Baumann, 2001). Comparisons in this style of reviewing facilitate the aesthetic evaluation of cultural goods by comparing a cultural product with other works to assess its relative contribution, and placing it within a specific genealogy (Debenedetti, 2006). The use of comparisons in reviews could therefore, in principle, be part of both a *user-oriented* and a *maker-oriented* style of reviewing (Gans, 1974).

The study of comparisons has different methodological uses. Rosengren (1987), for example, has used comparisons, or what calls the "mentions technique," as a methodological means to study longitudinal changes in the frames of reference of literary critics and reviewers. According to Rosengren (1987: 298), the lexicon of artists mentioned "as an expression of an association made by the reviewer" can be considered as a proxy for the "horizon of expectations," as conceptualized in reception aesthetics (Jauss, 1982). Mentions consist of artists' names that have a certain "fame" or "reputation" within a field and that function as a benchmark or point of orientation within that field. According to Rosengren, the mention technique has the advantage that references to other artists are relatively easy to identify and provide a wealth of information on synchronic and diachronic variations in the character of the frame of reference, i.e., the types of criteria that are used to group artists together (thematic content, style, generation, success, nationality, publisher, etc.).

The mentions technique can also be used to study the *social* logic underlying the classification of artists. Who is compared to whom in terms of social characteristics? Does the sharing of social characteristics make it more likely that artists are compared? Much like in social networks, the perceived relations between artists could exhibit the principle of *homophily*, whereby similarity on social characteristics makes relations more likely (or: are birds of a feather perceived to sing together?).

## 2. Artistic and Commercial Logic in Comparative Perspective

As argued by Rosengren (1987), the mentions used by critics possess some form of fame or legitimacy. However, the question can be asked which type of legitimacy these mentions possess. Bourdieu (1993) has described three types of legitimacy: popular, critical and professional recognition (Allen & Lincoln, 2004; Schmutz, 2005). Popular recognition consists of the legitimacy bestowed on artists by the public. Critical and professional recognition refer to the legitimacy granted by critics and fellow artists (i.e., peers), respectively.

To the extent that a cultural field is autonomous from external pressures – i.e., the market and a commercial logic – it will develop field internal forms of recognition – critical and professional prestige (Bourdieu, 1993). A dual structure emerges in which artists will orient themselves either toward the autonomous pole – seeking recognition by their peers – or toward the heteronomous pole – seeking popular recognition but thereby forfeiting their chances of receiving professional or critical prestige. In this dual field structure, Bourdieu argues, critics – as distributors of prestige and critical recognition – patrol the boundary between the autonomous and heteronomous pole. Bourdieu, in other words, assumes a zero-sum game of internal vs. external consecration.

The frames of reference used by reviewers could indicate whether they use a commercial logic and orient themselves towards the audience and the market. If the frame of reference of reviewers consists of popular artists, reviewers can be argued to emphasize the broad appeal of artists, or to orient themselves towards the heteronomous pole of the popular music field. If the frame of reference of reviewers consists of artists consecrated by critics and professionals, reviewers can be argued to work according to an aesthetic logic, focusing on the autonomous pole of the field and "framing" artists under review in terms of their relation to critically and professionally acclaimed artists

Differences between US and Dutch reviewers in the extent to which they use an aesthetic or commercial logic could be due to several factors.

*Firstly*, the autonomy of the journalistic field from market pressures could influence whether reviewers will frame popular music artists in relation to widely known, commercially successful, and "popular" artists; or in relation to critically and professionally acclaimed artists. The less autonomous the journalistic field is from commercial

pressures, the more likely reviewers will focus on the "popular" end of the spectrum (Janssen, Kuipers & Verboord, 2009). The American journalistic field – as a whole - is more market-dominated than its counterparts in Europe, including the Dutch journalistic field (Benson, 2005; Hallin & Mancini, 2004). US newspapers, for example, are far more dependent on advertising than European newspapers (Benson, 2005). A mediating factor, however, might be the internal structure of the journalistic field in both countries. In the Netherlands, the national newspapers compete with each other in the same market (Boone, Carroll & van Witteloostuijn, 2002), whereas the major national newspapers in the United States do not compete for the same audiences. In the face of strong competition, newspapers may be more inclined to focus on "popular" content than to uphold cultural hierarchies.

More particularly, the autonomy of music critics from the music industry has been a constant concern within the field of popular music. Hirsch (1972) already noted how media gatekeepers can become co-opted by the music industry and that critics can act as appendage of the promotional vehicle for the music industry. Journalists of pop magazines and, to a lesser extent, quality newspapers rely on the record industry for information and access to artists. By providing press kits and biographies to journalists, the publicity departments of record labels try to construct a particular image of an artist (Negus, 1999), which can include the framing of an artist in terms of influences, inspirations, etc. The kind of classification an artist receives from a reviewer, therefore, might be considered a *social* practice, whereby reviewers draw upon and are influenced by the classifications of artists themselves and by the record labels. Whether there are differences in how reviewers in the Netherlands and the United States are approached by the industry remains an open question.

*Secondly,* the relative autonomy of the larger media system could also influence how reviewers balance commercial and aesthetic logics (Janssen, Kuipers & Verboord, 2009). The US media system, in comparison to European media, has been market dominated. Commercial and entertainment oriented radio and television stations have dominated the US system from the beginning, whereas in the Netherlands, public broadcasters held the monopoly until the early 1990s. In the Netherlands, some of the public radio stations started to play popular music as early as 1959, but foreign radio stations and illegal "pirate" radio stations played

the most important role in distributing popular music. In general, public radio stations in the Netherlands resisted the example set by popular music radio stations until the early 1970s (Kleijer & Tillekens, 1997; Nuchelmans, 2002). Moreover, the adoption of popular music by public broadcasters, such as, for example, the influential VPRO (Mutsaerts, 2004), has been focused on defining and promoting "serious" popular music which fits the criteria of legitimate artistic discourse (Regev, 1994), and offered an alternative to commercial "Top 40" music. The Dutch public radio stations could therefore promote a hierarchization of popular music, for which they – because of their reach and legitimacy – could also create "universal" acceptance (DiMaggio, 1987), including among the cultural elites (Kennedy, 1995). In the US, college radio stations and urban radio stations have similarly formed a base for non-commercial popular music, yet because of their more limited reach, they may have been less successful in creating universal acclaim for the boundary between commercial and "serious" music. Dutch reviewers working for elite newspapers, who also have close ties with public broadcasters such as the VPRO, seem therefore more likely to uphold the distinction between "serious" and "commercial" popular music than their counterparts in the US.[15]

*Thirdly,* the autonomy of the field of popular music from the market may also have contributed to the creation of cultural boundaries. State support for artists and cultural institutions can help to sustain strong cultural boundaries and can provide a "buffer" against market forces. A strong dependency of cultural producers and institutions on private funding and revenues through sales is likely to erode hierarchical distinctions (DiMaggio, 1991; Lamont, 1992). In general, the American system of art support is far more decentralized and market-oriented than the European models. Public funding for the arts in the United States is limited to more indirect forms of support and direct public support constitutes only a small part of the total art funding (Janssen, Kuipers & Verboord, 2008). With regard to popular music, in the Netherlands the government has supported popular music from the early 1970s onwards as part of social welfare programs (Rutten, 1993). Support was given to

[15] The many ties that Dutch reviewers writing for outlets such as *NRC Handelsblad* and *de Volkskrant* have with public broadcasting points to the existence of a tightly connected group of media representatives within the Dutch popular music field, which – as argued by DiMaggio – might facilitate the creation of strong cultural boundaries.

youth centers where pop bands could rehearse and play, and in 1975 the Netherlands pop music foundation was formed with the aim of supporting alternative pop music. Since the 1970s, support for popular music has become part of the arts subsidies provided by the Dutch Ministry of Culture. In the US, this type of state support for popular music by the government has been absent, thereby possibly weakening the strength of cultural boundaries within the field of popular music.

*Fourthly*, cross-national differences in the use of commercial and aesthetic logics can also result from macro differences between the Netherlands and the United States (DiMaggio, 1987). Lamont (1992) has argued that *national cultural repertoires* make different toolkits more readily available in different national contexts. According to Lamont, the US is characterized by pragmatism and populism, which implies ambivalence towards cultural authorities, seeing high culture as "superfluous niceties," and emphasizing informality. As a consequence, in the American definition of cultural value, an appeal to the market is a salient and taken-for-granted element (Weber, 2000). The Netherlands is characterized by a national *habitus* that combines pragmatism and morality, but which has undergone a rapid social process of informalization (Wouters, 2007). On a macro-structural level, differences in stratification systems have also been argued to influence the strength of cultural boundaries, as social mobility can erode status differences (DiMaggio, 1987). Although the cross-national comparative literature on "societal openness" must be approached with some caution (Breen & Jonsson, 2005: 232), there is consensus that the US represents an "open" system and that the Netherlands has moved from a relatively closed to an open system in the second half of the twentieth century (Breen & Luijkx, 2004). The Netherlands and the United States also differ in the characteristics of their educational system, which – as argued by Bourdieu (1984) and DiMaggio (1987) – is of prime importance in the creation of cultural classification systems. Compared to the US, the Dutch educational system of secondary education is more internally stratified, and more standardized by the government. In the US, decisions on curricula are made at the local level, which thus varies considerably from state to state and from school to school. The US school system is therefore less capable of defining and perpetuating a common universal definition of "legitimate" culture. From these macro-structural differences – with the exception of differences in the educational system – it can be

expected that both in the US and the Netherlands cultural boundaries are weak and repertoires of distinction are absent. Field-level factors, however, do suggest cross-national differences.

**3. Social Logic of Race in Comparative Perspective**

The "mentions technique" can also be used to study the *social* logic underlying the framing of an artist under review by perceiving similarities or differences with another artist. I define the use of a *racial logic* as the tendency to compare artists within racial categories rather than across racial categories, which suggests the salience of the social category of race to the classification system of reviewers.

Work by Roy (2004), Dowd (2003) and Lopes (2000) has shown how racial boundaries were not "natural divisions" within the field of popular music, but historically contingent products of historically situated social actors. Business practices within the early music industry influenced the use of racial categories to sell and market records, and were not a direct result of a large-scale racial project (Roy, 2004). From this historical origin, the racial classification of "white" (Country & Western) and "black" (Rhythm & Blues) music became an institutional fact of the popular music industry, which, once in place, continued to influence the aesthetic practice of producers, consumers and intermediaries (Negus, 1999). The homology that was constructed between genres and race created aesthetic conventions which are infused with racial typifications, as when a sound or voice is considered and evaluated as sounding "black" (in case of white soul singers for example), and when white and black performers in a racially classified genre such as hip-hop have different access to claims to "authenticity" (McLeod, 1999). The "racial" classification of music grew out of power struggles within and between three industries – recording, radio, performance rights (Dowd, 2003). Powerful actors within these industries originally worked with classification systems that emphasized "esteemed music" and popular music with broad appeal, and did not include music by black performers. Due to struggles within and between these industries, the opportunity space opened up for small labels to create the niche market of race music, or Rhythm & Blues, thereby institutionalizing racial categories within the structure of the American music industry.

Due to the historical trajectory of the music industry, combined with the salience of race as a symbolic boundary in the United States, I

expect that American reviewers tend to use race as a category for classification. The strength of the homology between music and race might have diminished in the late twentieth century and a process of declassification might have weakened genre boundaries and the "information value" of music genres as markers of social identity, but race seems to have remained a salient boundary in the structure and logic of popular music, at least in the US. Bryson (1996), for example, finds that race is a prominent category in expressing musical dislikes and Binder (1993) argues that racial frames informed the perception of rap and heavy metal. Moreover, race has been found to influence the reception of cultural products in other fields as well. Griswold (1987: 1104) found that American literary reviewers were "obsessed by race" and interpreted the work of the Nigerian writer Lamming as fundamentally about racial issues. According to Griswold, cultural tools are used to grapple with present and pressing problems, and race is considered such a public issue in the United States. Racial stereotypes have also been present in Dutch culture (Blakely, 2001), but, due to the smaller presence of racial minorities and the absence of outright racial conflict, race seems to be a less salient public issue in the Netherlands. However, in the transnational field of popular music, racial categorization may be a taken-for-granted schema, which Dutch reviewers adopt and reproduce in their writings. Even though race has less salience in Dutch society than in the United States, Dutch reviewers may have taken on the categories and distinctions of the US popular music field.

By comparing the social logic of race used by critics in the Netherlands and the United States, I aim to assess the strength of the institutionalization of particular social boundaries in a time frame and national context in which larger societal frames would not seem to suggest the use of these boundaries. I can therefore address the issue from which *level* actors in cultural fields are more likely to draw their logic. By comparing the symbolic constructions of actors across nations that on a macro level seem to have different salience of racial boundaries but are participating in a field that is more and more transnational, the relative influence of meso- and macro-level can be studied. Moreover, studying the use of a racial social logic in critical reviews can help to assess the "path dependency" of symbolic structures, originating in historical struggles to define and structure the field of popular music.

## 4. Data and Methods

I collected reviews from two national newspapers per country: the *Los Angeles Times* and the *New York Times* in the US and *de Volkskrant* and *NRC Handelsblad* in the Netherlands. The US newspapers cover a whole year period (October 2004 until September 2005) and the Dutch newspapers a half-year period (October 2004 until March 2005). The reviews in the *Los Angeles Times* and the *New York Times* were found with the Proquest Standard search engine. Searching for document type "audio review" returned reviews on classical, popular and jazz recordings published in different newspaper sections. I excluded reviews on jazz and classical albums and, for the *New York Times*, reviews by guest editors. For the Dutch newspapers, I followed a different procedure. In the case of *NRC Handelsblad*, I downloaded the complete sections "Leven Etcetera" and "Kunst" – which are the two sections featuring music reviews. I scanned these sections for pop music album reviews – which I identified using the heading of the review and the name of the reviewer. Some articles were not included in the digital archive of *NRC Handelsblad* because the newspaper did not have publication rights: title, author and date were however listed and I gathered the actual review at the newspaper archive of the Royal Dutch Library in The Hague. In the case of *de Volkskrant*, I downloaded the section "Kunst katern" and selected the pop music reviews.

These reviews were coded for the occurrence and content of comparisons between artists. I looked at every mention of an artist different from the artist under review. However, as I am interested in perceived similarities, I excluded obvious comparisons, for instance, when reviewers would indicate that artists had played together, been members of the same band, or were part of the same label, etc. I included different forms of comparisons, such as "evaluative" comparisons ("In this follow-up, the 26-year-old singer-songwriter from Ottawa seems to operate even more in the shadow of Williams, and the comparisons don't always serve her well" – Kathleen Edwards), references to "forebearers" ("Brian Wilson and Lindsey Buckingham come to mind as precedents"– Eels), and mentions of artist's inspirations ("a record collection full of Neil Young and the Band" – Dolorean). I also included comparisons that were used to characterize the sound ("to create a sinister, Velvet Undergroundish aura" – Interpol) or voice of an artist ("delivered with a voice like that of Alison Krauss' older sister" – Adrienne Young).

Finally, I coded comparisons that were explicitly oriented towards consumer guidance ("fans of the Jayhawks and Josh Rouse should adopt this group immediately" – Dolorean) and comparisons that were used to describe a change of position in the field by setting different groups as "exemplars" of polar oppositions ("The band has moved closer to U2 and farther from the likes of Husker Du or Fugazi" – Jimmy Eat World).

I also gathered information on attributes of both the artists under review and the mentioned artists, including musical organization (group or an individual performer); race of performers (white; black; mixed); gender (male; female; mixed); national origin; and debut year (release year of debut album). This was established through consultation of diverse sources, including *OOR Muziek Encyclopedie*, *All Music Guide*, the *Rolling Stone* website and individual artist web sites if the preceding sources did not contain the required information.

In addition, I collected data on the *popular recognition* of artists in both album and singles charts (see Achterberg, Heilbron, Houtman & Aupers, 2010; Schmutz, 2005), For the US, I used the *Billboard* charts (Album Top 200 for albums and Hot 100 for singles). This information was gathered through *All Music Guide*. For all artists, their peak chart position was recorded before 2004 or 2005 (before the year that the review appeared). For the Netherlands, I used the Megacharts cd-rom, which lists the chart position of artists in both album and singles charts. Information on *professional recognition* was gathered by tracking whether the artists had received one or more than one Grammy awards (US) or Edison awards (the Netherlands). Furthermore, I registered whether artists had received *critical recognition* in the form of a position on the yearly *Village Voice* critic's poll as one of the best albums of the year.[16] For the Netherlands, I used the *OOR* magazine end of year critics' poll and scored whether an artist was mentioned among the critics' favorites from 1973 onwards. Of course, the mere fact that artists occur in my review sample already indicates that critics perceive them as "worthy of attention." However, the "best of the year" lists of critics in both the US and the Netherlands, which are based on a wider sample of reviewers per country, gives a clearer sense of which artists are favored by critics.

[16] The poll goes back to 1971.

Finally, I coded the main genre category of the artists by using the genre labels as found on *All Music Guide*.

## 5. Results

*Aesthetic and Commercial Logic*

How does the frame of reference of US and Dutch reviewers compare in terms of the kinds of legitimacy or recognition that "mentions" have received? As argued, the comparison of field-level factors between the US and the Netherlands suggests that US reviewers will use a commercial logic and refer to popular, commercially successful artists more often than Dutch reviewers. To compare across nations, I recoded the position of artists on the *Billboard* Album Chart into artists who had received a top 10 hit album, a top 100 hit album, and no chart success (which, for the US includes a *Billboard* position of higher than 100). In the US newspapers, 46% percent of the mentions had a Top10 album, 25% a position among the Top100, and 21% of the mentions did not have a chart position. In the Dutch case, only 30% of the mentions had a Top10 album, 29% a Top 100 album, and 37% of the mentions used by Dutch reviewers did not have a chart position on the Dutch album charts. Overall, mentions in the US reviews seem to possess more popular recognition than mentions in the Dutch reviews, which supports the assumption that US reviewers will emphasize commercial success more than Dutch reviewers in how they construct their frame of reference. To communicate the meaning of artists under review to the reader, US reviewers tend to frame them in terms of mentions that are visible in the mainstream market – in this sense, US reviewers do not distance themselves in their writings from the commercial, mainstream market, but draw upon artists within this market to introduce, interpret and describe music to their readership. Dutch reviewers, on the other hand, do seem to assume knowledge among their readers about a more distinctive set of mentions, which in many cases have not received much popular recognition.

However, the mentions in US and Dutch newspapers do not show much difference in critical and professional recognition. Of the Dutch mentions, 45% have been on the critic's lists against 48% of mentions in the US newspapers. In both countries, the reviewers also tend to select approximately the same percentage of mentions that have received

professional recognition. Moreover, as is visible in Table 1, neither the Dutch nor the US group of mentions shows an inverse relation between critical recognition and commercial recognition – on the contrary, the two types of legitimacy often go together. In other words, in the case of the artists that are used as a frame of reference by reviewers, I find no either/or logic to the distribution of critical/professional and popular recognition. Bourdieu's assumption about a zero-sum game of internal vs. external consecration can therefore be questioned in the case of the field of popular music since critical and popular recognition seem to be non-exclusive.

**Table 1: Popular Recognition by Critical Recognition (Debuts and Unknown Excluded)**

| | **United States** | | | | | **Netherlands** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Critical Recognition** | | | | | **Critical Recognition** | | | | |
| | **No** | | **Yes** | | **Total** | **No** | | **Yes** | | **Total** |
| Top 10 | 47 | *53* | 62 | *57* | 109 | 32 | *38* | 39 | *33* | 71 |
| Top 100 | 23 | *28* | 36 | *31* | 59 | 27 | *36* | 41 | *32* | 68 |
| Not in Chart | 35 | *24* | 15 | *26* | 50 | 62 | *47* | 25 | *40* | 87 |
| | 105 | | 113 | | 218 | 121 | | 105 | | 226 |
| | $\chi^2$=12,652, p = 0,002 | | | | | $\chi^2$=18,267, p = 0,000 | | | | |

*The Social Logic of Comparisons*

Do social classifications such as race structure the comparisons of reviewers? If social classifications influence the framing of artist under review, we would expect the comparisons that reviewers make to "stay within" these social boundaries, classifying black artists with black artists, etc. For this analysis, I have taken as the unit of analysis the individual comparisons, the dyads between an artist under review and each "mention," and have cross-tabulated the social characteristics of the artist under review with the social characteristics of the mention (Table 2). Larger than expected values on the diagonal will be an indication of strong in-group classifications. Both in the Netherlands and the United States, reviewers indeed show a strong preference for comparing within racial categories. On the diagonal, the observed values are significantly higher than the expected values (in italics), and comparisons across race

are relatively rare. Apparently, race is a strong social logic in the construction of musical comparisons in both countries. The direction of the comparisons is also interesting. In both countries, the classification of white artists under review with black mentions approaches the expected values to a relatively greater extent than vice versa. In social network analysis asymmetric directions in relations have been considered as an indication of prestige (actors who receive more ties than they give are considered as having more prestige), which could lead to the interpretation that black artists are considered more prestigious from the perspective of reviewers. However, a more plausible interpretation of this pattern is that black artists have greater difficulty to "escape" racial categorization. As the "marked" category on the racial dimension, black artists are more subject to the social logic of race than the "unmarked" category of white artists, which is considered as the neutral, non-racial category and therefore as less bounded by a racial social logic. In any case, my findings do not substantiate the assumption that American and Dutch reviewers would differ in the extent to which they classify according to race because of national differences in the salience of racial. Rather, the social boundaries of race seem to be reproduced in the classifications of reviewers because of a homology with field internal classifications, i.e., genre boundaries. Genre and racial boundaries indeed tend to overlap in the classifications of reviewers in both countries (Table 3). When reviewers compare within genre boundaries they also stay within racial boundaries and if reviewers compare across genre boundaries, racial boundaries are also crossed. The strength of racial categorization in the US *as well as* in the Netherlands seems therefore more an indication of the institutionalization of the homology of race and genre categories, not only within the American popular music field, but also in countries where the popular music field is strongly orientation towards the US (Janssen, Kuipers & Verboord, 2008).

**Table 2: Racial Classifications (Mixed Race Excluded)**

| | | **United States** | | | | | **Netherlands** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Mentions | | | | | Mentions | | | | |
| | | White | | Black | | Total | White | | Black | | Total |
| Artist under review | White | 251 | *224* | 26 | *53* | 277 | 236 | *216* | 15 | *35* | 251 |
| | Black | 9 | *36* | 36 | *9* | 45 | 8 | *28* | 25 | *5* | 33 |
| | | 260 | | 62 | | 322 | 244 | | 40 | | 284 |
| | | $\chi^2$=124,154, p = 0,000 | | | | | $\chi^2$=117,364, p = 0,000 | | | | |

**Table 3: Racial and Genre Classifications (Mixed Race Excluded)**

| | **United States** | | | | | **Netherlands** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Across race | | Within race | | Total | Across race | | Within race | | Total |
| Across genre | 20 | *8* | 50 | *62* | 70 | 12 | *5* | 49 | *56* | 61 |
| Within genre | 15 | *27* | 237 | *225* | 252 | 11 | *18* | 212 | *205* | 223 |
| | 35 | | 287 | | 322 | 23 | | 261 | | 284 |
| | $\chi^2$=28,930, p = 0,000 | | | | | $\chi^2$=13,981, p = 0,000 | | | | |

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have used the "mentions technique" developed by Rosengren (1987) to study the classification systems of popular music critics in cross-national comparative fashion. By studying the frame of reference of reviewers and the comparisons that reviewers make between artists under review and "mentions," I have explored possible differences and similarities between US and Dutch reviewers. Firstly, by looking at the aggregate patterns in the types of legitimacy mentions possess, I found that American reviewers tend to mention artists that have been commercially successful more often than Dutch reviewers. This finding supports the expectation that field-level differences between the US and Dutch journalistic and popular music field might result in weaker cultural boundaries and less distance towards the market in the US. Secondly, my analysis of the social characteristics of artists under review and mentioned artists showed that, both in the Netherlands and the US,

reviewers classify and compare artists within racial categories, which overlaps with comparing within genre boundaries. This finding suggests that, although macro-social racial boundaries are relatively absent in the Netherlands compared to the US, Dutch reviewers do invoke race as a salient boundary. This seems to be "side-effect" of using institutionalized, field internal genre boundaries as categories of perception, which have been historically codified within a racial frame in the US.

Both the cross-national comparative analysis of the commercial character of the mentions and the salience of racial classifications indicate that reviewers' classifications are influenced by field-level institutional structures rather than broader societal features. Although further research is needed to answer this question more conclusively, the findings of this US-Netherlands comparison can be better explained in terms of the relative position of the journalistic and popular music field towards the market (in the case of the commercial character of the mentions) and the institutionalization of a homologous structure within the field of popular music (in the analysis of the salience of racial classifications) than in terms of macro similarities and differences between the US and the Netherlands.

# CHAPTER 4

## The aesthetic discourse space of popular music: 1985-86 and 2004-05

### Introduction

Aesthetic classification systems consist of "the way that the work of artists is divided up both in the heads and habits of consumers and by the institutions that bound the production and distribution of separate genres" (DiMaggio, 1987: 441). The concept of aesthetic classification systems points towards the study of the formal characteristics of cultural systems. DiMaggio distinguishes four such formal characteristics: classification systems can be more or less *differentiated* (how many genres are distinguished), *hierarchical* (the extent to which genres are ranked in terms of superiority), *universal* (the extent to which the classifications are agreed upon), and symbolically *potent* (with boundaries between genres ranging from rigid to fluid). That is, classification systems may 'allow' for overlap, blending and mixing of genres, or may stress categorical purity (Douglas, 1966). Moreover, the concept of classification systems also suggests that genres should be studied not in isolation but as a 'totality', as a system of relations. This raises the question of how we assess the characteristics of a classification system – including the strength of its genre boundaries, its totality of genres, and most importantly, the way that classifications are divided up cognitively in people's 'heads and habits' as well as institutionally by the production and distribution of genres.

Arguably, studies of the institutional 'grounding' of classification systems have been most successful within the sociology of art. DiMaggio (1982) and others have clarified, for example, how the symbolic boundary between 'high' and 'popular culture' was established through the creation of the distinct organizational form of the non-profit. Studies on consumption patterns have shown how genre preferences relate to social-structural distinctions (Bourdieu, 1984; Peterson & Simkus, 1992). However, the *cognitive* dimension of aesthetic classification systems – the way that genres are *perceived* and *interpreted* as more similar or different – appears to be a more difficult research problem. On the one hand, interpretative scholars tend to focus on a limited set of genres so as to make a 'thick description' approach possible (Thornton, 1995), thereby losing sight of the study of classification systems as a totality. On the

other hand, large-scale quantitative research on classification systems tends to work with datasets that are comprehensive but, however, restrict the 'meaningfulness' of the material. This chapter seeks to strike a balance between studying the 'meaningful' way in which classification systems are organized - i.e. how genres are similar or different in the way they are 'made sense of' - and focusing on the system of relations that genres constitute together. I follow recent attempts at bridging the gap between hermeneutic and positivistic approaches by using quantitative techniques to 'measure' cultural meaning structures (Dowd, 1992; Mohr, 1998).

The dominant sociological model for analyzing systems of relations is, of course, the social network. Modeling the relations of genres as a network is therefore an appropriate way for studying the formal and structural characteristics of a classification system. Moreover, the network model theoretically has close ties with semiotic theories of meaning and can thus be used to study the meaningful side of classification systems by extracting a cultural model from textual material (Carley & Palmquist, 1992). For the study of *aesthetic* classification systems, *reviews* constitute a good source of data (Baumann, 2001; Bielby, et al., 2004; Hsu, 2006a; van Venrooij and Schmutz, 2009). Firstly, reviews can be used to construct a dataset that includes interpretative statements about a large number of genres within a particular cultural field. This allows us to examine the relations between these genres as a totality. This study focuses on the field of popular music and draws upon reviews of many different genres published in the *Los Angeles Times* in 1985-86 and 2004-05. Secondly, reviews provide relatively short but rich interpretive statements. This enables us to study the meaningful aspect of classification systems. For my purposes, reviews have several important structural features: critics try to place and classify an artistic product within a genre and they evaluate it within a limited 'evaluative repertoire' consisting of a number of aesthetic criteria. The combination of these two structural elements provides us with the material to extract the aesthetic classification system as it is constructed by the 'interpretative labor' of critics. I conceive of the 'evaluative repertoire' of critics as a multidimensional 'aesthetic space' in which genres occupy certain 'niche regions' (Mark, 1998; McPherson, 1983; Mohr & Guerra-Pearson, forthcoming; Mohr & Lee, 2000; Rawlings & Bourgeois, 2004); if genres tend to overlap in their respective niche

regions – which can be visualized as a network – critics have attributed similar meanings to these genres. By visualizing this niche overlap structure, I can then study the classification system or 'mental model' as it appears in the discourse of critics.

My aim is both substantive and methodological. By comparing the classification systems of *LA Times* critics in 1985-86 and 2004-05, I qualify possible changes in the perception of the field of popular music during a time frame that has arguably witnessed 'declassification' – which I discuss below in detail. Then I turn to the methodological aim of analyzing the meaningful organization of classification systems, and describe the application of the methods developed by Mohr on modeling discourse structures by drawing on the ecological concept of 'niche spaces'. Finally, I discuss and compare the extracted model of the aesthetic classification system of *LA Times* popular music critics in 1985-86 and 2004-05.

## 1. Classification systems of popular music in transition

The contemporary field of popular music exhibits many signs of the process that DiMaggio (1991) describes as 'declassification'. It seems to have become more differentiated and characterized by a plethora of genres. This differentiation has been associated with an increased demand for more finely grained 'ritual classifications' – the need for cultural resources to mark the social boundaries of various style groups and subcultures (McLeod, 2001). Genre boundaries have also weakened. The rise of hybrid genres such as techno-rock and rap-metal, in which aesthetic elements from different 'genre worlds' are combined, indicate that producers, consumers and intermediaries have become less purist in their boundary drawing. The way in which hierarchical boundaries are drawn within the field of popular music seems to have changed as well. Until the mid 1980s, hierarchical distinctions between 'serious' and 'authentic' rock music and 'frivolous', commercial pop music were more firmly based on the application of principles of distinction that mirrored the boundary between 'art' and 'commerce'. In contrast, the contemporary field of popular music apparently is characterized by an 'intermediate aesthetic' which combines commercial and artistic values (Lindberg et al., 2005).

Regev (2002) describes this process of declassification as 'pop-rockization': increasingly more genres occupy the field of popular music

and the boundaries between genres such as rap/hiphop, electro-dance, mainstream pop, heavy metal, alternative rock, reggae, 'classic' rock are less strictly drawn. The increasing use of the label 'pop/rock' signals the waning of the hierarchical distinction between the 'heavy, hard and difficult' (i.e. rock) and the 'light, soft and easy' (i.e. pop). Regev regards this as indicative of an underlying cultural logic, a 'pop/rock aesthetic', that allows for the grouping of these diverse genres into one meta-category. All these genres are connected by their reliance on similar creative practices: electric and electronic sound textures, amplification, studio craftsmanship and a vocal delivery that can be characterized as 'untrained' or 'spontaneous'. Thus, the use of similar aesthetic practices in the production of different styles of music ensures that all genres of 'pop/rock' are drawn into 'one sonic idiom, in one semiotic system' (Regev, 2002: 253).

Changes within the popular music industry could have facilitated this 'declassification'. Especially since the 1980s, a decentralized or 'open' system of production – in which many labels are controlled by a few large firms – has resulted in larger numbers of new acts and an increase in genre diversity in the mainstream market (Burnett, 1996; Dowd, 2004; Lopes, 1992). The success of 'hip-hop' and 'new wave' in the 1980s and 'alternative rock' in the 1990s testifies to this growing diversity. The blurring of institutional boundaries between 'major' and 'independent' labels within the open system of production could also have resulted in the waning of hierarchical distinctions between commercial 'pop' and authentic 'rock' which have often been superimposed on the institutional distinction between large-scale and restricted production (Bourdieu, 1993) or 'generalist' and 'specialist' organizations (Burnett, 1996; Dowd, 2004). Moreover, the 'open' system of production may have promoted the commercialization of 'communal' genres, thus contributing to the blurring of the boundaries of genres. According to DiMaggio (1987: 450), commercial actors tend to push towards broader classifications and the erosion of boundaries of genres, to increase their market share. Commercial industries tend to generalize and weaken the information value of cultural goods as markers of social identity, thus eroding the ritual classifications used by taste publics to mark social boundaries and group membership (see also Hesmondhalgh, 1998; Peterson, 1978).

I examine whether and how this declassification manifests itself at the level of the perception and evaluation of popular music albums by critics over the last 20 years – attending to whether genres are increasingly drawn into 'one sonic idiom, in one semiotic system', as Regev argues. If the cultural logic of the field of popular music has indeed changed, the critical discourse of critics could be used to track and map out these changes in the meaning of symbolic boundaries between genres. Critics in cultural fields are *producers* of symbolic systems and influential actors in the definition of the 'dominant principles of vision and division' (Bourdieu, 1993). One of the performative aspects of their discourses is the making and maintaining of genre boundaries. These discourses will not only 'mirror' changes in the cultural logic of the field but also produce new classifications and definitions (Baumann, 2001). Critics also patrol the internal boundaries of cultural fields between the 'commercial' large-scale and the 'artistic' restricted pole – which makes the analysis of their discourse relevant for supposed processes of declassification. Moreover, critics make their assessments of worth and classificatory distinctions between cultural goods publicly. Critical reviews, therefore, provide an accessible source of data and an 'unobtrusive measure of taste' for the study of classification systems (Janssen, Kuipers & Verboord, 2008).

My aim, then, is to make a longitudinal comparison of the classification system of genres from the perspective of one particular national newspaper, the *LA Times*, across a time period in which declassification has arguably occurred. In 1985-86 as well as 2004-05, the *LA Times* is a widely distributed newspaper with a social-demographically diverse readership, and more importantly, an outlet that reviews a wide variety of popular music genres. Of course, the *LA Times* selects only a specific – and because of the large extent of the popular music field in terms of yearly produced albums and active artists, only relatively small – subset of the field of popular music. However, it is relatively varied in its popular music coverage, reporting on both the mainstream genres as well as more peripheral and specialist music genres. Although this study is limited to only one newspaper, and could benefit from inclusion of other newspaper sources, the units of which the classification system of *LA Times* critics is constructed are thus multiple

and diverse, which allows for an explorative study of how these critics perceptions of the popular music field have changed.[17]

## 2. Structural analysis of the discourse of music reviews

In extracting the classification system from the discourse of critics, I follow core principles of structuralist analysis, which comprise three analytical steps (Lévi-Strauss, 1963; Mohr, 1998).

The first step consists of identifying basic elements in the discourse of popular music critics: (a) the use of genre labels to classify artists/albums within more general categories and (b) the use of evaluative criteria, which can consist of sentences, short text passages or words that have evaluative meaning. These elementary units of the discourse are coded on a low level of generalization. That is, I attempt to stay as close to the text as possible and postpone the aggregation to larger semantic categories. This approach differs from other forms of content analysis because it avoids generalization at the lower level of analysis by not working with a preconceived coding scheme (Franzosi, 1989; Roberts, 1989). Especially for research that wants to gauge the characteristics of classification systems, assuming the content of categories and their boundaries (e.g., devising of a coding form) can lead to problems of circularity. The 'anti-categorical' imperative of structural analysis therefore seems preferable in studying classifications and boundaries (Emirbayer, 1997).

The second step consists of assessing relations of similarity and difference among the genre categories. I use the concept of 'structural equivalence' – positing that elements which have similar relations with other elements are indeed 'similar.' Thus, if genres have comparable relations to evaluative criteria (i.e., similar 'evaluative profiles'), I regard them as similar. This is consistent with the idea of genres as sets of conventions that guide expectations and provide 'standards for evaluating

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[17] Further research would be needed to assess how various contextual factors– such as changes in the newspaper market and the organization of the *LA Times* - contributed to such shifts in perception. This, however, is beyond the scope of the present chapter. The position of the LA Times in the field of popular music criticism will be addressed in chapter 5.

and appreciating cultural objects' (Crane, 1992: 112). Note that similar evaluative profiles can flow from many elements – including values touted by critics (e.g., authenticity), connotations of particular genres (e.g., raw and rough), and behavioral rules that apply to genres (e.g., intimate revelatory music by a singer-songwriter for a quiet and contemplative audience). In other words, genres are situated in a space of values, connotations, uses, etc. – a space of aesthetic discourse. Therefore, genres can also be seen as more or less similar in meaning by considering which meanings are attributed to them by critics. If genres receive similar evaluative judgments and are judged by the same criteria, these genres can be said to be similar in meaning. The closer together in the space of aesthetic discourse, the more similar I consider genres to be.

The third step consists of assessing the structure of the relations of genre as a whole. I examine the meaning of each individual genre through its structural position within the overall relational system of how each genre is positioned vis-à-vis all other genres. To assess this overall relational structure, I conceive of genres as occupying *niche spaces* within the aesthetic discourse space and consider the overlap structure of genres. This means that I begin by assessing how critics situate *individual* artists and albums within the aesthetic discourse space; every genre classification of an artist/album is treated as a discrete unit of meaning. Then, since each individual album/artist has received a genre classification, I can conceptualize the position of a genre as a discursive region – occupying a *niche* space within this aesthetic discourse space. Developed for the study of organizational ecology (McPherson, 1983) but also applied to discourse spaces (Mohr & Lee, 2000), I use the niche *overlaps* between genres to establish whether genres have similar meanings. Overlapping genres will have similar meanings and genres that do not overlap will have different meanings. This overlap structure can then show the relational structure of genres.

This 'ecological' conceptualization of an aesthetic space in which genres occupy (overlapping) niche locations speaks to a number of analytical issues, of which I mention three. First, the measurement of niche spaces can capture the ambiguous and often contested nature of discourses. Different critics might mean slightly different things by labels as 'rock' or 'hip-hop'. Furthermore, the exact application of a genre label is often contested within cultural fields. However, as it relies on measures of central tendency, the measurement of niche regions points towards a

certain *core* use of a genre. Critics may have different and conflicting ideas about a genre label and its application and this measurement strategy can take into account the ambiguous nature of discursive classifications.

Second, the measurement of niche spaces can also indicate whether genres have more 'elaborate' or more 'restricted' meanings (Bernstein, 1960). The relative breadth of a genre niche space indicates whether critics attribute a wide or limited range of meanings to a genre. Since the 'restrictedness' or 'elaborateness' of the meaning of a genre is considered an important aspect of genre trajectories (Peterson, 1978), comparing the relative niche sizes of individual genres over time can provide a measure of whether the meaning of genres becomes more fuzzy and blurred or more rigid and bounded. The 'declassification' of individual genre boundaries can therefore be assessed.

Finally, this conceptualization of an aesthetic discourse space can be seen as a way to study the process of cognitive 'aggregation' (DiMaggio, 1997: 278). As argued by Bourdieu, the *habitus* – as a structuring structure – can account for the process of aggregation since it applies similar, 'transposable' and often basic oppositions such as high/low, left/right, etc. to different domains, which thereby reduces complexity and structures perception into higher and more simple categorical structures. In a similar way, the evaluative repertoire that critics apply to albums and artists is also inherently limited. In my conceptualization, the aggregation of genres in a higher-order system of categorization is actually achieved since the evaluative repertoire that critics use poses its own limitations on the perception of complexity. The use of the spatial metaphor of 'aesthetic discourse space' already emphasizes the constraints that the evaluative discourse places on the positioning of genres. Since genres have a location within this space and because of the boundedness of this aesthetic space, they will overlap to a certain extent and form a higher-order system of relations. This then allows us to study the relations between these genres as a totality.

## 3. The discourse on popular music: data and methods

The data consist of two sets of reviews, both collected from the *LA Times* through the electronic database Proquest Newspapers, covering two time periods: January 1985 through November 1986 and October 2004 through September 2005.

I gathered the 2004-5 reviews by searching for document type 'audio review'. This returned reviews on classical, popular and jazz music, from which I selected 157 reviews that appeared in the rubrics dedicated to pop albums such as *Record Rack*, *Pop Album Review* and *Latin Record Rack*. The 1985-1986 reviews were collected by searching on the column 'Record Rack' since document type 'audio review' was not available at the time. This yielded 212 reviews.[18]

I subsequently performed a textual analysis on these reviews with the help of the coding program AUTOMAP, in which I used lists of text strings to identify the elements of the two discourses (i.e., genre labels and evaluative criteria). The two sets of words and text strings were constructed by an iterative process of coding and recoding the reviews. First, I generated a list of words that recognizes the actual use of genre labels in the reviews.[19] Second, I identified and compiled a list of text strings used as evaluative criteria. To reflect the naturally occurring discourse, in both cases, I aimed to stay as close as possible to the actual word usage in the reviews – without aggregating or imposing theoretical categories. However, because I was interested in the use of evaluative criteria rather than the positive or negative direction of the evaluation, I used a slightly aggregated list of text strings to disregard the difference between a positive and negative implementation of a criterion (is_not_authentic and is_authentic are both coded as an invocation of the criterion of 'authenticity'). Table 1 lists the genre labels that were used in the two time periods; Table 2 lists examples of text strings that were used to recognize the evaluative criteria in the two time periods[20]. Not all genre labels or evaluative criteria were present in both time periods since different genres were of course discussed and also the use of evaluative criteria differed slightly.

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[18] To simplify the coding, reviews that discussed more than one album in the same review were deleted.

[19] The reviews were furthermore 'cleaned' from text segments that included titles of albums / songs and quotation of lyrics in order to exclude the recognition of genre labels or evaluations not used by the reviewer but possibly appearing in the title of an album (e.g., 'rock' in 'The Rock of my People'). Likewise, texts were cleaned from expressions and words that could be mistaken for genre labels (e.g., 'soul' in 'soul of the American people'). I also deleted sentences that included genre labels not pertaining to the artist in question (e.g., when a link was made to a previous review).

[20] See APPENDIX B for more examples.

**Table 1: Text strings used to recognize genre labels**

| |
|---|
| BLUEGRASS_MUSIC: bluegrass |
| NORTENO_MUSIC: norteno |
| FUNK_MUSIC: funk, funk-infused, funk-loving, funky |
| GOSPEL_MUSIC: gospel-fueled, gospel |
| SOUL_MUSIC: soul |
| FOLK_MUSIC: folk-style, folky, folk |
| BLUES_MUSIC: bluesy, blues, bluesman, border-blues |
| JAZZ_MUSIC: jazz, jazzy |
| SALSA_MUSIC: salsa music, salsa |
| R_AND_B: rhythm and blues, rhythm-and-blues, R&B-tinged, R&B-rooted, R&B-style, R&B |
| SINGERSONGWRITER: singer-songwriters, singer songwriters, singer-songwriter, singersongwriter |
| COUNTRY_MUSIC: country-accented, country-flavored, country-influenced, country-tinged, country-ish, countrified, country-style, country's, country music, country |
| ROCK_MUSIC: rock-edged, rockers, rocker, rock music, rocky, rock |
| HIP_HOP: hip-hop-flavored, hip-hop-style, hiphop, hip hop, hip-hop, rap |
| POP_MUSIC: popular music, pop music, pop-star, poppy, pop |
| |
| COUNTRY_ROCK: country rocker, country rock, countryrock |
| PUNK_MUSIC: punkish, punk |
| HEAVY_METAL: heavymetal, heavy metal, metal, metal rocker |
| DANCE_MUSIC: dancemusic, dance music, dance |
| REGGAE_MUSIC: rootsreggae, reggaeizes |
| POP_ROCK: pop rock, poprock, poprocker |
| ROCK_N_ROLL: rock n roll |

Although the lists for genre labels and evaluative concepts were much longer, I only used genre labels and evaluative concepts that had a minimal occurrence of 4 in the dataset of each period. For each review, I also selected the main genre designation, which I defined as the genre label that occurred most frequently within a review. If, for example, the label 'hip-hop' was used 3 times within a review and the label 'rock' only once, I assigned 'hip-hop' a 1 and 'rock' a 0. If two genre labels were equally used within a review they both received a 1. From this recoded matrix of genres by reviews of artist/albums, I then selected the genres that occurred at least 4 times (cf. Table 1).[21] For the evaluative concepts, I only coded for their presence or absence in a review. Thus, I disregarded whether an evaluative criterion was used more than once since this might

[21] Selecting only the main genre per review also rules out that genres will be similar only because they occur in the same review.

reflect the length of the review rather than the criterion's importance for this type of artist. Again, I only included evaluative criteria that had an overall frequency of minimally 4.

To construct the aesthetic space, I deleted reviews that did not contain any genre label and/or that lacked the evaluative criteria that I identified. The album reviews that were included for analysis therefore had both a main genre designation as well as at least one evaluative criterion. For the 1985-86 dataset, this finally resulted in a binary matrix of 152 x 57 artist/album by evaluative criterion matrix. For the 2004-05 dataset, this resulted in a binary 126 artist/album x 53 evaluative criterion matrix. Next, by calculating the degree of similarity in their aesthetic profiles,[22] I constructed two square matrices (152 x 152 and 126 x 126) in which every artist/album is located vis-à-vis all other artists/albums. Both matrices were then submitted to a multidimensional scaling analysis which locates all artists within a 6-dimensional evaluative space.[23]

**Table 2: Text strings used to recognize aesthetic criteria (examples)**

***AUTHENTICITY***: gives it heart and authenticity, sounded inauthentic
***AUTHORSHIP***: with 11 of her own compositions on her album, is based mostly on his own material
***BEAUTY***: gorgeous albums, a beautiful warm
***CATCHINESS***: catchy beats, hooks arent as grabby
***CLICHÉ***: minus the cliche, avoids Latin pop cliches
***COMMITMENT/DRIVE***: the music sounds like indifference
***CONSISTENCY***: a cohesive wellconceived collection, the result is uneven
***CREATIVITY***: group with this much passion and imagination
***EDGINESS***: harderedged, are still edgy
***EFFORT/EASE***: easy to enjoy, they are more accessible
***ENERGY***: sparks fly, an energetic cut
***ENGROSSMENT***: the most absorbing, most compelling
***ENTERTAINMENT***: on its own terms thats perfectly entertaining, as fun as it is familiar
***EXCITEMENT***: one of the most exciting revival albums
***FUNCTIONALITY***: pleasant enough for dinner music
***EXPRESSIVITY***: expresses himself, nakedly personal
***FOCUS***: brings added focus and point of view, sense of purpose
***RAWNESS***: bristled with the raw passions, the raw emotions
***SINCERITY***: his sincerity plays well throughout, earnest
***SKILL***: agile verbal skills, far more skilled than

[22]I used a Jaccard measure to calculate the similarity coefficients.
[23] The 6-dimensional solution of the MDS (a) on the 1985-86 dataset had a stress value of 0.172 and (b) on the 2004-05 dataset had a stress value of 0.158. I used the metric MDS application in UCINET.

***SMOOTHNESS***: smooth lyrical and melodic set, silky resonant baritone
***SUBSTANCE***: isnt ready to risk adding depth, puffed up with soapbubble ideas
***SWEETNESS***: a melody as sweet as, sweetest harmonies
***TALENT***: an immensely gifted, supremely talented
***UNIQUE***: something unique, one of the most distinctive voices
***WARM/COLD***: is a warm if sometimes unsettling, warm intimate vocals

*CHARM*: most charming soul singles of the year
*DIRECTNESS*: more direct and uptempo lp, employs a roaring straightforwardness
*EFFECTIVITY*: a teasingly effective, with less effective results
*FORMULA*: sound formulaic, tended to sound formulaic and dull
*GRACEFULNESS*: he's a graceful and consistent singer and writer, beauty and grace
*INDULGENCE*: indulged without being indulgent, too often selfindulgent
*INSPIRATION*: without much inspiration, an inspired reading
*INTERESTING*: gets more interesting, keep things interesting
*LUSHNESS*: lush full bodied vocals, are not quite as lush as
*MELODIC*: on strong melodic hooks, are melodious and interestingly arranged
*SENTIMENTAL*: couldnt have salvaged hopelessly schmaltzy ballads, could easily sound sappy
*SHINING*: a scintillating style, glisten with, shimmering track, textures shimmer, shimmering
*SPARSENESS*: spare austere sound, again is overly sparse, lean feisty raw
*VERSATILITY*: narrow musical range, even stretches out a bit
*WEIGHT*: with even the most lightweight material, there isnt enough heavyweight material here

**BOLDNESS/DARING**: a bold attempt, a daring artist
**PROMISE**: an otherwise promising, had enough promise
**ARTISTRY**: a more artful and thoughtful work, artistically astute
**PROGRESS**: they take a massive step, taking what amounts to a bold step
**DISTINCTIVE**: extraordinary vocals, unremarkable and chameleonlike, standing out from the pack
**SOPHISTICATE**: most sophisticated, sophisticated, the sophistication of
**ELEGANCE**: elegant quintet, street elegance,
**URGENCY**: theres nothing that conveys urgency, a moment or two of alarm and urgency
**GRITTY**: gritty gangster material, gravelvoiced, replace country grittiness, gritty
**SOLIDNESS**: a solid album, solid collection, solid contemporary pop
**IRRESISTIBILITY**: refrain you cant resist, hardtoresist track, irresistible and varied rhythms
**SOOTHING**: soothing sounds, calming flow, hypnotic moods
**PARTICIPATORY**: an effervescent singalong, to accommodate highschool singalongs
**TRADITIONAL**: more traditional, refreshingly oldfashioned
**SATISFYING**: so why is it often unsatisfying, with equally satisfying results

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Legend: criteria that appear in both sets of reviews (bold and italicized), only in 1985-86 (italicized), and only in 2004-05 (bold)

Through the reduction provided by the multidimensional scaling analysis, I now have a 6-dimensional evaluative space in which all artists/albums have a location. The organization of this space is structured according to the duality of genres and evaluations. The next step is to calculate the volume of space occupied by different genres in this evaluative space. As mentioned earlier, critics draw on a genre discourse to classify artists and albums. Because all artists and albums are located within this 6-dimensional space, and these artists and albums have all received a genre classification, it is possible to determine the core location of genres within this aesthetic space. McPherson (1983) proposed a simple procedure that can be followed to calculate this niche space. First, I calculate the core location of the genres in this evaluative space by taking the mean value of all the points in the aesthetic space that have been classified with the particular genre label. Next, I add 1.25 of the standard deviation on both sides of the mean. For example, in the case of the 2004-05 aesthetic space, 22 artists are classified by critics with the label 'rock music' as the most important genre label, and since the evaluative space has 6 dimensions, I therefore took the mean of the 22 scores on the 6 dimensions and in each case added 1.25 of the standard deviation. In the case of 'rock music', the mean of the 22 artists classified as 'rock music' on the first dimension is 0.67 with a 0.28 standard deviation, the window size on the first dimension is $0.67 \pm 1.25(0.28) =$ 0.32 to 1.02. The volume of the space occupied by the genres can then be calculated by multiplying the window on all 6 dimensions. In the case of 'rock' the total volume is 0.0492. [24]

To assess how the genres are positioned vis-à-vis each other within the aesthetic space, I calculated the size and proportion of the overlap between genres. Because the window of each genre on the dimensions is known, the overlap can be calculated between all genres on the 6 dimensions. The window on the first dimension of 'hip-hop' in the 2004-05 dataset, for example, is 0.327 to 0.943 and for 'pop' this is 0.238 to 0.928 – they therefore overlap on the first dimension from 0.327 to 0.928. Again by calculating the overlap on all 6 dimensions, the volume of the overlap can be found. [25] Next the overlap relative to the overall size of the

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[24]The diagonals of Tables 4 and 5 list the volume of the space of the 17 genres in the 1985-86 dataset and the 15 genres of the 2004-05 data respectively.

[25] Table 4 lists the overlap of the 17 genres of 1985-86, while Table 5 lists the regional overlap of 15 genres of 2004-05.

region space of each genre can be taken. This matrix is therefore asymmetric because the overlap is proportioned to the size of the region of the genre itself. It can be seen in Table 7, for example, that in 2004-05 ‘rock’ shares only 9% of its space with the space of ‘funk’ but that the overlap between ‘rock’ and ‘funk’ constitutes 46% of the space of ‘funk’. To enhance the visual inspection of the overlap matrix, I dichotomized the matrix at 50% of overlap[26]. When more than half of the region space of a genre overlaps with another genre, there will be a directed line from one genre to the other genre. A doubled-headed arrow indicates that the overlap between two genres is more than half of the space of both genres.

[26] See Table 8 and 9. The conventional cut-off at the mean did not highlight the most pronounced overlap relations. For comparison across two time periods, 50% also seemed more appropriate.

Table 4: Size of region and regional overlap 1985-86

| | Pop | Rock | Funk | Dance | Country | Soul | Rockn Roll | Blues | Punk | Folk | Heavy Metal | Hiphop | PopRock | Jazz | R&B | Reggae | Country_Rock |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pop | 0.1076 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Rock | 0.0517 | 0.1083 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Funk | 0.0449 | 0.0604 | 0.1046 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Dance Music | 0.0418 | 0.0413 | 0.059 | 0.0931 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Country | 0.0399 | 0.0403 | 0.0291 | 0.0271 | 0.1032 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Soul | 0.0487 | 0.0367 | 0.029 | 0.0308 | 0.0261 | 0.0935 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Rockn Roll | 0.0462 | 0.0394 | 0.0301 | 0.0315 | 0.0286 | 0.0346 | 0.0936 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Blues | 0.0339 | 0.0414 | 0.0382 | 0.0399 | 0.0437 | 0.0231 | 0.0339 | 0.1039 | | | | | | | | | |
| Punk | 0.0365 | 0.0378 | 0.043 | 0.0278 | 0.0424 | 0.0167 | 0.0225 | 0.0304 | 0.0968 | | | | | | | | |
| Folk | 0.0484 | 0.0597 | 0.053 | 0.0471 | 0.0388 | 0.0446 | 0.0382 | 0.0457 | 0.0224 | 0.1327 | | | | | | | |
| Heavy Metal | 0.0208 | 0.0139 | 0.0168 | 0.0167 | 0.0109 | 0.0159 | 0.011 | 0.0075 | 0.009 | 0.0203 | 0.0526 | | | | | | |
| Hiphop | 0.0235 | 0.0192 | 0.0257 | 0.0218 | 0.0179 | 0.0123 | 0.029 | 0.0237 | 0.0156 | 0.0309 | 0.0093 | 0.0618 | | | | | |
| PopRock | 0.0641 | 0.0689 | 0.0569 | 0.0533 | 0.0632 | 0.0499 | 0.0505 | 0.0609 | 0.0486 | 0.0809 | 0.0171 | 0.0266 | 0.1739 | | | | |
| Jazz | 0.0094 | 0.0112 | 0.0117 | 0.0018 | 0.0066 | 0.0084 | 0.005 | 0.0027 | 0.007 | 0.0096 | 0.0056 | 0.0032 | 0.0098 | 0.0264 | | | |
| R&B | 0.0464 | 0.0354 | 0.0366 | 0.0488 | 0.0426 | 0.0391 | 0.0386 | 0.0492 | 0.0229 | 0.0552 | 0.014 | 0.023 | 0.0632 | 0.0001 | 0.1141 | | |
| Reggae | 0.047 | 0.0552 | 0.0561 | 0.0558 | 0.0393 | 0.0444 | 0.0365 | 0.0509 | 0.0379 | 0.055 | 0.0149 | 0.0191 | 0.0676 | 0.0079 | 0.0361 | 0.1549 | |
| CountryRock | 0.0136 | 0.0114 | 0.0082 | 0.0057 | 0.0205 | 0.0113 | 0.0128 | 0.0118 | 0.0165 | 0.0072 | 0.0019 | 0.0046 | 0.0182 | 0.0025 | 0.0115 | 0.0102 | 0.0529 |

Table 5: Size of region and regional overlap 2004-05

| | Bluegrass | Norteno | Funk | Gospel | Soul | Folk | Blues | Jazz | Salsa | R&B | Singersongwriter | Country | Rock | Hiphop | Pop |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bluegrass | 0.0061 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Norteno | 0.0013 | 0.0896 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Funk | 0 | 0.0031 | 0.0099 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Gospel | 0 | 0.011 | 0.0037 | 0.0192 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Soul | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0247 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Folk | 0.0012 | 0.0171 | 0.0043 | 0.0123 | 0 | 0.0406 | | | | | | | | | |
| Blues | 0.0029 | 0.0275 | 0.0023 | 0.0072 | 0 | 0.0189 | 0.0496 | | | | | | | | |
| Jazz | 0.0022 | 0.0157 | 0.0022 | 0.005 | 0 | 0.0162 | 0.0242 | 0.0479 | | | | | | | |
| Salsa | 0 | 0.0113 | 0.0004 | 0 | 0 | 0.0075 | 0.0063 | 0.0049 | 0.0326 | | | | | | |
| R&B | 0.0008 | 0.0186 | 0.0042 | 0.0105 | 0 | 0.0216 | 0.0139 | 0.0097 | 0.0137 | 0.0459 | | | | | |
| Singersongwriter | 0.0021 | 0.0222 | 0.0041 | 0.0102 | 0 | 0.023 | 0.023 | 0.022 | 0.006 | 0.0187 | 0.0478 | | | | |
| Country | 0.0015 | 0.0192 | 0.0029 | 0.0046 | 0 | 0.0151 | 0.0174 | 0.0195 | 0.007 | 0.0135 | 0.0268 | 0.0389 | | | |
| Rock | 0.0009 | 0.0179 | 0.0045 | 0.0065 | 0 | 0.0163 | 0.0137 | 0.0164 | 0.01 | 0.0233 | 0.024 | 0.0187 | 0.0492 | | |
| Hiphop | 0.0005 | 0.0173 | 0.0033 | 0.006 | 0 | 0.0185 | 0.013 | 0.0133 | 0.0159 | 0.0241 | 0.0173 | 0.0178 | 0.024 | 0.0429 | |
| Pop | 0.0007 | 0.0275 | 0.0048 | 0.0097 | 0 | 0.0192 | 0.0171 | 0.0155 | 0.014 | 0.0296 | 0.0257 | 0.0216 | 0.0313 | 0.0309 | 0.0535 |

Table 6: Overlap as proportion of region space 1985-86

| | Pop | Rock | Funk | Dance Music | Country | Soul | Rockn Roll | Blues | Punk | Folk | Heavy Metal | Hiphop | PopRock | Jazz | R&B | Reggae | Country_Rock |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pop | 1 | 0.48 | 0.4172 | 0.3888 | 0.3706 | 0.4524 | 0.4291 | 0.3151 | 0.3392 | 0.4494 | 0.1932 | 0.2179 | 0.5952 | 0.087 | 0.4312 | 0.4365 | 0.1265 |
| Rock | 0.477 | 1 | 0.5576 | 0.3816 | 0.372 | 0.3384 | 0.3638 | 0.3824 | 0.3487 | 0.551 | 0.1282 | 0.1776 | 0.6362 | 0.1031 | 0.3269 | 0.5095 | 0.1053 |
| Funk | 0.4295 | 0.5776 | 1 | 0.5641 | 0.2787 | 0.2771 | 0.2878 | 0.365 | 0.4115 | 0.5068 | 0.1606 | 0.2455 | 0.5443 | 0.1122 | 0.3504 | 0.5366 | 0.0784 |
| Dance Music | 0.4494 | 0.4439 | 0.6334 | 1 | 0.2906 | 0.3307 | 0.3385 | 0.4287 | 0.299 | 0.5058 | 0.1792 | 0.2345 | 0.5721 | 0.019 | 0.5245 | 0.5995 | 0.0609 |
| Country | 0.3867 | 0.3906 | 0.2825 | 0.2623 | 1 | 0.2533 | 0.2773 | 0.4237 | 0.4107 | 0.376 | 0.1055 | 0.1739 | 0.6129 | 0.0644 | 0.4126 | 0.3811 | 0.1989 |
| Soul | 0.521 | 0.3921 | 0.31 | 0.3294 | 0.2796 | 1 | 0.3702 | 0.2473 | 0.179 | 0.4771 | 0.1696 | 0.1319 | 0.5341 | 0.0897 | 0.4185 | 0.4747 | 0.1214 |
| Rockn Roll | 0.4936 | 0.4211 | 0.3216 | 0.3368 | 0.3058 | 0.3698 | 1 | 0.3624 | 0.2402 | 0.4087 | 0.1174 | 0.3102 | 0.5393 | 0.0536 | 0.413 | 0.3906 | 0.1373 |
| Blues | 0.3264 | 0.3986 | 0.3673 | 0.3841 | 0.4206 | 0.2224 | 0.3263 | 1 | 0.2923 | 0.4396 | 0.0718 | 0.2276 | 0.5862 | 0.0255 | 0.4735 | 0.4902 | 0.1135 |
| Punk | 0.3773 | 0.3903 | 0.4446 | 0.2877 | 0.4378 | 0.1729 | 0.2323 | 0.3139 | 1 | 0.2313 | 0.0929 | 0.1609 | 0.5017 | 0.0721 | 0.2369 | 0.3916 | 0.1707 |
| Folk | 0.3646 | 0.4497 | 0.3994 | 0.355 | 0.2923 | 0.3361 | 0.2882 | 0.3442 | 0.1687 | 1 | 0.1533 | 0.2326 | 0.61 | 0.0724 | 0.416 | 0.4143 | 0.0539 |
| Heavy Metal | 0.3957 | 0.2642 | 0.3196 | 0.3174 | 0.2071 | 0.3017 | 0.2091 | 0.142 | 0.1711 | 0.3871 | 1 | 0.1772 | 0.3252 | 0.1063 | 0.267 | 0.2828 | 0.0353 |
| Hiphop | 0.3797 | 0.3114 | 0.4156 | 0.3535 | 0.2904 | 0.1996 | 0.4698 | 0.3829 | 0.2521 | 0.4997 | 0.1507 | 1 | 0.4306 | 0.0511 | 0.3731 | 0.3087 | 0.0743 |
| PopRock | 0.3684 | 0.3963 | 0.3273 | 0.3063 | 0.3636 | 0.2871 | 0.2902 | 0.3503 | 0.2792 | 0.4655 | 0.0983 | 0.153 | 1 | 0.0561 | 0.3633 | 0.3885 | 0.1049 |
| Jazz | 0.3546 | 0.423 | 0.4443 | 0.067 | 0.2515 | 0.3176 | 0.1898 | 0.1004 | 0.2644 | 0.3639 | 0.2117 | 0.1196 | 0.3694 | 1 | 0.0031 | 0.3009 | 0.0939 |
| R&B | 0.4069 | 0.3104 | 0.3213 | 0.4281 | 0.3732 | 0.3429 | 0.3388 | 0.4314 | 0.201 | 0.484 | 0.123 | 0.2021 | 0.5539 | 0.0007 | 1 | 0.3168 | 0.1013 |
| Reggae | 0.3034 | 0.3563 | 0.3623 | 0.3604 | 0.2538 | 0.2865 | 0.236 | 0.3289 | 0.2447 | 0.355 | 0.096 | 0.1231 | 0.4362 | 0.0513 | 0.2333 | 1 | 0.0656 |
| CountryRock | 0.2573 | 0.2154 | 0.1549 | 0.107 | 0.3875 | 0.2142 | 0.2427 | 0.2228 | 0.3119 | 0.1351 | 0.035 | 0.0867 | 0.3446 | 0.0468 | 0.2181 | 0.192 | 1 |

Table 7: Overlap as proportion of region space 2004-05

| | Bluegrass | Norteno | Funk | Gospel | Soul | Folk | Blues | Jazz | Salsa | R&B | Singersongwriter | Country | Rock | Hiphop | Pop |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bluegrass | 1 | 0.2166 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.192 | 0.477 | 0.3639 | 0 | 0.1292 | 0.3407 | 0.1292 | 0.3407 | 0.2421 | 0.147 |
| Norteno | 0.0147 | 1 | 0.0344 | 0.1223 | 0 | 0.1908 | 0.3064 | 0.1754 | 0.1259 | 0.207 | 0.2476 | 0.2141 | 0.1994 | 0.1935 | 0.3066 |
| Funk | 0 | 0.313 | 1 | 0.3725 | 0 | 0.4375 | 0.2287 | 0.2259 | 0.0426 | 0.4226 | 0.4207 | 0.2977 | 0.4595 | 0.3396 | 0.4827 |
| Gospel | 0 | 0.5721 | 0.1918 | 1 | 0 | 0.6432 | 0.3775 | 0.2604 | 0 | 0.5493 | 0.5314 | 0.2389 | 0.3375 | 0.3146 | 0.5071 |
| Soul | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Folk | 0.0288 | 0.4214 | 0.1063 | 0.3036 | 0 | 1 | 0.465 | 0.3984 | 0.1838 | 0.5333 | 0.5662 | 0.3729 | 0.402 | 0.4555 | 0.4726 |
| Blues | 0.0585 | 0.5542 | 0.0455 | 0.1459 | 0 | 0.3809 | 1 | 0.4878 | 0.1267 | 0.2814 | 0.4649 | 0.3512 | 0.2764 | 0.2628 | 0.3446 |
| Jazz | 0.0462 | 0.3284 | 0.0465 | 0.1042 | 0 | 0.3377 | 0.5049 | 1 | 0.1021 | 0.2033 | 0.4599 | 0.4063 | 0.342 | 0.2783 | 0.3245 |
| Salsa | 0 | 0.3458 | 0.0129 | 0 | 0 | 0.2285 | 0.1923 | 0.1498 | 1 | 0.4212 | 0.1846 | 0.2145 | 0.3064 | 0.4864 | 0.4291 |
| R&B | 0.0171 | 0.404 | 0.0907 | 0.2291 | 0 | 0.4713 | 0.3037 | 0.2119 | 0.2993 | 1 | 0.407 | 0.2938 | 0.5079 | 0.5253 | 0.6434 |
| Singersongwriter | 0.0434 | 0.4647 | 0.0869 | 0.2132 | 0 | 0.4813 | 0.4824 | 0.4612 | 0.1262 | 0.3915 | 1 | 0.5622 | 0.5025 | 0.3616 | 0.5385 |
| Country | 0.0379 | 0.4939 | 0.0755 | 0.1178 | 0 | 0.3895 | 0.4479 | 0.5007 | 0.1802 | 0.3473 | 0.6909 | 1 | 0.4823 | 0.4574 | 0.5569 |
| Rock | 0.0182 | 0.3633 | 0.0921 | 0.1314 | 0 | 0.3317 | 0.2784 | 0.3328 | 0.2033 | 0.4742 | 0.4878 | 0.3809 | 1 | 0.4872 | 0.6365 |
| Hiphop | 0.0127 | 0.4043 | 0.0781 | 0.1405 | 0 | 0.4311 | 0.3037 | 0.3107 | 0.3701 | 0.5625 | 0.4025 | 0.4143 | 0.5589 | 1 | 0.7203 |
| Pop | 0.0128 | 0.5133 | 0.0889 | 0.1814 | 0 | 0.3583 | 0.319 | 0.2902 | 0.2616 | 0.5519 | 0.4803 | 0.4041 | 0.5848 | 0.577 | 1 |

Table 8: Binary representation of regional overlap (cutoff = 0.5) 1985-86

| | Pop | Rock | Funk | Dance Music | Country | Soul | Rockn Roll | Blues | Punk | Folk | Heavy Metal | Hiphop | PopPock | Jazz | R&B | Reggae | Country_Rock |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pop | - | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Rock | 0 | - | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Funk | 0 | 1 | - | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| DanceMusic | 0 | 0 | 1 | - | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Country | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Soul | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| RocknRoll | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Blues | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Punk | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Folk | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| HeavyMetal | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Hiphop | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| PopRock | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Jazz | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| R&B | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | - | 0 | 0 |
| Reggae | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - | 0 |
| Country Rock | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - |

Table 9: Binary representation of regional overlap (cutoff = 0.5) 2004-05

| | Bluegrass | Norteno | Funk | Gospel | Soul | Folk | Blues | Jazz | Salsa | R&B | Singersongwriter | Country | Rock | Hiphop | Pop |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bluegrass | - | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Norteno | 0 | - | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Funk | 0 | 0 | - | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Gospel | 0 | 1 | 0 | - | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Soul | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Folk | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Blues | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Jazz | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | - | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Salsa | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| R&B | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Singersongwriter | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Country | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | - | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Rock | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - | 0 | 1 |
| Hiphop | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | - | 1 |
| Pop | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | - |

**4. Comparison of aesthetic boundaries between genres**

The size of the niche region – as argued above – indicates whether critics use an 'elaborate' or 'restricted' code to describe and evaluate artists/albums labeled with particular genre categories. Genre labels that have a larger niche size are regarded as having more diffuse and elaborate meanings and a wider repertoire of aesthetic discourse attached to them than genres with relatively small niche spaces. The diagonals in Tables 4 and 5 show the niche sizes of the 1985-86 genres and 2004-05 genres respectively. For a more convenient comparison of the genre labels in terms of their relative niche size, Table 10 gives the ranking of the genre labels in both years. To verify that the size of the niche region does not merely reflect the frequency with which genre labels are used as the main genre classification in a review, I also listed the frequency of the genre label in Table 10 and calculated a correlation coefficient between the size of the niche region and the frequency of genre labels.[27] In both years, the niche size and frequency are not strongly correlated.[28] It is therefore safe to say that the niche size of genre labels does reflect the dispersion of artists/albums within the aesthetic discourse space independently of the frequency of the use of genre labels.

In 1985-86, the larger niches are occupied by genres as 'pop-rock', 'reggae', 'folk' and 'R&B' and the artists/albums classified by critics with these genre labels are more widely dispersed throughout the aesthetic discourse space than, for example, the artists/albums labeled as 'jazz', 'hip-hop', 'heavy-metal' and 'country-rock', which occupy smaller niche spaces. In 2004-05, the genre label 'norteno' occupies the largest niche region in aesthetic space, followed by 'pop', 'blues', 'rock' and 'jazz', whereas 'bluegrass', 'funk', 'gospel' and 'soul' are some of

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[27] For the main genre classification of an artist/album, I selected the genre label which occurred in the review with the highest frequency, but if multiple genre labels occurred with the same frequency, I assigned multiple genre labels to the same artist/album. The total frequency of genre labels therefore exceeds the total number of reviews of artists/albums. In 1985-86, 214 genre labels occur in 152 reviews (1.4 per review), and in 2004-05, 191 genre labels occur in 126 reviews (1.5 per review). Since the multiple classification of artists/albums can possibly influence the overlap of genre niches, I calculated the correlation coefficients between the number of times two genre labels co-occur in the same review and the size of the overlap of their regions, which is low in 1985-86 (0.25) and slightly higher in 2004-05 (0.48). Since the co-occurrence of genre labels in reviews is part of the naturally occurring discourse of critics, I included this aspect in the modeling of the discourse structure.

[28] The correlation coefficient is 0.10 for 1985-86 and 0.28 for 2004-05.

the genre labels with smaller niche bases. Is there a plausible interpretation of the relative large discourse spaces occupied by 'pop-rock' and 'reggae' in 1985-86 and 'norteno' in 2004-05? The large niche size of 'pop-rock' could indicate that 'pop-rock' – as the label itself already suggests – is an example of a genre label with a general meaning: artists/albums classified by the label 'pop-rock' can apparently be described and evaluated with aesthetic criteria that are distant in the structure of the aesthetic discourse. 'Reggae' also seemed to incorporate a diffuse set of aesthetic criteria in 1985-86. Although only a few artists/albums are primarily labeled as 'reggae', the niche's breadth could reflect the mainstream and crossover success of the genre in the 1980s. Commercial success can weaken the aesthetic boundaries of a genre and thereby contribute to the breadth of the aesthetic repertoire used by critics to describe and evaluate a genre (Peterson, 1978). This crossover effect perhaps also explains the large size of the 'norteno' niche in 2004-05, which combines traditionalism with pop sensibility and fuses traditional Mexican music with 'aesthetically distant' genres as electronic music as in the case of the band 'Nortec Collective'.

**Table 10: Ranking of genre labels in niche size**

| | **1985-86** | **Freq** | **2004-05** | **Freq** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | PopRock | (6) | Norteno | (4) |
| 2 | Reggae | (4) | Pop | (30) |
| 3 | Folk | (7) | Blues | (8) |
| 4 | R&B | (6) | Rock | (22) |
| 5 | Rock | (43) | Jazz | (9) |
| 6 | Pop | (43) | Singersongwriter | (19) |
| 7 | Funk | (15) | R&B | (12) |
| 8 | Blues | (8) | HipHop | (27) |
| 9 | Country | (13) | Folk | (8) |
| 10 | Punk | (8) | Country | (21) |
| 11 | RocknRoll | (9) | Salsa | (11) |
| 12 | Soul | (14) | Soul | (6) |
| 13 | Dance | (16) | Gospel | (5) |
| 14 | HipHop | (7) | Funk | (5) |
| 15 | CountryRock | (4) | Bluegrass | (4) |
| 16 | HeavyMetal | (5) | | |
| 17 | Jazz | (6) | | |

The niche size rankings of genres in 1985-86 and 2004-05 also show some major overtime changes. Most strikingly, 'jazz' as a genre

label has moved from a small niche base to a relatively large niche in 2004-05. Even though its use as a label has not increased much, the position within the discourse space has gone from a more tightly bounded genre label to a more general, elaborate use within the discourse space. The meaning of jazz seems to have become more 'fuzzy' over time and used in a more diverse way and with broader aesthetic connotations. The same pattern is visible for 'blues' and 'hip-hop', although the use of the latter genre label has also increased since 1985-86. 'Funk' dropped in its relative size – going from a relatively average sized niche to only a small space. However, to specify further how the meaning of individual genres has changed, the analysis of the niche region's size must be supplemented by an analysis of the overlap structure of the genres, which considers the relational structure of genres vis-à-vis each other.

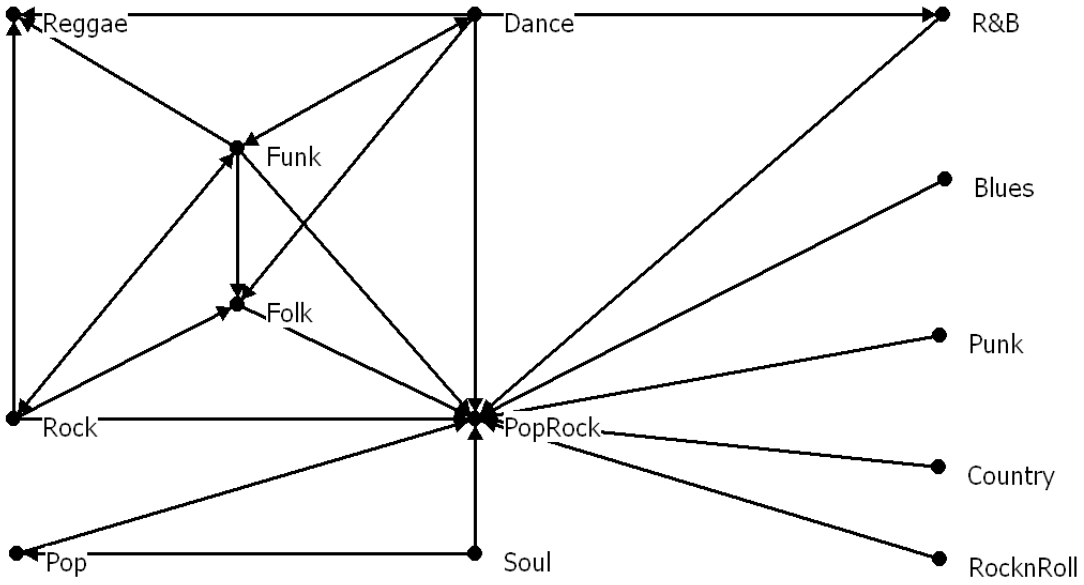


**Figure 1 Niche overlap 1985-86 (cut-off = 0.5)**

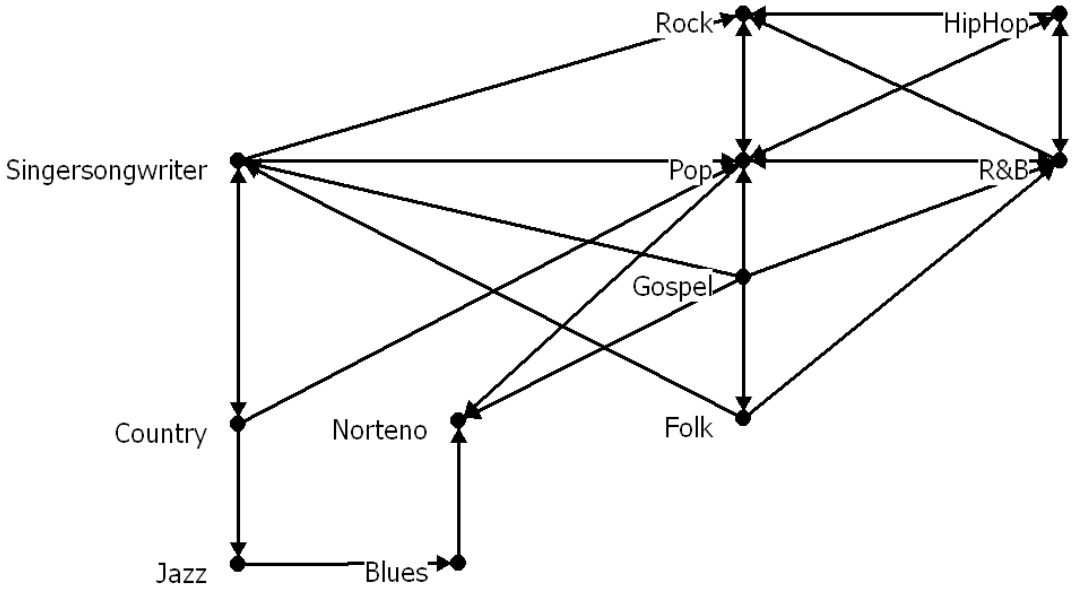


**Figure 2 Niche overlap 2004-05 (cut-off = 0.5)**

Figures 1 and 2 show the two niche overlap structures of genres within aesthetic space in 1985-86 and 2004-05. When more than half of the region space of a genre overlaps with another genre, the two genres are connected by a directed line. A doubled-headed arrow indicates that the overlap between two genres is more than half of the spaces of both genres. In both graphs, four genres are not represented as they did not overlap with any other genre for more than half of their space. In 1985-86, 'hip-hop', 'jazz', 'heavy-metal' and 'country-rock' held such isolate positions, while in 2004-05 'bluegrass', 'soul', 'salsa', and 'funk' qualify as isolates. These isolate genres occupy positions at the periphery of the overlap structure in aesthetic space, whereas the remaining genres that are overlapping with each other are part of the center of the structure. Considering this center-periphery structure in both years, 'hip-hop' appears to have moved from an isolated position in the periphery to a firm position in the center, whereas 'funk' has moved from the center to the periphery. As mentioned, the size of the region of 'hip-hop' also increased between the two time periods. In the 1980s, 'hip-hop' was a relatively new genre and apparently it occupied a more separate aesthetic space in the perception of critics. Its movement to the core might also reflect the particular genre-trajectory of 'hip-hop' from a relatively marginal and aesthetically distinct type of music to a now very central genre which together with 'rock', 'pop' and 'R&B' occupies the core

area of the aesthetic space. ‘Funk’ on the other hand, which had a strong presence on the charts in the 1980s and also was seen by critics as a category which overlapped in meaning with broader genres as ‘rock’, ‘reggae’, ‘folk’, ‘dance-music’ and ‘pop-rock’, has moved to a relatively separate niche. This trajectory from center to periphery suggests that funk is nowadays seen as a genre outside of the pop-rock mainstream.

Regarding the other isolates in 1985-86, ‘heavy-metal’ is not used as a label frequently enough to be represented in the 2004-05 genre structure and the same applies to the ‘country-rock’ label. ‘Jazz’ is still used as a label and made a slight move towards the center in 2004-05 but although ‘country’ shares more than 50% of its space with ‘jazz’ and ‘jazz’ also shares a relatively large part of its space with ‘blues’, the genre remains somewhat on the periphery of the aesthetic discourse space in 2004-05, even though – as mentioned – its relative niche size greatly increased.

Looking at the genres represented in the overlap structure, the center of both years appear to be structured differently. In general, the overlap structure in 2004-05 seems more evenly dispersed among the genres, whereas in 1985-86 the overlap largely depends on the centrality of one large genre niche, namely ‘pop-rock’. The genre ‘pop-rock’ occupies a large region of the aesthetic space[29], which indicates that the artists/albums labeled as ‘pop-rock’ are widely dispersed throughout the aesthetic space. The overlap structure then shows that the region of ‘pop-rock’ is occupied by almost all of the other genres like ‘punk’, ‘rock ‘n’ roll’, ‘country’, ‘pop’, ‘soul’, ‘blues’, ‘rock’, ‘funk’, ‘folk’, ‘dance-music’ and ‘R&B’. Only the above mentioned isolates and ‘reggae’ do not share more than half of their own space with ‘pop-rock’.

It is therefore safe to say that in 1985-86, ‘pop-rock’ is used as one of the most general labels which encompasses the aesthetic space occupied by almost all other genres. The generality of this label then, is what connects many of the genre labels in 1985-86. If we removed this label (also known as a ‘cutpoint’), the structure of the 1985-86 genres becomes more loosely connected and only a core area of 5 genres (‘dance-music’, ‘folk’, ‘rock’, ‘reggae’ and ‘funk’) would appear as a densely populated area within the aesthetic space. In that case, apart from these 5 overlapping genres, most other genres would have a more specific

[29]Cf. Table 4.

niche aesthetic space. In 2004-05, on the other hand, the overlap structure shows a larger group of connected genres which, as a structure, does not hinge on one general category (has no 'cutpoints) for its connectedness. Apart from the isolates all other genres share their space with at least two other genres. 'Jazz' and 'blues' are two genres which have relatively separate niche positions yet they are connected with each other and also share space with 'country' and 'norteno'. The core of this structure is formed by the four genres 'pop', 'rock', 'R&B' and 'hip-hop', which each overlap with one another.

A more formal measure of the 'interconnectedness' of the two graphs is provided by the overall density of the two networks which is larger in 2004-05 (0.1238) than in 1985-86 (0.0846).[30] This comparison of the overlap structure points to a greater structural overlap in 2004-05 and, therefore, a growth in similarity in aesthetic judgment. If the genre structure of popular music has undergone a process of isomorphism and aesthetic boundaries between genres have blurred, we would indeed expect to find more genre overlap in aesthetic space in 2004-05 than in 1985-86. However, critics in 2004-05 also divide their attention more evenly across a greater number of genres. In 1985-86, the labels 'pop' and 'rock' are most frequently used to classify an artist/album, whereas in 2004-05, 'pop' and 'rock' are joined by 'hip-hop', 'country' and 'singer-songwriter' as frequently used genre labels. Since the frequency of occurrence of genre labels has low correlation with the niche size of genres, the more even distribution of attention over more genres in 2004-05 does not increase the size of the individual genre niches and thereby the (possibility of) overlap. Moreover, in both periods, the niche sizes have similar distributions (cf. Figures 3 and 4), which means that despite the more skewed frequency distribution of genres in 1985-86 – with 11 genres having a frequency of less than 10 and two genres ('pop' and 'rock') with frequencies of 43 – the niche size distribution has not changed. Most genres in both 1985-86 and 2004-05 have approximately average sized niches. This suggests that the increasing overlap in the discourse space does not result from a dramatic change in the relative

[30] Total number of ties divided by the total number of possible ties

sizes of the niches but a shift in the relative 'positioning' of the genres in the aesthetic discourse space between 1985-86 and 2004-05.[31]

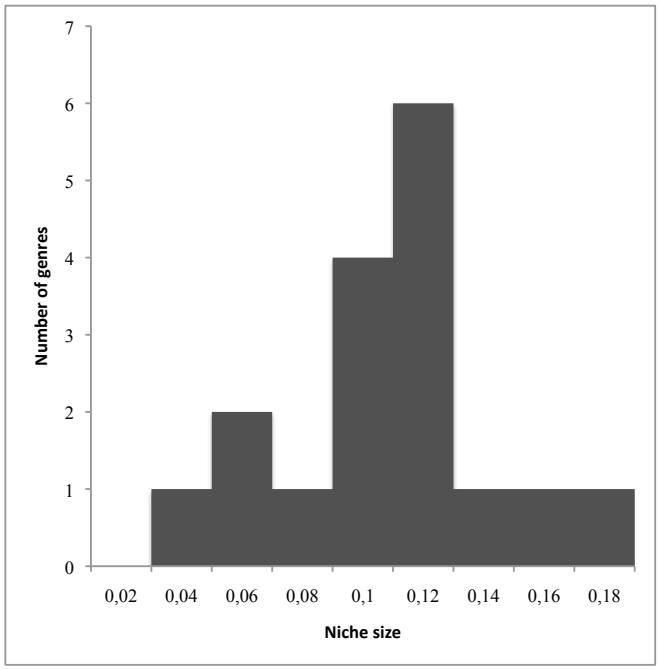


**Figure 3 Histogram of niche size 1985-86**

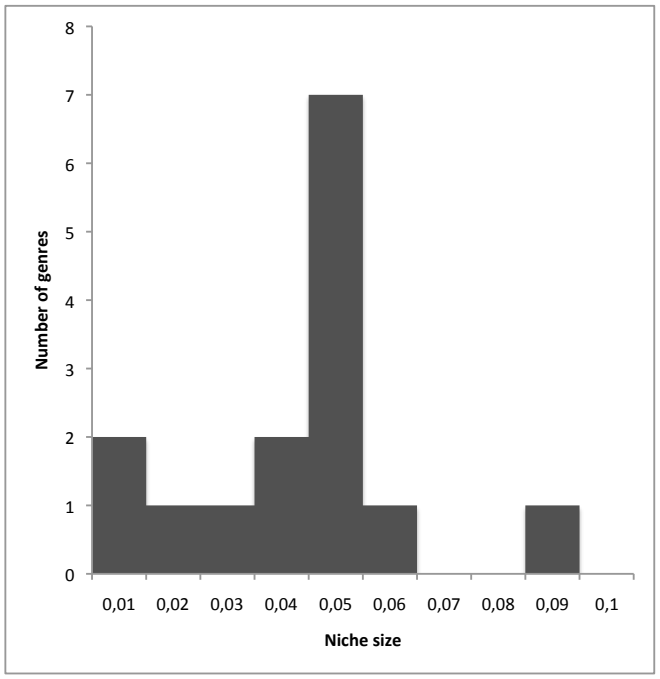


**Figure 4 Histogram of niche size 2004-05**

[31] Given the low correlation between co-occurrence of genre labels in the same review and niche overlap, and the fact that the average number of genre labels per review has not increased, this factor does not seem to account for the increase in overlap.

The centrality of the label ‘pop-rock’ in 1985-86 however suggests that the process of ‘pop-rockization’ was already underway in the 1980s. The comparison of the two genre structures could however point out that, whereas in the 1980s, critics seemed to perceive a blurring of the boundary between ‘pop’ and ‘rock’, they wanted to reserve the two labels for designating two more separated aesthetic areas. The use of the label of ‘pop-rock’ as a general label could be interpreted as critics trying to ‘isolate’ the blurring of the boundary as a separate stream, a separate genre, whereas in 2004-05, critics have lost the distinctiveness of ‘pop’ and ‘rock’ and appear to judge them by the same aesthetic principles. In 2004-05, ‘pop’ and ‘rock’ share a large part of each other’s aesthetic space – in which they are joined by ‘hip-hop’ and ‘R&B’ – and critics do not seem to perceive strong categorical boundaries between these two genres – at least not in the kinds of aesthetic criteria they apply to these genres.

**Conclusion**

This chapter aimed to model the way in which popular music critics position different genres within an aesthetic discourse space. I argue that studies of aesthetic classification systems – i.e. relations of similarity and difference between genres – should consider how these classification systems are meaningfully ordered and are structured in and by the ‘categories of perception and evaluation’ of actors within the field. My study shows how an aesthetic classification system can be conceptualized and measured by (1) assessing how genres occupy niche regions within an aesthetic space, which is defined as consisting of the evaluative repertoires available to critics and (2) measuring the niche overlap structure of genres. Genres that overlap in their niche regions within aesthetic space are evaluated similarly by critics and therefore could be argued to have similar meanings.

This conceptualization of an aesthetic space is then used to study, in an exploratory way, possible changes within the aesthetic classification system of popular music critics between 1985-86 and 2004-05. Changes in the aesthetic classification system of critics substantiated the thesis of ‘declassification’ or ‘pop-rockization’. The comparison of the two structures in 1985-86 and 2004-05 revealed that, in the latter time period, genres overlap more in aesthetic space, which signals that critics perceive and evaluate different genres with more similar evaluative criteria.

Moreover, critics also tend to perceive the category pair of ‘pop’ and ‘rock’ as less distinct. In 1985-86, ‘pop’ and ‘rock’ have less overlap than in 2004-05. However, the centrality of the label of ‘pop-rock’ in 1985-86 indicates that, at this point in time, critics perceived ‘pop-rock’ to be a general category that is positioned centrally within aesthetic space. Moreover, it may signal the acknowledgment of ‘pop-rock’ as a separate stream of music, but which still suggests that critics tended to perceive ‘rock’ and ‘pop’ as two more or less distinct categories. These results could indicate that critics over the past few decades have come to draw less strong boundaries between commercial, illegitimate ‘pop’ versus artistic, legitimate ‘rock’ – possibly due to the aforementioned changes in the structure of the music industry. As in the case of film (Baumann, 2001), the creation of a boundary between ‘high’ and ‘low’, ‘legitimate’ and ‘illegitimate’ within the popular music industry might have had its heydays in the 1970s and 1980s but, due to commercial pressures, has perhaps eroded in recent years.

This study could be expanded along several lines. For one, I only looked at the symbolic logic of genres and their meanings within the discourse of critics. Although this approach has proven fruitful, a more direct analysis of the duality between the production or organizational context of popular music and the symbolic system of critics would enrich this study. Do critics in their use of genre labels or evaluative judgment in fact operate as boundary patrolling agents between the field of restricted and large-scale production as argued by Bourdieu? Are the organizational identity categories of ‘indie’ vs. ‘majors’ maintained within critical discourse (Zuckerman & Kim, 2003) and has the change in production logic to an open system diminished the strength of these identities? Moreover, this study could be complemented by analyzing the use of elements from different genre worlds (Rao, Durand & Monin, 2005). Indeed, what has been the role of critics in processes of category erosion? Also, this study did not address changes within the field of journalism, and/or within the organization of the *LA Times*. By studying these questions, we could contribute to the growing interest in how the structure of fields are constructed and maintained through meaningful categorization and identity assignment, a central topic in both Bourdieuan field theory and ecological theory of organizational fields (Lizardo, forthcoming).

Moreover, the effort in this chapter to apply quantitative techniques to measure the structure of meaning in aesthetic discourses, could strengthen the analysis of meaning into the sociology of arts, which has mostly focused on (measurable aspects of) the production, distribution and reception of 'concrete cultural objects' and has been reluctant to include the analysis of culture as 'implicit' meaning. The measurement of meaning (of art works themselves, or the discourses that surround them) seems, however, to be a middle ground where both the quantitatively oriented 'production of culture' and the qualitatively oriented study of discourses, narratives, and meaning making can cooperatively meet (Griswold, 2005).

# CHAPTER 5

## The duality of discourse and structural positions in the field of popular music

### Introduction

One of the most central questions in the sociology of culture is the study of the 'interlinking' of the symbolic and the material, the cultural and the social, the cognitive and the institutional. Aesthetic classifications systems are, for example, seen as constituted by and constitutive of organizational forms (DiMaggio, 1982), class structures (Bourdieu, 1984), race (Roy, 2004; Dowd, 2003), ethnicity (Berkers, 2009), gender (Dowd et al., 2005; Schmutz, 2009), industry structures (Peterson, 1997; Peterson & Berger, 1975), and international (power) relations (Bevers, 2005; Janssen, Kuipers & Verboord, 2008).

The study of the duality of the symbolic and the material, the cultural and social, and the cognitive and the institutional, has been recently approached by scholars using formal analytic techniques for studying this "duality" (See Mohr, 1998; Mohr & White, 2008 for an overview). Drawing on relational techniques developed for the analysis of social networks, and the theoretical concept of 'institutional logics', defined by Friedland and Alford (1991) as 'a set of material practices and symbolic constructions', these studies attempt to formally analyze how multiple orders of the social intersect and interact to create stable and enduring institutions (Breiger, 2000; Martin, 2000; Mische & Pattison, 2000; Mohr & Duquenne, 1997; Tilly, 1997).

This chapter builds on these recent attempts at formally analyzing the duality between 'material practices and symbolic constructions' in investigating how, in the contemporary field of popular music, a symbolic discourse space of popular music is structured in terms of organizational and social distinctions and vice versa, how organizational and social distinctions are 'articulated' in distinct 'discourse positions'. To study the intersection of symbolic and material boundaries in the field of popular music, I model a 'critical discourse space', which I conceive of as consisting of three discourse vectors: (1) discourse producing institutions – or the "field" of popular music publications (2) an aesthetic discourse space representing the aesthetic codes used to evaluate and describe popular music, and (3) a judgment vector indicating the

negative, neutral or positive evaluation. I use these three vectors to model a 'critical discourse space' in which popular music albums, their artists and their producing music labels are situated and located. The data is drawn from an electronic archival database (*Metacritic*) from which I have constructed a dataset on the critical evaluation of 457 popular music albums released in 2004, and that were evaluated in 6,820 different reviews distributed over 57 different publications in the field of popular music criticism. In modeling the 'critical discourse space' as consisting of the three discourse vectors, I will use the ecological concept of "niche" to describe distinct locations within this space and will draw upon the notion of 'structural equivalence' (White, et al., 1976; DiMaggio, 1986) as a means of finding these discourse "niche" locations. Subsequently, I will investigate how the structure of 'niche positions' within this 'critical discourse space' intersects with material and social positions within the field of popular music. Here I will examine if the structure of discursive positions reinforces or articulates distinctions and divisions within the field of popular music at the level of material production and/or social characteristics of popular music artists. I will consider how these multiple levels of the popular music field interact to construct the institutional space of the contemporary popular music field as a dually ordered space of symbolic and material boundaries.

**1. Discourse structures and structural positions**

The intersection of symbolic and material structures has been a key assertion of Bourdieu's field theory. The metaphor of the 'field' is introduced by Bourdieu because it impels us to think relationally and to abandon the 'substantialist' mode of analysis. This emphasis on relations, Bourdieu adapts from structuralist thinking in which symbolic systems as language (Saussure), myths (Levi-Strauss) and texts (Barthes) are assumed to be constructed out of relations of difference and similarity. Symbolic elements derive their meaning from their position in a semiotic system and not from any substantialist essence. This fundamental assumption of relationality accords well with the use of formal modes of analysis to study these systems, which have therefore been a trademark of structuralist thinking. Bourdieu, however, also distances himself from 'purely' structuralist thinking which regards the principles of differentiation in symbolic systems as stemming only from the symbolic system itself. Symbolic systems are, according to Bourdieu, always tied

and embedded in practices and practical domains of activity. In his perspective, the organization of relations among symbolic elements is intimately connected with the material world: symbolic systems do not follow autonomous principles of differentiation but are embedded in and constructive of the forms of distinction in the material worlds in which they are used and located. Neither the symbolic nor the material is considered as taking analytic precedence and both relational structures are considered to be mutually constitutive. Material distinctions are imbued with meaning through symbolic distinctions, but symbolic distinctions can only make meaning because they are tied to material distinctions. Bourdieu, in other words, considers fields as *dual* structures of mutually constitutive relations among material and symbolic structures. This emphasis on dual structures has opened up the use of formal models of analysis of two-mode data sets in which symbolic and material structures can be simultaneously mapped using techniques such as correspondence analysis (favored by Bourdieu) and/or network techniques such as block modeling and lattice analysis (Mohr, 1998).

In his work on fields of cultural production, Bourdieu (1993) also emphasizes the dually constructed nature of these fields. This concerns both the way in which institutions, products, and actors within these fields are positioned in a relational space of positions and the way in which this space of positions is interpreted, made sense of, and constructed by subjectively meaningful distinction that are themselves meaningful because of the distinctions in the material structures which they 'articulate'. Bourdieu characterizes the principle of differentiation (and of the hierarchization) of cultural fields as following the law of an 'economic world reversed', in which the disavowal of economic interests in the narrow sense or an 'interest in disinterestedness' is the fundamental stake in the struggle over field specific capital. In the process of 'autonomization', cultural fields develop field-specific forms of differentiation that are in opposition to external (economic or political) principles of differentiation. The fundamental opposition structuring fields – on both the material and symbolic level – is the struggle between field internal and field external ways of differentiation, or in fields of cultural production, between 'art' and 'commerce' (Bourdieu, 1993). On the material level, cultural fields are, according to Bourdieu, partitioned in 'producer-oriented' subfields of restricted production, which forfeit direct commercial success in favor of field specific symbolic capital

(prestige, recognition, etc) and 'audience-oriented' subfields of large-scale production in which recognition among peers is sacrificed for audience success (Bourdieu, 1993). At the symbolic level, 'the opposition between 'commercial' and 'non-commercial' [which] reappears everywhere' is also 'the generative formula of most of the judgments which, in the theatre, cinema, painting or literature, claim to establish what is and what is not art' (Bourdieu, 1993: 82). This distinction is 'articulated' not only in the space of symbolic systems in the 'objective' sense of hierarchical relations among genres ('the space of position takings') but also in the 'subjective' symbolic sense of the meaning structures, the classification systems or 'principles of vision and division' used to make sense of material oppositions: 'the opposition which structures the whole space of cultural production [operates] simultaneously in people's minds, in the form of systems of classification and categories of perception' (Bourdieu, 1993: 86).

To investigate this homology in cultural fields, Bourdieu (1993: 87-96) points explicitly to the 'space of judgments' of critics. Critics are considered as important institutional actors within the (re)production of symbolic systems and the definition of the 'dominant principles of vision and division.' Critics are crucial for the symbolic production of art, for example, by making decisions on whether or not to review a particular cultural good, they implicitly acknowledge whether or not a cultural product is part of the art world they cover (See also Zuckerman, 1999 on 'identity assignment'). Also in their discursive constructions, the use of symbolic classifications such as light/heavy, effortless/laborious, rare/common, brilliant/dull are used to symbolically maintain the hierarchical distinction in the cultural field based on the 'inversion of the economic principle'. Like in the case of other institutional evaluators (Bourdieu, 1996: 30-32 on educational system), meaningful oppositions are used to create and recreate structural positions within the field. The interpretative dimensions of subjective classifications are viewed as interlinked with 'objective positions' within fields.

Critics themselves, however, are also placed in a homologous structured space of the *journalistic* field, reproducing in their 'subjective' classifications the space which structures the objects that they classify – the works discussed – and the space in which they themselves are placed – the journalistic space (Bourdieu, 1993: 87). Critics who are, for example, located at the 'autonomous' pole of the journalistic space will,

for example, have an 'elective affinity' for discussing products from the 'restricted' subfield. Moreover, they will use 'valuation regimes' (Crane, 1976) that express the same distance towards the market. They will evaluate an artist's work with other producers in mind, emphasizing artistic, autonomous criteria as "originality" or "innovativeness", which underline the position and contribution of a cultural work to the cultural field. Critics located at the 'heteronomous' pole of the journalistic field, would favor discussing production in the large-scale subfield and evaluate these as commercial products and with the audience in mind. They will evaluate products not only in terms of sales, but also with criteria that express the possibility of wide audience participation: "accessibility", "ease of enjoyment", etc (Cf. Radway, 1997). The difference can also be expressed in terms of the relative autonomy of the field towards the market as a distinction between a producer-oriented style of evaluation vs. an audience-oriented style of evaluation (Gans, 1974). Audience-oriented evaluation is more concerned with the question whether the audience will like it, rather than whether it should like it (Bielby, Moloney & Ngo, 2004).

According to Bourdieu, the mutually constitutive relation between the producer of discourse and the content of the discourse should therefore also be considered. The meaning and value of evaluations depend on who makes them, what they 'mean' by it, and where it is published. Both a product from the restricted and the large-scale subfield may be classified as "accessible", but an elite paper could use the term pejoratively whereas it might be used favorably by a 'popular' publication. As Bourdieu (1993: 93) argued in his analysis of theatre criticism, 'the meaning and value of words […] depends on the market in which they are uttered; […] the same sentence can take on opposite meanings when addressed to groups with opposite presuppositions.' Therefore, it is not enough to investigate only *how* products from different subfields are classified but also *who* does the classifying, and treat these as two interrelated elements.

Bourdieu's theory of cultural fields therefore points towards the study of how the symbolic system of critical discourses (in both the *who* and *how* sense) contributes and maintains the structural position within cultural fields of 'autonomous' vs. 'heteronomous' poles. The study of criticism has therefore been mostly focused on how in and through critical discourses the symbolic boundary of 'art' vs. 'non-art', 'serious

art' vs. 'commercial entertainment' has been constructed (Baumann, 2001; Corse & Griffin 1997; Regev, 1994; Shrum 1996; van Venrooij and Schmutz, 2009).

I will follow Bourdieu to a certain extent in this emphasis on how critical discourses (re)produce hierarchical distinctions based on the 'inversion of the economic principle' or 'distance from the market'. However, I also agree with some of Bourdieu's critics that his conceptualization of the dominant principle of differentiation in fields (on both the material as well as the symbolic level) leaves no room for (inductively) finding other types of structural boundaries and symbolic logics which might not be part of or derivative of the 'master' opposition between 'autonomy' and 'heteronomity' (Lamont, 1992: 181-185; Mohr, 2000b; Hall, 1992; McCall, 1992; Schulze, 1992; Margolis, 1999).[32] Bourdieu's operationalization of field space remains tied to a linear logic of having more or less (field internal or external) capital which orders all positions in space along the distribution of capital - either in its volume or composition (Mohr, 2000b). To construct a field space as a dual structure, Bourdieu limits the range of possibilities by defining from the outset the amount of capital as the most important distinction.

**2. Measuring positions within a relational discourse space**

Mohr (2000b, forthcoming) proposes a measurement strategy that combines the advantages of Bourdieu's 'constructivist' perspective on meanings as constitutive of field structures with the benefits of the 'topological' metaphor of space of social network analysis. This approach does not impose a linear metric or an external coordinate system to field spaces. Instead, it takes as its starting point the concrete relations of actors within fields without imposing an abstract metric in which they should be placed – the positions within space are therefore not 'forced' into a system of coordinates but finding possible (localized) structures *a posteriori* becomes the main goal. More specifically, Mohr combines the ecological concept of 'niches' with the social network concept of 'structural equivalence' – a combination first proposed by DiMaggio

[32] Weber (2001), for example, in his study of evaluative practices of book publishers in the US and France found that one of the US respondents routinely used an opposition between 'dry' and 'exciting' which did not seem to correspond to an 'art' vs. 'commerce' distinction but an 'internal' classification of a market-oriented, horizontal cultural logic.

(1986) – to inductively assess the niche positions of actors within a meaningfully ordered relational space. The emphasis on the duality between meaning and structure remains the key element of the analysis, but the tools to find these dualities are provided by the more inductively oriented social network tradition.

This measurement strategy would consist of the following steps. First, following the principle of fields as relative positioning of actors vis-à-vis each other, or, in other words, as constituting an environment for each other, data should be collected on the actors that make up the field under consideration. Second, according to the constructivist principle, the relative position of actors within a field should be based on *meaningful* similarities and differences. In contradistinction to how fields have been conceived of in, for example, social network analysis or neo-institutional approaches, the relation between actors should incorporate 'cultural logics' and not exclusively focus on structural relations among actors or resource dependency as in ecological theories. If meanings matter in the structuration of fields, as Bourdieu argues, these meanings should be directly incorporated in the measurement of field space and positions therein. This can be achieved by gathering data on how actors position themselves (as Mohr & Guerra-Pearson have proposed, see below) or are positioned (as I will propose) in cultural classification systems. The semiotic space of meaning structures should, in other words, be used to assess the relations among actors within fields. Third, the field can be seen as partitioned into 'niches' of 'structural equivalence' actors within the meaningfully ordered space. First developed in ecological theory, 'niches' have been used to explain how entities carve out particular resource spaces and can compete over similar domains when their 'niches' overlap. DiMaggio (1986) proposed the use of the social network concept of 'structural equivalence' to inductively find 'niches' from relational data on interaction between social actors. Structural equivalence, which was developed for the study of role positions in social networks, posits that actors will be considered as occupying similar positions if they have similar relations to all other actors within the field. This means that structurally equivalent actors do not have connections with each other, but have similar relational 'profiles'.[33] By taking into

[33] 'Teachers' as a role can, for example, be found because of their structurally equivalent relations to 'pupils' and vice versa.

account the relational profiles of actors in their semiotic meanings, structural equivalence can therefore also be used to partition actors into structurally equivalent 'discourse niches' within a meaningfully ordered field space. Fourthly, the structure of positions (the 'relations of relations') can then be assessed by examining how positions are ordered. One strategy is to study patterns of niche overlap (Mohr & Guerra-Pearson, forthcoming; Mohr & Lee, 2000; van Venrooij, 2009). Another strategy is to study how niches are embedded in multiple orderings of overlapping structures (Rawlings & Bourgeois, 2004).

This measurement strategy was applied by Mohr and Guerra-Pearson (forthcoming) to the study of the organizational field of welfare organizations in New York City as a meaningfully ordered space. For organizations that made up the field, they gathered data on how they positioned themselves in terms of three classification structures: how they define who they treat in terms of social statuses (women, soldiers, etc.), what specific 'problems' they see as wanting to solve ('fallen' women), and which techniques they perceive as providing help ('provide shelter', etc.). By coding combinations of three discourse 'vectors' - 'statuses' (S), 'techniques' (T), 'problems' (P) – or a TSP profile of the organizations - they arrive at a relational mapping of these organizations within an meaningfully ordered institutional space. By investigating this meaningfully ordered organizational space for structurally equivalent niches of organizations, they assess the specific and localized conflict of organizations in multiple dimensions.

Here I will use a similar measurement strategy to study the field of popular music as a meaningfully ordered space. I will map out how albums (and by way of the albums, the labels and artists that produce them) are positioned within a relational, semiotic discourse space, not through self-classification but through the classifications of criticism as the prime institution in cultural fields, as Bourdieu argued, to construct and maintain symbolic discourse systems.[34] I will model the meaningful structure of the popular music field as consisting of three discourse vectors: 'publications', 'aesthetic codes', and 'judgment'. By combining data on which publication reviews an album (P), which aesthetic codes are used in each review to classify the album (C) and the rating of each

[34] Self-classifications could be studied with other type of data, such as interviews, press kits, etc. This however falls outside the scope of this chapter

album (R), I can construct a detailed and multidimensional model of the discourse space in which producers of popular music are located and positioned. We may thus construct a 'symbolic space' which not only represents which publication reviews which albums but simultaneously includes *how* these publications review these albums, or how they symbolically classify and construct the symbolic meanings of these albums, and also include the negative, neutral or positive direction of this evaluation.

These three 'vectors' – publication space, aesthetic space, and rating space – are often considered to be related and mutually constitutive relations themselves. From a field theoretical perspective, it has been argued that the institutions within the space of journalism - the popular music publications in our case - are themselves differentiated in terms of the kind of aesthetic codes they use (see for example Bourdieu's analysis of the reception of left-bank and right-bank theatre[35]), which is also dependent on the type of popular music they discuss. Because of the assumed homologous structure in the space of critical positions and the structure of the space in popular music production, publications, which aim at the center of the consumer market (widely distributed newspapers such as *Los Angeles Times* or *the New York Times*, or entertainment-oriented magazines as *E! Online*) would favor logics of evaluation that emphasize 'accessibility', 'pleasure', and 'fun' (or what we earlier described in chapter 2 as the 'popular aesthetic'). Publications are placed in an aesthetic space and the aesthetic space is structured according to the logic of the journalistic space. More specifically, Bourdieu's field theory also specifically suggests how publications and aesthetic codes are mutually differentiated. Publications that are at the 'specialized' end of the spectrum, and that hold 'independent' value regimes, would be more likely to employ 'artistic' criteria (e.g. 'originality', 'innovativeness'), focused on evaluating the contribution of a cultural product to the development of the art form, or 'distinction' criteria (e.g. 'difficult', 'not easy to enjoy', 'requires investment', 'needs repeated listens') indicating that this is not music for everyone and requires specialized skills to

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[35] 'Thus the space of judgments on the theatre is homologous with the space of the newspapers for which they are produced and which disseminate them and also with the space of the theatres and plays about which they are formulated, these homologies and all the games they allow being made possible by the homology between each of these spaces and the space of the dominant class.' Bourdieu, 1993: 89.

decode. Moreover, even if publications use the same evaluative criteria, the meaning of particular aesthetic codes is dependent on the publication in which it appears. As Bourdieu (1993: 93) noticed, 'the meaning and value of words […] depends on the market in which they are uttered; […] the same sentence can take on opposite meanings when addressed to groups with opposite presuppositions.'

It is also probable that aesthetic codes and the rating vector are mutually related. One particular aesthetic code could perhaps have different evaluative connotations. For example, continuing the above example, 'accessibility' can be considered a positive aspect by a general audience-oriented publication, but when used in the context of 'specialized' magazine describing an album as 'accessible', it might have a derogatory connotation. It therefore does not suffice to know that a publication uses a particular aesthetic code; we should also consider whether this occurs in the context of a positive, neutral or negative review.

In a similar way, in addition to which publication has reviewed a particular album, one needs to know if this publication has reviewed the album positively or negatively. A negative review in a specialized magazine and a positive review in a general magazine would indicate a different position of an album than a positive review in a specialized magazine and a negative review in a general magazine. Just relying on the relation between publication and albums would fail to make the distinction between these two discourse positions. By implication such an approach would be unable to validly assess their positions in the discourse space.

Modeling a discourse space as consisting of these three discourse vectors provides the first step in our measurement strategy. This provides us with a relational mapping of popular music albums within a relational, semiotic space. By measuring niche positions in this space of structurally equivalent actors, we arrive at a map of the field of popular music, as it is constituted through the duality of culture and structure. Positions can be discerned in this space and next the structural organization of these positions can be assessed. In this paper, I will focus on how discourse positions map onto other types of structural positions within the field of popular music. What structures do the discourse positions 'signify'? What deeper logics can be discerned in the relational space of popular music? Do they 'articulate' material oppositions, or other types of

structural boundaries? What is, in other words, the meaning of different positions? Before I turn to the concrete analysis of these overlaps, I will discuss several arguments on how discourse positions and other types of structures overlap within the field of popular music.

## 3. Production and reception in popular music: symbolic and material structures

The formal analysis of the intersection between symbolic (in its institutional context as well as aesthetic content) and material boundaries within the field of popular music can help provide empirical evidence for substantive questions concerning the contemporary popular music field. First, it can address the question whether the material division between 'restricted' and 'large-scale' production in the field of popular music is recognized and symbolically legitimated by the symbolic field. Second, it can address the question of how the field of popular music criticism orders itself along structural boundaries different from the 'autonomous' vs. 'heteronomous' distinction.

The structural division between 'restricted' and 'large-scale' production as described by Bourdieu, or large 'generalist' and small 'specialist' firms studied in ecological theory, has been argued to also capture the structural organization of the contemporary popular music industry (Burnett, 1996; Dowd, 2004). The 'generalists' are the major companies that dominate the production, distribution as well as the marketplace. These major companies often provide mass products for a mass audience or a wide range of products for a wide audience. Their strategy is to aim at the center of the market. The 'specialists' are the various independent companies or industry minors that comprise a heterogeneous group of smaller firms and entrepreneurs. These smaller companies focus on a limited product or genre – aiming at a small niche. The popular music industry is, in other words, also characterized by a 'dual' structure between a core center and the periphery. In the current situation, four multinational music corporations dominate the global music industry but also thousands of small record labels specializing in specific genres and fulfilling specific market demands have blossomed in the periphery of the market.

However, the question could be asked whether the structural distinction between 'independents' and 'majors' is a symbolically pertinent distinction within the reception of popular music. Is the material

distinction ‘grounded’ in both the publication space and the sense-making activity of aesthetic evaluation? One reason why the boundary might have become less symbolically potent is that the boundaries itself between ‘independents’ and ‘majors’ have become less visible. Especially since the 1980s, a decentralized or ‘open system of production’ has developed in which large firms also cooperate, control or own smaller labels that operate semi-independently from the major companies. These semi-autonomous subsidiaries, operating under a separate name and identity, have been a major force in increasing the genre diversity in the popular music field and responsible for the success of aesthetic innovations such as ‘new wave’, ‘rap music’ and in the 1990s ‘alternative rock’ (Lopes, 1992; Dowd, 2004; Burnett, 1996). The blurring of the institutional boundary between ‘independent’ and ‘majors’ might also make the ‘identity assignment’ by audiences and critics of artists as a ‘major’ or ‘independent’ artist more difficult – not only in the application of these categories but also in recognizing the aesthetic ‘codes’ and conventions previously associated with these production categories.

Peterson (1997) has argued that two aesthetic codes - the ‘soft shell’ and ‘hard core’ style seem to describe the aesthetic conventions of the products produced by either the ‘generalists’ or the ‘specialists’ organizations. The ‘hard core’ style makes claims to ‘authenticity’ and the ‘soft shell’ tends towards soft, accessible and non-challenging music stripped of its ‘rough’ edges. According to Peterson, the two sets of conventions have a dialectic relation; genres go through cycles of a more predominant ‘soft shell’ style characterized by more ‘slick’, ‘overproduced’ conventions to periods in which the roots of a genre are re-appropriated and a more simple, stark aesthetic is preferred that signals ‘authenticity’ and a removal from the commercial tendencies of the ‘soft shell’ style. This description of cycles is reminiscent of Bourdieu’s argument of recurring struggles in the field of cultural production between the old and the new guard, who continuously recreate the fundamental oppositions of cultural fields between ‘art’ and ‘commerce’ by employing the strategy of being ‘more pious than the pope.’ The opposition between ‘soft shell’ and ‘hard core’ also appears in Peterson’s study of the industry level changes, which contributed to the replacement of the jazz aesthetic (soft shell) and the appearance of the rock aesthetic in 1955 that can be described as ‘hard core’ style (Peterson & Berger,

1975). The opposition in conventional structure between ‘soft’ and ‘hard’, which also translate into the use of different evaluative repertoires by audiences, producers and critics, would in other words be tied to the production context of large scale or restricted producers; it is seen as a dialectic between producers who remove the more ‘rough’ elements of music to make it more accessible for the center of the market and counter-reactions by small-scale producers to make the music more ‘authentic’, and ‘rough’ so as to appeal to ‘specialist’ consumers who can use their taste in specialized music as a kind of ‘subcultural’ capital. Peterson thus views the ‘soft shell’/’hard core’ oppositions as a symbolic distinction which maps onto two different production contexts. Hierarchical distinctions between ‘serious’ popular music and ‘commercial’ popular music also seem to map onto the production context of ‘generalist’ vs. ‘specialist’ music companies.

However, Regev (2002) has argued that the opposition of conventional structures in commercial ‘soft shell’ and autonomous ‘hard core’ styles has weakened (Regev, 2002). Regev signals a process of ‘pop-rockization’ in which the opposition between the ‘heavy, hard, and difficult’ and the ‘light, soft and easy’ has become increasingly fuzzy. The hierarchical distinction between authentic ‘rock’ and ‘commercial’ pop has weakened due to the increased borrowing of aesthetic conventions and codes in both directions. For example, the commercial and artistic success of ‘alternative rock’ in the 1990s, previously confined to an underground network of college radio stations, independent record companies and specialist retail stores, did not only have the effect of major labels acknowledging the commercial potential of ‘independent’ music, increasingly signing artists from the ‘independent’ field, and thereby weakening the institutional boundaries. It also introduced the ‘hard core’ aesthetic to ‘pop’ groups by including ‘heavy’, electric guitars. From the other direction, the commercialization of ‘alternative rock’ also included the adaptation of ‘pop’ conventions as the use of melody, and ‘sing along’ qualities. Regev therefore sees the ‘soft shell’ and ‘hard core’ style not as mutually exclusive but as increasingly converging into the development of a ‘pop-rock aesthetic’.

As previously argued, the symbolic space consists of both the producers and the content of aesthetic discourse on popular music. The field of popular music criticism – as the distinct positions of publications – should therefore also be considered. In their historical study of the

Anglo-Saxon field of popular music criticism, Lindberg et al. (2005: 259-262) argue that music criticism, especially in the US, had adopted the notion in their aesthetic ideology 'that the authentic and the artificial were not in fact separable' and aesthetic judgments had become relative: 'at one moment the Spice Girls are praised for their pop superficiality and silly images while in the next Jeff Buckley is lauded for his deep insight into the human soul.' In the period starting from 1984-2004, the space of publications also tended not to be polarized, whereby publications did not situate themselves at either the autonomous or heteronomous pole in terms of who and how they discussed artists from both ends of the production field, but positioned themselves in the middle of the field. Although Lindberg et al. provide no explanation, this 'crowding' of music publications towards the center of the market, could have been the result of increasing deterioration of the market for magazines at the turn of the century after a period of growth in the 1980s and 90s. However, concentration does not have to exclude diversity (Cf. Carroll & Swaminathan, 2000). Whereas some of the major music magazines such as *Rolling Stone* or *Spin*, and due to their broad readership this also presumably applies to general newspapers such as the *Los Angeles Times* and the *New York Times*, are described as aiming for the center of the market, specialization in targeting niche markets has also been a major trend in the music criticism field (Lindberg et al., 2005: 303). On the one hand, numerous online music magazines such as *Pitchfork, Dusted Magazine, Outburn* have seen the light of day in recent years, possibly adopting more specialized tastes, and (re)establishing the boundary between 'mainstream' and 'independent' and providing coverage of the periphery of the market.[36] In other words, the field of music publications might itself been partitioned into 'generalists' and 'specialists'. On the other hand, as Lindberg et al. describe, there has also been a development of 'specialized' music magazines within the 'traditional' music magazine industry, especially in the case of music magazines targeted at hip-hop culture and African American culture such as *The Source, Vibe* and *Urb.*

[36] In their 'self-classification', these online music magazines often pit themselves against "the mainstream", as in the case of Outburn Magazine: "Outburn Magazine is the leader of the new music revolution. From hard and heavy to subversive and sublime, Outburn is at the forefront of everything exciting in music today. Rock, metal, punk, hardcore, indie music, and more, Outburn is edgier and always ahead of the mainstream."

These have created, or more accurately, recreated at the level of the popular music journalism field (Cf. Binder, 1993), the racial boundary that has been an important boundary within the field of popular music, in terms of production (Roy, 2004; Dowd, 2003) and consumption (Bryson, 1996). The racial boundary had, of course, been a pertinent boundary within the 'white' popular music press in the sense of the neglected 'other', the 'prehistory' of rock music, or the negative foil against which the 'artistic' status of white rock music could be constructed. The development of a 'black' music press (and 'white' critics sympathetic to hip-hop music), however, has meant that the symbolic production of meaning within popular music, could have developed a more autonomous representation of the value of black music and perhaps even a re-evaluation of traditional aesthetic hierarchies (Shusterman, 1992).

The development of specific niche publications, divided against racial lines, within the space of music publications, is one reason why I will address the question of how the field of popular music criticism orders itself along structural boundaries different from the 'autonomous' vs. 'heteronomous' distinction. Another reason lies at the level of the aesthetic codes used by critics to evaluate popular music, which have not only been interpreted as relating to the production context as Peterson argued but also to social distinctions such as gender and race. McLeod (2002), for example, has interpreted the aesthetic evaluative oppositions mobilized by critics as a fundamental 'articulation' of gender relations in popular music. In an analysis of reviews of Pazz and Jop winners, McLeod identifies a number of dimensions that appear to describe the gendered nature of the 'rock' aesthetic. Because of the 'masculine domination' within the field of popular music, and most particularly in the music press, the positive evaluation of music is drawing upon 'masculine' connotations, in for example emphasizing 'aggressive intensity', 'rawness' or dismissing music for its (female) 'softness', 'sweetness' or 'sentimentality'.[37] DeNora (2002), Frith and McRobbie

[37] McLeod also describes other dimensions. Critics, for example, react negatively towards blandness: 'being bland, boring, or middle-of-the-road flies in the face of what many critics value about rock 'n' roll, which is a sense of rebellion or, at lest excitement.' Simplicity is also often valued according to McLeod. Lack of excessive aural adornment, avoidance of 'fluffy', 'overproduced' sounds is associated with rawness. Other dimensions which critics favor are 'personal expression' (honesty, sincerity, speaking from the heart), 'seriousness' and 'intelligence'. Vapidity or stupidity is seen as in contrast to seriousness and not favored. Traditionalism is

(1978), Clawson (1999) also describe how gender is used to articulate and make sense of musical characteristics and distinctions. In a similar way, race has also provided discursive oppositions for the classification and evaluation of music such as 'sexual/non-sexual', 'body/mind', 'rhythm/melody' (Frith, 1996: 123-144). The critical matrix of perception and evaluation might therefore also be used to symbolically construct gender and race relations within the field of popular music.

Although studies have therefore pointed towards the complex interactions between the production and reception of popular music, how aesthetic language and codes could potentially map onto social and material structures within the field and how these relate to music journalism as a space of publications, these studies have mostly relied on historical overviews and anecdotal evidence, and formal analysis of these interactions has not been attempted.

## 4. Data and methods

The data used in this chapter are drawn from an electronic archive of critical reviews in popular music, *Metacritic.* Similar to electronic archives in film such as *Rotten Tomatoes*, *Metacritic* archives critical reviews for a large number of popular music albums. Currently it contains popular music reviews starting in 2000. The *Metacritic* archive covers more than 50 publications, ranging from nationally distributed US (and some UK) newspapers, such as the *Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Times*, magazines such as *Village Voice*, *Rolling Stone*, *Vibe*, (the UK based) *NME,* internet magazines such as *Pitchforck*. *Metacritic* includes reviews from albums that have been reviewed in at least three of the publications they monitor for reviews. Currently, it is the most extensive and most comprehensive database of popular music reviews.[38]

For each reviewed album, *Metacritic* lists information relevant for our purposes. First, it offers general identifying information such as the name of the artist, the name of the album, the music label that published the album, the date of release, and the names of the publications that have

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favored in the sense of having a connection with rock 'n' roll's past. Authenticity is favored and commercialism is derided. Originality, experimentation, inventiveness, and musical rule breaking are traits associated with critically favored artists. The formulaic and cliché are abhorred as well as sweet sentimentalism, which according to McLeod is an especially gendered evaluative dimension.

[38] *Metacritic* describes their inclusion policy of publications as focused on 'well-regarded' and 'influential' publications in the industry that publish reviews regularly.

reviewed the album. Second, it includes, for each review, a rating score on a homogenized rating scale of 0 -100. This score either translates the rating scale used by the publication itself, or, in the absence of a rating scale (as for example a 0- 5 star system), *Metacritic* editors code the rating based on the overall impression of the review. Third, it lists a central quote from each review that summarizes the main content of the review. If possible, *Metacritic* also provides a link to the complete review in the newspaper's own archive or the website.

Through a semi-automated procedure, I gathered the previously described data for popular music albums released in the year 2004. My database consists of 457 popular music albums, reviewed in 57 different publications, in a total number of 6,820 reviews. For all 6,820 reviews, I extracted from the archive the main quote from the review as well as the rating score given by *Metacritic* (based on the actual reviews). Ideally I would have wanted to gather the complete review, but many of the links to websites proved to be no longer correct and therefore I decided to include only the main quote from the review as a means of measuring the symbolic classification. Relying on a singular quote (often consisting of no more than one or two sentences) perhaps does not completely represent the symbolic classification of an album by a publication, but through comparison of a number of reviews that were available I felt confident that *Metacritic* had indeed selected the main semantic content of the reviews.[39] The reliance on quotes does, however, have methodological advantages. Non-evaluative information has already been removed from reviews, and the remaining quotes are relatively short and condensed expressions of the reviewers' value judgments. Although the reliance on quotes from reviews is a limitation of this study, it therefore also facilitates the inclusion of a large number of reviews, needed for a field approach to the study of symbolic systems.

[39] Baumann (2002) also investigates 'quotes' from reviews, but these are selected as part of an advertisement.

**Table 1: Aesthetic codes and frequency (100 most used across albums)**

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| is_compelling | 157 | is_soft | 56 | is_subtle | 42 | is_noise | 35 |
| is_catchy | 116 | is_ambitious | 55 | is_charming | 42 | is_uneven | 35 |
| is_moody | 101 | is_worthwhile | 55 | is_replicating_themselves | 42 | is_daring | 35 |
| is_strange | 98 | is_dark | 53 | is_raw | 42 | is_rewarding | 35 |
| is_beautiful | 97 | is_fun | 52 | is_complex | 42 | is_hot | 34 |
| is_consistent | 97 | is_warm | 52 | is_familiar | 42 | is_not_catchy | 34 |
| is_unique | 96 | is_slick | 52 | is_not_innovative | 41 | have_ideas | 34 |
| is_innovative | 93 | is_brilliant | 52 | is_moving | 41 | is_straightforward | 33 |
| is_intelligent | 93 | is_conventional | 52 | is_sweet | 41 | is_expanding | 33 |
| is_boring | 86 | is_humorous | 51 | is_immediate | 41 | is_not_consistent | 33 |
| is_skilled | 80 | is_powerful | 51 | is_angry | 41 | is_potent | 33 |
| is_fantastic | 77 | is_authentic | 50 | is_rich | 40 | is_gem | 32 |
| is_graceful | 76 | is_surprising | 50 | is_not_compelling | 40 | is_lush | 32 |
| has_energy | 72 | is_worth_repeatedlistening | 50 | is_rough | 40 | is_varied | 32 |
| has_talent | 72 | is_experimental | 49 | is_not_progressing | 39 | is_classic_sound | 31 |
| is_fine | 71 | is_expressive | 48 | is_danceable | 39 | is_pretentious | 31 |
| is_emotional | 69 | is_depth | 47 | is_enjoyable | 37 | is_remarkable | 31 |
| is_fresh | 68 | is_accessible | 47 | has_passion | 37 | is_focused | 31 |
| is_lovely | 67 | is_exciting | 46 | is_new | 37 | is_spare | 31 |
| is_strong | 65 | is_derivative | 45 | is_formulaic | 37 | is_accomplishment | 31 |
| is_solid | 64 | is_simplicity | 44 | is_intense | 37 | is_memorable | 30 |
| is_progressing | 60 | is_maturing | 44 | is_appealing | 36 | has_dynamism | 30 |
| is_crafted | 60 | is_interesting | 44 | is_honest | 36 | is_not_new | 30 |
| is_impressive | 59 | is_distinctive | 44 | is_tight | 35 | is_thrilling | 30 |
| is_confident | 57 | is_perfect | 44 | is_masterwork | 35 | is_satifying | 30 |

The quotes from reviews were inductively coded by identifying text segments that have evaluative and descriptive meaning – adjectives, adverbs, metaphors or expressions which consist of the repertoire of evaluation in the field of popular music. I made a distinction between positive and negative use of a code. So for example ‘this is not authentic’ is coded as ‘is_not_authentic’. In total, I identified 2,280 individual codes. I selected the codes which had a raw frequency of more than 10 and if the negation of a particular code was not within the selected codes I added these codes as well – to have both the positive and negative

invocation of a code in the data (if no negative/positive was found then of course these will be absent). This resulted in the inclusion of 595 codes. Table 1 lists the 100 most used aesthetic codes.

To model the discourse space, the measurement strategy consists of the following steps. First, I construct a discourse profile for each individual album consisting of which publications have reviewed the album (P), which aesthetic codes were used to classify the album (C), and which rating an album received (R). There are 57 publications that an album can be reviewed by. There are 595 codes that can possibly be applied to an album. I then recoded the rating scale of *Metacritic* to three values: positive, neutral and negative. The profile of an album can then be constructed by taking the combination of PCR (57 x 595 x 3 = 101,745), PC (57 x 595 = 33,915), PR (57 x 3 = 171), CR (595 x 3 = 1,785) and the individual components of the combination P (57), C (595), R (3). In principle if all combinations and sub-combinations do in fact occur the profile length would be 138,271 in total. Only 17,790 of these combinations (13%) actually occur. By taking these combinations into account a detailed discourse profile can be constructed for each album. For example, an album could be reviewed by the *LA Times,* which classifies the album as 'boring' and 'not innovative', and gives it a negative rating.[40] The profile of this album would consist of PCR combinations (P_LAT * C_is_boring * R_negative), (P_LAT * C_is_not_innovative * R_negative). This would then also include the sub-combinations PC (P_LAT * C_is_boring), (P_LAT * C_is_not_innovative); the PR sub-combinations (P_LAT * R_negative); the CR combinations (C_is_boring * R_negative), (C_is_not_innovative * R_negative), and the individual P, C and R values (P_LAT), (C_is_boring), (C_is_not_innovative), (R_negative).

Second, these profiles for the 457 albums are used to create a relational space in which all 457 albums are placed vis-à-vis each other. If album B is reviewed by the *New York Times*, and classified by this publication as 'boring' and 'not innovative' in a negative review, this album would have dissimilar scores from the album in the previous example on the PCR, PC, PR combinations and the individual P score, but similar scores on the CR combinations, and the individual C and R

[40] This example is for illustrative purposes only. Most albums are, of course, reviewed by more than 1 publication, making the string of combinations much longer.

scores. This would then capture that both albums are reviewed negatively, that they both are negatively evaluated using the same aesthetic codes, but that they do not have the same position in the publication space. Calculating a Jaccard similarity index of all albums by all other albums using these profiles, gives us a measure of how 'close' or 'distant' each pair of albums is, based on how much overlap there is in their respective profiles relative to the combined breadth of their profiles. By submitting this 457 x 457 album by album matrix to a multidimensional scaling analysis, these 457 albums are placed in a n-dimensional Euclidian space. Through this analysis, albums with similar profiles will be placed close together and the original 17,790 dimensions of the raw matrix has been reduced to n-dimensions – simplifying the discourse space to a n-dimensional space in which all albums are positioned. By investigating the scree plot of stress values, we have settled on a 6 dimensional solution that has a stress value of 1.73 which is acceptable considering the large and sparse input matrix. The coordinates of the MDS can subsequently be submitted to hierarchical cluster analysis which, by relaxing a threshold, groups albums which have similar 'niche' positions in the discourse space – or in other words, have structurally equivalent positions in terms of their discourse profiles.

The niche structure of albums within the critical discourse space can then be used to investigate homologies between symbolic and material structures. I first coded the music labels of the albums as 'major' or 'independent'. To establish whether a music label could be coded as an 'independent' and not as a subsidiary (before or in 2004) of the major companies EMI, Warner Music Company, Universal Music Company and Sony BMG, several secondary sources were consulted. The membership lists of the *American Association of Independent Music* or the *Association of Independent Music* provided one source of information. Information on ownership relations were also gathered from the website www.riaaradar.com which lists the relations among labels. As 'major' were classified labels that were subsidiaries or owned by the major record companies. Indie labels distributed by majors, as indicated by combinations such as Sub Pop/Geffen, I coded as indie/major combination.[41] Second, I coded the race and gender of the performer. The

[41] Additionally, I also gathered the credits of all 457 albums from *All Music Guide*, and created a collaboration network to map out the relational position of albums through a social network analysis of collaborators (Uzzi & Spiro, 2005). This

race of performers was coded as white, black, latin or mixed race in the case of groups with members of different races. The gender was coded as male, female, or mixed gender. This was established through consultation of diverse sources, including *All Music Guide*, *Last.FM* and/or individual artist pages if the preceding sources did not contain any information on the particular artist. Third, I coded whether the album was a debut album or not.

## 5. Analysis

*Aesthetic codes in the discourse of popular music criticism*

Before I analyze the duality between symbolic and material spaces, I will start with separate analyses of the aesthetic codes.

Table 1 lists the 100 most frequently used codes in the discourse. Part of these codes might (preliminarily) be classified as 'audience-oriented' vs. 'producer-oriented'. For example, the most frequently used code ('compelling') emphasizes the experience of listening to music whereas codes such as 'innovative', 'unique', 'derivative', 'conventional', 'formulaic' take a 'maker-orientation' and evaluate music in relation to the field of possibilities. 'Compelling' (and synonyms as 'engrossing', 'engaging', etc.) evaluate the possibility of what Adorno described as the experiential mode of 'concentrated listening'.[42] 'Catchy' also describes a listening experience whereby the 'hook appeal' of songs is described, or how the music can 'draw the listener in'. Similar to codes such as 'accessible', 'immediate' and 'difficult', 'catchy' describes a logic of access, whereby the possibility of audience participation is evaluated. 'Thrilling', 'exciting', 'moving', 'boring' are also descriptions of what Johnson (2004: 254) calls the 'music as moving force' metaphor in which the agency of the music in affecting the listener (or absence thereof) are described and evaluated. Similarly, reviewers point to the

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collaboration network showed a center-periphery structure, which to a large extent was aligned with the major-indie classification, indicating that the albums by 'major' artists are made by frequently cooperating actors, and the albums produced by 'indie' labels form a distinct region of the material field space of popular music. This partioning was however not used in subsequent analyses since it did not add to the major-independent classification.

[42] According to Adorno, 'concentrated listening' was the characteristic mode of experience for 'serious music', which he contrasted with the 'deconcentrated' mode of listening within popular music.

'actor making' possibilities of popular music (DeNora, 2000) when they describe music as 'soothing' (not in table) or 'calming'. A 'logic of refinement' can also be discerned whereby the 'unrefined' ('spare', 'rough', 'raw') and the 'refined' ('slick', 'smooth', or 'graceful', 'charming', 'fine') is described. A logic of authenticity could also be found in which moral characteristics are described as in the case of 'honest, 'authentic' as well as a logic of ('intelligent', 'silly', 'stupid').

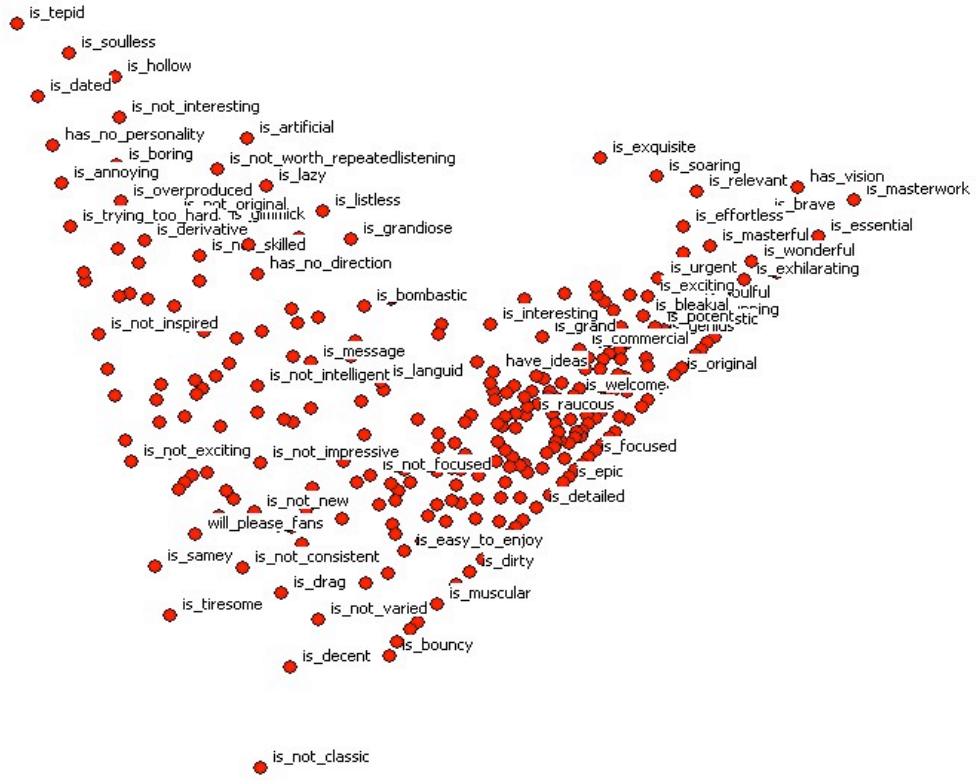


**Figure 1: Aesthetic codes in evaluative context**

The use of different codes varies according to the evaluative direction of the review in which they appear. Figure 1 makes use of the relative percentages of occurrence of codes in positive, neutral or negative reviews to plot the codes in terms of their use in evaluative contexts. 'Masterwork', 'essential', 'effortless', 'masterful' on the top right are, for example, codes that predominantly occur in positive reviews. Neutral reviews at the bottom are characterized by codes such as 'is not classic', 'decent', 'bouncy', 'is easy to enjoy'. In negative reviews – the left top - codes are used such as 'tepid', 'soulless', 'is trying too

hard', 'boring', 'tired', 'awkward', or 'has no personality'. Positive reviews seem to contain codes associated with both an audience-oriented style of reviewing such as 'sing along', 'accessible', 'danceable', 'exciting', 'seductive', 'immediate', 'irresistible' as well as maker-oriented codes as 'unique', 'uncompromising', 'not conventional', 'not predictable', 'original', 'consistent', which indicates that in the logic of evaluation both dimensions are considered to be important and not mutually exclusive. The strong opposition between 'effortless' as a predominantly positive code and 'trying too hard' as a negative code seems to imply that reviewers value a 'sense of ease' (Bourdieu, 1984).

*Mapping symbolic and material structures*

To study whether and how the symbolic and material boundaries overlap in the field of popular music, how the different levels of the field are embedded within each other, I first clustered albums within the critical discourse space in structurally equivalent niches by submitting the coordinates of the 6-dimensional MDS solution, which positions the albums vis-à-vis each other in an Euclidian space, to a 'complete link' hierarchical clustering algorithm. This algorithm groups entities into subsets so that entities within subsets are relatively similar to each other. The 'conservative' complete link method groups entities into subsets in which all pairs are similar below some threshold value. By relaxing the threshold value or the similarity measure between all pairs, hierarchical clusters are created. In practice, the 'complete link' method gives more stable and homogenous clusters than alternative methods (Wasserman & Faust, 1994: 381).

If the niche clusters in discourse space are partitioned according to other types of structures (such as production context, race, gender, etc.), we would expect the cross-tabulation of clusters with other types of structures to show significant difference from random distribution. Since cluster solutions are hierarchical and there are no formal ways of establishing the 'right' number of clusters, I first investigated the cross-tabulations of different cluster solutions with the boundary of production context (indie vs. major labels), racial categories (white vs. black artists), and gender (male vs. female artists). Table 2 lists the chi-square values for cross-tabulations for different cluster solutions.

**Table 2: Cross-tabulation Discourse Niches and Material Boundaries**

| Clusters | Indie/Major | | Race | | Gender | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | $\chi^2$=25.551 | p=0.000 | $\chi^2$=0.622 | p=0.43 | $\chi^2$=10.819 | p=0.001 |
| 3 | $\chi^2$=27.241 | p=0.000 | $\chi^2$=1.799 | p=0.407 | $\chi^2$=11.013 | p=0.004 |
| 4 | $\chi^2$=30.196 | p=0.000 | $\chi^2$=1.837 | p=0.607 | $\chi^2$=11.195 | p=0.011 |
| 5 | $\chi^2$=31.972 | p=0.000 | $\chi^2$=29.961 | p=0.000 | $\chi^2$=11.196 | p=0.024 |
| 6 | $\chi^2$=36.935 | p=0.000 | $\chi^2$=32.960 | p=0.000 | $\chi^2$=17.534 | p=0.004 |
| 7 | $\chi^2$=43.603 | p=0.000 | $\chi^2$=33.717 | p=0.000 | $\chi^2$=17.706 | p=0.007 |
| 8 | $\chi^2$=71.947 | p=0.000 | $\chi^2$=60.893 | p=0.000 | $\chi^2$=18.725 | p=0.009 |
| 9 | $\chi^2$=71.948 | p=0.000 | $\chi^2$=60.957 | p=0.000 | $\chi^2$=20.177 | p=0.01 |
| 10 | $\chi^2$=83.155 | p=0.000 | $\chi^2$=63.452 | p=0.000 | $\chi^2$=28.573 | p=0.001 |
| 11 | $\chi^2$=85.222 | p=0.000 | $\chi^2$=63.588 | p=0.000 | $\chi^2$=32.647 | p=0.000 |
| 12 | $\chi^2$=85.252 | p=0.000 | $\chi^2$=85.877 | p=0.000 | $\chi^2$=33.125 | p=0.001 |

Note: Mixed race, mixed gender, indie/major combinations excluded.

From the partitioning from 2 to 12 distinct niche positions or clusters, I find significant differences of observed from expected values, indicating that positions in discourse space overlap with the production context on multiple partition levels. Apparently, albums produced by either independent or major companies also have their own niches within the critical discourse space. The same seems to apply to gender boundaries within the field of popular music. From the 'rough' partitioning of the discourse space in two niche positions down to a more finely grained partitioning of 12 distinct discourse niches, the distribution of female and male artists seems to overlap with these positions in discourse space. Female and male artists are positioned differently in the discourse space suggesting that publications and the way that they evaluate popular music are partitioned in terms of who they discuss in terms of gender. Racial boundaries only start to segregate the field of popular music discourse at more specific levels, when at least 5 different niches are identified.

The cross-tabs can tell us that the discourse structure has distinct niches that correspond with both divisions in production context, gender and race boundaries. However, to assess how these multiple levels construct each other, we can apply a multiple correspondence analysis. Correspondence analysis summarizes the association between a set of categorical values by locating both the rows and the columns of a contingency table in a two-dimensional space. Multiple correspondence analysis applies this method to more than two variables. This gives us the

means to describe how positions within the discourse space correspond to the other types of boundaries by simultaneously projecting these variables onto a two-dimensional space. For this analysis, I have taken the 12 cluster solution identified by the hierarchical cluster analysis. Table A in appendix C lists these clusters and their members.[43] The MCA simultaneously plots the 12 clusters in relation to three other main variables – race, gender, production context (mixed were excluded).

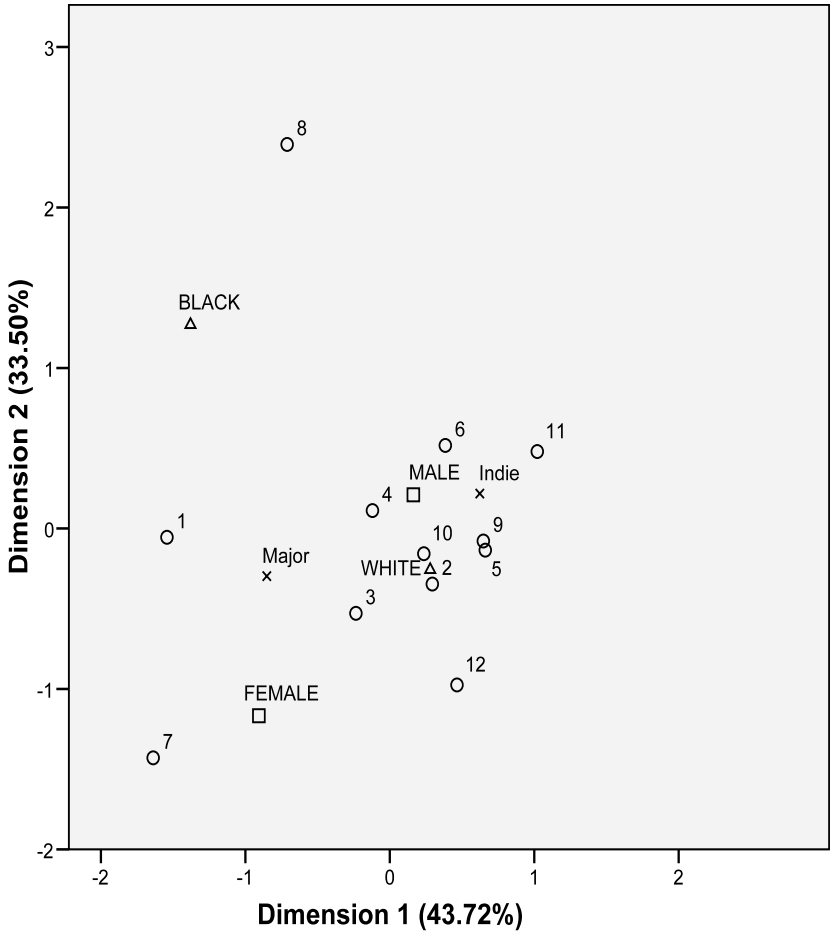


**Figure 2: MCA plot Discourse Niches, Gender, Race and Production Context**

The correspondence analysis shows how the major-indie distinction structures the first dimensions into niche positions on the right side of the graph (most characteristically niche 5, 9 and 11) which are predominantly

[43] I identify the albums with the names of the artists; some artists have released multiple albums in 2004 and therefore can appear more than once.

artists produced by ‘independent’ labels and to the left side the niche discourse positions which overlap with major labels (1, 7 and 8). The production context and niche clusters contribute the most to the first dimension (discrimination measures: production 0.531; discourse niches 0.685; race 0.386; gender 0.148) indicating that these two structures are spread out over the first dimensions to a relatively large extent. The discourse niches also spread across the secondary dimension (discrimination measures: race 0.326; production 0.065; gender 0.245 and discourse niches 0.704) together with gender and race. The horizontal dimension could therefore be labeled as the production axis whereas the vertical axis distinguishes the ‘unmarked’ (white – male) from the ‘marked’ social categories (female – black). Apparently, the dual space of publications and the space of aesthetic codes is primarily structured according the ‘restricted’ – ‘large scale’ opposition. The ‘marked-unmarked’ distinction, however, introduces a secondary distinction whereby female and black artists have their own distinct niche space in the critical discourse space. The ‘marked’ categories also tend to overlap with the ‘large-scale’ subfield of production. This suggests that clusters 8 and 1 are not only marked by their social characteristics but also as the ‘other’ in terms of their position in the field of production. However, it should also be noted that the discourse clusters do not all seem to overlap to a large extent with the material and social boundaries included in this analysis. Clusters 2, 3, 4 and 10 are, for example, close to the middle of the graph and they might differentiate themselves along other lines not included in this analysis.

Do these homologies also occur when only considering the aesthetic logic of popular music criticism or the aesthetic discourse space without incorporating the publications and rating vector? A similar procedure can be followed to address this question. Again each album can be seen as having a particular aesthetic profile consisting of the codes used by reviewers. A similarity matrix of albums by albums can be calculated by using the *Jaccard* measure that can then be submitted to a multidimensional scaling in which structurally equivalent niches can be identified using hierarchical cluster analysis. Table 3 lists the different structurally equivalent niches in aesthetic discourse space and shows the results of chi-square tests of correspondence with material and social boundaries. Here it can be discerned that the overlap with gender becomes much weaker. For the clusters 2 to 12 no overlap can be found

with gender categories. The aesthetic discourse space, however, does again show significant partitioning in terms of indie-major oppositions and racial categories. Even at the most basic partitioning of two broad niches in aesthetic discourse space, the overlap with race remains significant. The indie-major and racial structure therefore seems to be embedded within the aesthetic language used by reviewers, but female and male artists are not discussed using different kinds of aesthetic language.

**Table 3: Cross-tabulation Aesthetic Discourse Niches and Material Boundaries**

| Clusters | Indie/Major | | Race | | Gender | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | $\chi^2$=0.645 | p=0.422 | $\chi^2$=4.929 | p=0.026 | $\chi^2$=0.344 | p=0.557 |
| 3 | $\chi^2$=1.401 | p=0.496 | $\chi^2$=9.423 | p=0.009 | $\chi^2$=0.915 | p=0.633 |
| 4 | $\chi^2$=3.075 | p=0.380 | $\chi^2$=11.849 | p=0.008 | $\chi^2$=1.340 | p=0.720 |
| 5 | $\chi^2$=16.781 | p=0.002 | $\chi^2$=11.858 | p=0.018 | $\chi^2$=1.858 | p=0.762 |
| 6 | $\chi^2$=22.880 | p=0.000 | $\chi^2$=11.862 | p=0.037 | $\chi^2$=2.231 | p=0.816 |
| 7 | $\chi^2$=26.664 | p=0.000 | $\chi^2$=15.824 | p=0.015 | $\chi^2$=5.267 | p=0.510 |
| 8 | $\chi^2$=27.461 | p=0.000 | $\chi^2$=17.312 | p=0.015 | $\chi^2$=5.277 | p=0.626 |
| 9 | $\chi^2$=27.981 | p=0.000 | $\chi^2$=22.711 | p=0.004 | $\chi^2$=6.345 | p=0.609 |
| 10 | $\chi^2$=30.543 | p=0.000 | $\chi^2$=24.203 | p=0.004 | $\chi^2$=6.602 | p=0.679 |
| 11 | $\chi^2$=30.557 | p=0.000 | $\chi^2$=27.315 | p=0.002 | $\chi^2$=9.511 | p=0.484 |
| 12 | $\chi^2$=31.304 | p=0.001 | $\chi^2$=28.006 | p=0.003 | $\chi^2$=10.218 | p=0.511 |

*The publication space*

The importance of the indie-major distinction can also be seen from table 4 in which I have listed the publications in the data set according to the percentage of reviews dedicated to either indie or major artists.

**Table 4 Percentage of reviews dedicated to indie/major albums**

| Publication | % Indie | % Major |
|---|---|---|
| Vibe | 0,22 | 0,78 |
| Los Angeles Times | 0,23 | 0,77 |
| The New York Times | 0,28 | 0,72 |
| E! Online | 0,29 | 0,71 |
| Dot Music | 0,33 | 0,67 |
| Village Voice (Consumer Guide) | 0,35 | 0,65 |
| Rolling Stone | 0,41 | 0,59 |
| Austin Chronicle | 0,42 | 0,58 |
| Entertainment Weekly | 0,42 | 0,58 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| New York Magazine | 0,42 | 0,58 |
| The Guardian | 0,42 | 0,58 |
| Launch.com | 0,43 | 0,57 |
| Drawer B | 0,43 | 0,57 |
| RapReviews.com | 0,47 | 0,53 |
| Blender | 0,47 | 0,53 |
| Amazon.com | 0,47 | 0,53 |
| Village Voice | 0,48 | 0,52 |
| Billboard | 0,49 | 0,51 |
| Nude As The News | 0,50 | 0,50 |
| Playlouder | 0,52 | 0,48 |
| Q Magazine | 0,55 | 0,45 |
| New Musical Express | 0,55 | 0,45 |
| Flak Magazine | 0,56 | 0,44 |
| The Onion (A.V. Club) | 0,56 | 0,44 |
| Filter | 0,56 | 0,44 |
| Spin | 0,56 | 0,44 |
| All Music Guide | 0,59 | 0,41 |
| ShakingThrough.net | 0,59 | 0,41 |
| Drowned In Sound | 0,59 | 0,41 |
| Uncut | 0,60 | 0,40 |
| Mojo | 0,61 | 0,39 |
| PopMatters | 0,63 | 0,37 |
| Paste Magazine | 0,64 | 0,36 |
| Stylus Magazine | 0,65 | 0,35 |
| Logo | 0,65 | 0,35 |
| Urb | 0,66 | 0,34 |
| Lost At Sea | 0,67 | 0,33 |
| cokemachineglow | 0,68 | 0,32 |
| Pitchfork | 0,69 | 0,31 |
| No Ripcord | 0,70 | 0,30 |
| Under The Radar | 0,71 | 0,29 |
| Tiny Mix Tapes | 0,71 | 0,29 |
| Neumu.net | 0,71 | 0,29 |
| Alternative Press | 0,71 | 0,29 |
| Trouser Press | 0,75 | 0,25 |
| Planet | 0,75 | 0,25 |
| The Wire | 0,78 | 0,22 |
| Delusions of Adequacy | 0,78 | 0,22 |
| Splendid | 0,79 | 0,21 |
| Magnet | 0,83 | 0,17 |
| Junkmedia | 0,85 | 0,15 |
| Almost Cool | 0,87 | 0,13 |
| Dusted Magazine | 0,89 | 0,11 |
| musicOMH.com | 1,00 | 0,00 |
| CultureDose.net | 1,00 | 0,00 |
| Prefix Magazine | 1,00 | 0,00 |
| Outburn | 1,00 | 0,00 |

On the top of the table the publications are located that predominantly discuss 'major' artists. The hip-hop oriented publication *Vibe*, as well as the general outlets *Los Angeles Times,* the *New York Times* and *E! Online* discuss for more than 70% major artists. This is congruent with findings on the 'popular' character of the *Los Angeles Times* and the *New York Times* (van Venrooij, 2009). These two newspapers therefore do not seem to position themselves at the autonomous pole of the field – in terms of which type of artists to review but have a more 'mainstream' character.

Table 4 only presents a rudimentary positioning of publications vis-à-vis each other. The measurement strategy as employed in the previous analyses can however also be used to visualize the relational positioning of publications vis-à-vis each other in terms of more detailed relational positioning. The 'positions' of publications can also be seen as consisting of *who* they review (which artists) and how they review them (which codes and which rating). A similar procedure can therefore be followed as described above, but now creating 'profiles' of publications in terms of (combinations of) an artist, aesthetic code and rating vector. The artist's space is composed of the 457 artists, the aesthetic space of the 595 codes, and the rating space of the categories positive, neutral and negative evaluation. Again by creating ACR vector profiles (and their subcombinations), publications can be situated in relation to each other and a visualization of the journalistic field can be created. I removed 9 publications that contributed less than 25 reviews to the dataset and could therefore create outlier positions. Using a Jaccard measure of similarity, and submitting the resulting 48 x 48 publication by publication matrix to multidimensional scaling analysis, publications that choose to discuss similar artists in similar ways will be positioned close together in the field and publications that discuss dissimilar artists and/or give different ratings and use different codes will be further apart.[44] A 6-dimensional MDS solution was found to have a sufficiently low stress value (0.114) and the Euclidian coordinates of this solution were submitted to a complete link hierarchical cluster solution, resulting in the hierarchical classification structure of figure 3.

[44] The total vector space would consist of 457x3 + 457 x 595 + 595 x 3 + 457 x 595 x 3 + 457 + 595 + 3 = 1091871 dimensions. Only 24854 (2%) of all these combinations actually occur.

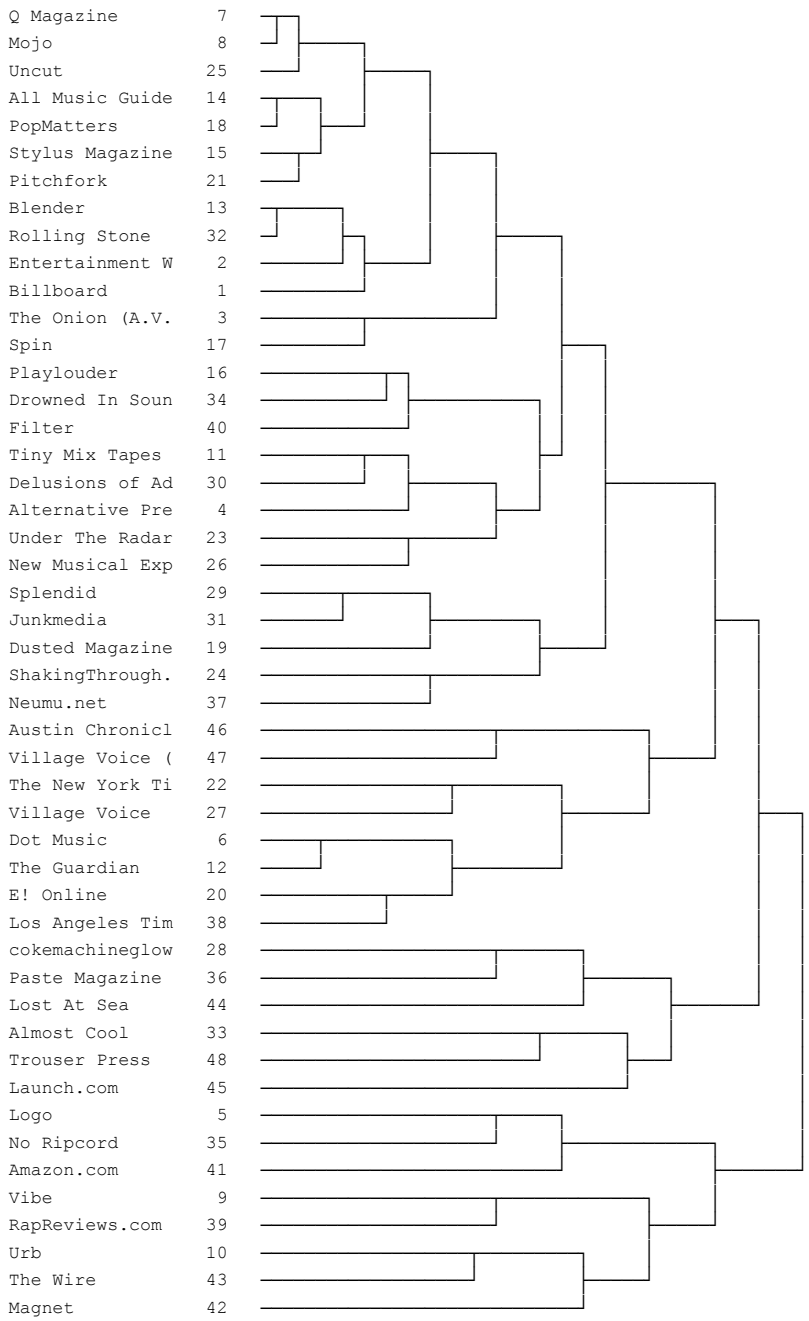


**Figure 3: HCA of Publication Space**

The HCA groups together – by relaxing a threshold – publications which have similar positions within the publication space. As can be seen, there is one group of publications that clusters together at relatively low levels of dissimilarity, indicating that they are relatively close together in terms of their profiles. These publications include, among others, *Rolling Stone, Blender, Entertainment Weekly, Billboard, Q*

*Magazine, Uncut and Mojo*. These publications tend to show high consensus on who and how to review. These are also some of the more established and larger music magazines (*Rolling Stone* and *Blender*) and could be termed the 'generalist' music critics. These also cluster together with 'general' online music review sites such as *All Music Guide, Pitchfork, PopMatters, Stylus Magazine* to form a large cluster of 11 publications. Whereas these 11 publications cluster together, at approximately the same cut-off point the rest of the publication space shows only small clusters of 2/3 publications, of which the largest is a cluster of *The Guardian, Dot Music, E! Online* and *the Los Angeles Times*. One could therefore argue that the publication space is partitioned in a densely overlapping space of 'general' publications and a more dispersed space in which there is less consensus on who and how to review popular music artists. Publications outside of the center seem to have more 'disparate' reviewing profiles suggesting that they target more special interest tastes or niche markets. At the lower end of the HCA plot, we find, for example, the hip-hop oriented *Vibe* and *Urb*, and *The Wire* that distinguishes itself by focusing on experimental music, hip-hop and electronic music.

Interestingly enough, the two major US newspapers, the *Los Angeles Times* and the *New York Times* hold slightly different positions in the publication space. The *LA Times* clusters together with the 'entertainment' oriented *E! Online,* which is also located in Los Angeles and the *New York Times* is relatively close to *Village Voice,* also located in New York, suggesting that a geographical distinction perhaps plays through in which type of artists the *LA Times* and the *New York Times* discuss. It could also suggest a distinction between a more entertainment-oriented approach by the *LA Times* (since it is close to *E! Online*) and a more artistic approach by the *New York Times* (which the closeness to *Village Voice* suggests). However, when relaxing the threshold, the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times* eventually also form a cluster together, along with *the Guardian, E! Online, Dot Music, Village Voice, Village Voice Consumer Guide* (of veteran critic Christgau), *Austin Chronicle*.

To conclude, the space of publications could be described as partitioned into the 'general' and 'specialist' publications. It seems that the major music magazines are close together in their choice of which artists to review, and in their aesthetic evaluation of these artists. The

tendency of other (online) magazines towards specialization is also visible in this graph – in contrast to the center, these publications seem to hold more distinct positions in who and how they review, and do not overlap to a large extent with each other or with the center publications.

**Conclusion**

This chapter aimed to formally analyze the duality between symbolic and material space in the field of popular music. I argued that studies of cultural fields should take into account the intersection between meaning structures and material structure. I proposed a way to incorporate and directly measure the intersection of production and reception structures by modeling a relational 'critical discourse space' that consists of three discourse vectors (publications, aesthetic codes and ratings) and in which cultural products can be seen to have a distinct location. By analyzing the structure of this discourse space in terms of multiple orders of boundaries – as production contexts, social boundaries – one might assess whether and how these boundaries overlap.

My analysis of this duality in the contemporary field of popular music shows the independent-major distinction to be a symbolically potent boundary, which is reproduced and maintained in the discourse structures of popular music critics. The identities of these two types of organizational forms still seem to be accepted and maintained (Zuckerman & Kim, 2003). The symbolic production of popular music appears to be partitioned along these material lines of cultural production. Social boundaries of race and gender are also reproduced in the discourse structure of popular music, but seem of secondary importance to the production logic.

This analysis therefore contributes to the growing convergence between field theoretical perspectives and ecological studies on boundary maintenance in industry structures. As pointed out by Lizardo (2009), field theory and ecological theory are converging on different points. First, both theories employ an image of space, emphasizing how organizations are positioned vis-à-vis each other in a 'field' or 'ecology'. Second, they both discern similar organizational forms as developing from partitioning mechanisms in these spaces, namely a distinction between restricted producers and large-scale producers in field theory and specialist and generalist organizations in ecological theory. Third, they both acknowledge the importance of the meaning structures of audiences

(or proto-audiences as critics) in constructing and maintaining the form segregating mechanisms between restricted/large-scale or specialist/generalist organizations (Hsu, 2006b; Zuckerman & Kim, 2003). This study has shown that the evaluative practices of critics indeed contribute to the boundary maintenance between different production logics.

# CHAPTER 6

## Conclusions, contributions and unanswered questions

This study has investigated how popular music critics evaluate and classify popular music. The goal has been to answer questions concerning possible cross-national differences in evaluative repertoires and classification of popular music artists, changes in the meaning of genre categories and relations between material and symbolic structures. In Chapter 2, I found popular music reviewers in American, German and Dutch elite newspapers to differ in their use of evaluative repertoires, employing 'popular aesthetic' and 'high art aesthetic' criteria to varying degrees. In the Netherlands and the United States, where 'high culture' seems a less stable and pertinent symbolic category than in German society, reviewers of popular music also seem less inclined to draw exclusively upon evaluative criteria of the high arts.

In Chapter 3, I investigated cross-national differences in the classificatory practices of US and Dutch popular music reviewers using the 'mentions technique' developed by Rosengren. The 'frames of reference' of US and Dutch reviewers appeared to be relatively similar in terms of the types of artists they include (favoring 'critically' and 'professionally' recognized artists), but US reviewers draw upon popular artists to a larger extent than their Dutch colleagues. Both US and Dutch reviewers make use of a racial social logic in their classifications. The homology between musical and social categories of race (the 'racialization' of popular music), which has a long history in the United States, seems to have become a taken for granted institution within the field of popular music; it continues to structure the symbolic sense-making of actors in countries outside of the US as well, even though macro-level societal differences would suggest otherwise. In Chapter 4, I studied the aesthetic classification system of *Los Angeles Times* reviewers at various points in time to assess whether boundaries between genre categories have remained stable or have changed. My analysis shows that the boundaries within the meaning system of genres have eroded. In particular, the distinction between two exemplary categories – 'pop' and 'rock' – that have been argued to vary in status and hierarchical position, has become less symbolically significant to *Los Angeles Times* reviewers. Whereas in 1985-86, critics seemed to assign more distinct meanings to

different genres, in 2004-05 the meanings of genres have become fuzzy. This suggests that the waning of hierarchical structures and boundary erosion also characterizes the classification systems *within* popular music, or at least within the popular music field as it is perceived by critics writing for a widely distributed newspaper like the *Los Angeles Times*. Finally, in Chapter 5, I analyzed the homology between material and symbolic positions within the field of popular music. Here I proposed a formal model of a 'critical discourse space' as consisting of three discourse vectors: a publication vector, an aesthetic code vector, and a rating vector. Combining these three vectors, I argued, affords a modeling of this 'critical discourse space' as a relational semiotic space in which the producers (in terms of the labels and the artists) can be seen as occupying positions. This allows for the study of the mutual constitutive nature of symbolic and material structures. My analysis of this duality shows symbolic boundaries to overlap with the production logic of 'independent' and 'major' record companies. The internal structure of the popular music field in its duality of symbolic and material structures thus shows the almost universal tendency of cultural fields to develop internal partitioning of 'restricted' and 'large scale' fields. The analysis also has implications for the classification of the US newspapers that were studied in the previous chapters. Both the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times* can be characterized as 'general' newspapers in terms of their relative position in the critical discourse space. As the analysis of the previous chapters show, they report relatively frequently on commercial artists, use commercial artists within their frame of reference, combine popular and artistic discourses, and perceive weak genre boundaries. It is tempting to define the taste patterns of these newspapers as 'omnivorous' (Peterson and Simkus, 1992), or at least as not drawing a strong vertical art-commerce boundary when discussing popular music. The symbolic articulation of strong boundaries within the field is probably more often found in specialized publications whose 'voices', however, might not carry as far as the symbolically dominant voices of widely distributed newspapers such as the *Los Angeles Times* and the *New York Times*.

*Cultural (de)hierarchization and legitmation*

This study aimed to contribute to the study of several issues and themes, which might be further explored in various ways. First, it addressed processes of (de)hierarchization and legitimation. It has been a widely

voiced claim that the traditional boundary of high vs. popular culture has weakened during the late twentieth century. The status hierarchy between classical music and popular music has, for example, been shifting in favor of popular music (Janssen et al., 2009; Schmutz et al., forthcoming). Although this erosion of status distinctions points to a collapse of traditional cultural hierarchies, the status increase of formerly popular cultural forms has been accompanied by the creation of field specific hierarchies *within* popular cultural forms (Laermans, 1992; Regev, 1994; Baumann, 2001). Cultural hierarchies are thus argued to continue to exist as consecrating institutions within popular cultural fields have erected hierarchical distinctions by defining canons and making distinctions between 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' forms of popular music, film, thrillers, etc. In other words, the claim of a general collapse of cultural hierarchies has been argued to overlook the creation of new hierarchies within popular cultural forms as well as the different trajectories through which popular cultural forms can seek legitimacy: legitimating strategies within popular cultural forms can try to adapt to the model of high culture or can attack the legitimacy of high culture and revert the principles of distinction by 'emancipating' the values of popular cultural forms (Laermans, 1992; Frith, 1987, 1996; Schulze, 1992).

One of the main contributions of this study has been to argue and study empirically that different strategies of legitimation within a popular cultural form can actually be related to the overall classification system and strength of the high/popular distinction and therefore may account for possible cross-national differences in legitimating popular cultural forms. The strength of the wider boundary of high vs. popular culture within a particular national context can, in other words, suggest different strategies that consecrating institutions *within* popular cultural fields choose. My aim and contribution has therefore been to argue and empirically study the relation between legitimation strategies within popular cultural fields and the broader cultural classification system in which these struggles for legitimacy occur. I thereby show how studies dealing with changes and differences in cultural classification system can possibly be combined with the study of field specific processes of hierarchization. This study has, however, been limited to one particular cultural genre – popular music. To further corroborate the cross-national differences I have found, and the possible relation between cultural classification systems and differences in legitimating strategies, this analysis could be extended by

including other popular cultural forms such as film, thrillers, television. Are similar cross-national patterns visible in the way these genres are evaluated in different countries?

Another way in which this topic can be expanded is by considering how the social characteristics and trajectories of critics themselves affect the evaluation and classification of popular music. Bourdieu for example identifies social classes and class fractions that are most likely to invest in not-yet-legitimate arts and views these choices of cultural investment as expressions of an underlying relationship towards the educational system and its consecrated, legitimate culture. Bourdieu considers the 'new petit bourgeoisie' – to which popular music journalists belong - as the main driving force behind the 'legitimation' and/or 'intellectualization' of not-yet-legitimate arts. Their social trajectories and resulting relationship with legitimate culture, which is itself a result of the expansion of the educational system, inclines them to create distinct cultural markets with their own consecrating agencies (Bourdieu, 1984; cf. Featherstone, 1987). This 'Bourdieuan' perspective thus draws attention to the social background and trajectories of the 'legitimators' of popular music, i.e. the pop critics. Although many have mentioned the significance of the social background (i.e. their middle-class origin and relatively high degree of higher education) of legitimators of popular music in one way or the other (Vulliamy, 1977; Frith & Horne, 1987; Ross 1989; Stratton, 1989; Negus, 1996; Jones, 2002; Santoro, 2002), this topic has remained understudied.[45]

*Genre trajectories*

A related theme to which this study aimed to contribute is the topic of genre trajectories or how cultural genres develop over time and go through distinct phases. The study of genre trajectories has been a constant theme in the work of Richard Peterson (1972, 1997, 2008). Peterson (1972), for example, studied the transition of jazz from a 'folk' music, sustained by specific social communities, to a form of 'pop music' produced and distributed by corporations and mass distribution, to a 'fine art' embedded within conservatories, select audiences of connoisseurs and critical discourse. Peterson (1978, 1997, 2001) also investigated the

[45] Lopes (2000: 165-167) mentions the lack of empirical evidence on this matter as well and furthermore argues that in the case of jazz music legitimation was not related to changes in class background.

development of country music, tracing the institutional development of 'country music' as a distinct musical field and the mechanisms that contributed to the erosion and/or maintenance of the distinctive identity of the field from 'popular music' and 'art' and 'folk' music (1997: 221-233; 2001). He assessed the trajectory of country music by looking at the development of both the organizational and institutional structure of the field and the musical conventions of the genre – and how these related to the conventions of, for example, 'pop music'.

The study of genre trajectories was extended by Lena and Peterson (2008) who described common trajectories across different musical forms and common genre types. Based on an analysis of secondary sources within the academic and popular press, they constructed ideal types of four distinct genre types – Avant-garde, Scene-based, Industry-based, and Traditionalist – and three distinct trajectories originating in either Avant-garde, Scene-based or Industry-based type of genres. Lena and Peterson were therefore able to go beyond the study of individual genres and investigated how genres are similar or different in terms of characteristics such as their organizational form, scale, and locus of music production, the codification of performance conventions, the role of technology, press coverage, etc.

My study also engages the study of genre trajectories. How genres go through distinct phases has been studied in Chapter 4 by mapping the relations between genres in terms of the meanings attributed to genres by critics. Changes in position of individual genres within – what I termed – an aesthetic discourse space can be a way to determine how the conventional structure of genres changes over time. Also by assessing the overlap in meanings of genres, I was able to address the issue of 'identity maintenance' of different genres and whether or not they are viewed as having distinct meanings. Although I have found a general tendency towards boundary erosion between genres in the perception of critics, the analysis also shows how genres such as 'funk' (and to a lesser extent 'country') also seem to be able to maintain or re-establish a separate identity from other genres. My analysis therefore hints at the dialectical process described by Peterson. Genres may go through cycles of becoming more similar to other genres, being 'sanitized' of their distinctive identity, and in reaction to this process of homogenization a counter-dynamic arises whereby the identity of the genre is reestablished.

Moreover, my research also explicitly studies the relations between genres as a whole. As Lena and Peterson rightfully note, most studies on popular music genres focus on one particular genre and do not attempt to construct a theoretical or empirical analysis of changes in classificatory systems. However, what separates my study from Peterson's and Lena's work on genre trajectories is that it focuses more directly on the symbolic production of genre distinctions through discursive constructions *as symbolic constructions*. Whereas Lena and Peterson, for example, draw upon the symbolic work of academics and popular press in describing the meaning and trajectory of genres as a *source* of data on the meaning of genres, I approach the meaning constructions of critics in the press as a *topic* in itself (as ethnomethodologists would say). Critics are argued to contribute to the symbolic production of genres and their discourses therefore should – to a certain extent – be approached as providing a semi-autonomous perspective on how genres develop and change.

The attention to the discourse constructions of critics in establishing genre boundaries and meanings has however also somewhat restricted the analysis to the symbolic production of genre boundaries in critical discourses. Although I have proposed a relation between changes in critics' perceptions of genre boundaries and structural changes within the music industry as a possible factor contributing to the creation and/or erosion of boundaries, other factors such as the organizational form, the institutions that sustain a genre, the type of audience, etc. could be included as well. Do the genres which critics perceive as increasingly similar also increasingly share those kinds of characteristics? In other words, do the *Los Angeles Times* reviewers in 2004-2005 perceive 'hip-hop' and 'R&B' and 'pop' and 'rock' as similar because of increased cooperation between artists within these genres, connections through producers, record companies, performance venues, etc.? A more direct and detailed incorporation of the material dimension of genre systems would be one possible way to extend this research on genre trajectories over time, which could illuminate the relation between discursive perception/evaluation and institutional structures, separating and constructing genre worlds.

*The sociological study of aesthetics*

My study also aims to contribute to the sociological study of aesthetic judgment. The study of aesthetics is mostly seen as a philosophical and

humanistic object of study. Philosophers construct aesthetic systems and doctrines for defining what is and is not 'good' or 'beautiful' art. The study of aesthetics – because of the association with the philosophical discipline and the idea that value judgments fall outside of the scope of sociological analysis – has made sociologists wary of engaging in questions concerning the meaning and value of artistic work (Cf. Bielby & Bielby, 2004). However, as argued by Becker (1982), philosophical aesthetic systems are part of the 'art world' and contribute to the demarcation of the boundaries of art worlds. Becker treats aesthetic judgments as an activity rather than a body of doctrine in which not only philosophers but also critics, artists and other members of art worlds are engaged. The sociological approach to studying aesthetics is therefore to address how actors within artistic fields perform this 'boundary work'. Just as 'boundary work' and 'evaluative repertoires' can be studied objectively by taking the construction of meaning as the topic of sociological investigation (Lamont, 1992; Bourdieu, 1984; Griswold, 1987; Baumann, 2001) 'aesthetic boundary work' by actors within cultural fields can be studied from a sociological perspective. This is the approach I followed in this study, but such a study of aesthetic 'meaning making' by *critics* may not even go far enough. Although it engages with the question of cultural content and meaning on the level of the perception of artistic works, the analysis of art works themselves would bring us even closer to incorporating the aesthetic dimension within the sociology of art.

In the study of art in general and music in particular, there has been an disciplinary distinction between those who focus on 'the text', the content of artistic works, and those (sociologists in particular) who take a contextual approach, studying the production, distribution and reception of artistic products. However, within the sociology of art and culture, a small but growing body of work has developed, that analyzes both the aesthetic content of art works and its social context in a systematic and methodological rigorous manner. These studies avoid the 'interpretative fallacies' of textual readings of art works that either 'overburden' works with meanings or produce unique and singular readings that are not amendable to reliable analysis. Moreover, these studies also appear able to connect the meaning of art works to their social context of production and reception. Dowd (1992) and Cerulo (1984) have, for example, provided systematic analyses of the musical characteristics of popular

music songs and national anthems. Inspired by literary theory, Ekelund and Borjesson (2004) have analyzed aesthetic elements such as the narrative structure of the novels, elements of time and space, the characteristics of protagonists, etc. within a large corpus of American debut novels. Martin (2000) provided a systematic mathematical modeling of the totemic logic of relations between jobs and animals in a children's book, Richard Scarry's *What Do People Do All Day*. Lena (2006) has studied changes in the content of rap lyrics in relation to production contexts. Here, the same holds as I argue below for the analysis of the content of discourses of aesthetic judgment. Meanings can be systematically measured, mapped and studied – also within artistic works – and related to the social contexts in which they function.

*Formal analysis of discourse structures*

One of the methodological aims of the current study was to contribute to the formal analysis of discourse structures. In recent years, quantitatively oriented scholars have shown a growing interest in studying and measuring cultural elements such as symbols, meanings, texts, frames, narratives and cognitive schema's. With respect to the analysis of texts and discourses, the introduction and exploration of two main concepts – relationality and duality – have moved traditional quantitative content analysis away from just 'counting words' (Roberts, 1989) and closer to the substantive interests and theoretical assumptions of cultural analysis. On the one hand, formally analyzing discourse structures as relational systems of similarities and differences between cultural elements can both draw upon and speak to cultural analysis inspired by semiotic theory and structuralism. It also can retain the rich detail of thick description within cultural analysis by not reducing meanings to predefined abstract codes or categories. On the other hand, by using formal 'pattern preserving' techniques to discover cultural meaning structures it concomitantly accords with the systematic and rigorous methodological *habitus* of quantitatively oriented social scientists who otherwise might feel uncomfortable to study discourses.

In particular, I aimed to show the possibilities of the formal analysis of relational meaning structures in the study of aesthetic

classification systems, which – as I have argued – is a relational concept and therefore begs to be analyzed as such.[46]

Duality has been another key concept in the formal analysis of meaning structures and one that points towards the mutual constitutive nature of different levels of social reality. From the conceptual viewpoint, dualities between agency and structure, symbolic and material, culture and structure have been central notions in practice theories of scholars such as Giddens, Bourdieu, Bauman, Douglas, Ortner and others. Methodologically, the formal analysis of two-mode data sets has been proposed as a way to study the co-constitutive duality of multiple domains of social reality (Breiger, 2000; Mohr, 1998; Mohr & White, 2008) and has offered concrete, empirical ways to study these long lasting intellectual problems within sociology. For discourse analysis, the notion of duality provides a way to simultaneously map 'content' and 'context', 'internal' and 'external' structures, and therefore to resist either the cultural bias of studying discourses as autonomous structures or the reduction of cultural meaning to 'nothing more' than indications of social structures or dependent variables of more 'hard' social structures (Alexander, 2003). On the contrary, it emphasizes how cultural meanings are constituted by and constitutive of social locations and positions.

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[46] The specific approach to content analysis in these latter chapters could be described as a 'corpus based' approach in which the homomorphic reduction of the meaning system within the whole text corpus is attempted. This relational analysis is often hailed as offering an alternative to the assumptions of General Linear Reality (Abbott, 1988; Franzosi & Mohr, 1997; DiMaggio, 1994) within regression analysis as it privileges elective affinity rather than causality. This 'corpus based' approach can however be distinguished from the 'case based' approach in chapter 2 in which the appearance of 'codes' are seen as 'attributes' of the cases and traditional statistical analysis can be performed. As argued by Perrin (2004), regression analysis can be appropriate when case-oriented comparative questions are asked, or in other words, when variance is to be explained, between in this case, reviews from different countries.

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# APPENDIX A: reviews used in chapter 2

| Album | Artist | Newspaper(s) | Date(s) |
|---|---|---|---|
| A Corazon Abierto | Alejandro Fernández | Los Angeles Times | 18 Oct 2004 |
| Abattoir Blues / Lyre of Orpheus | Nick Cave & the Bad Seeds | Frankfurter Allgemeine | 3 Oct 2004 |
| Afternoon | Eleni Mandell | Sueddeutsche Zeitung | 17 Feb 2005 |
| All Things To You | The Cucumbers | New York Times | 8 Nov 2004 |
| Always outnumbered, never outgunned | The Prodigy | Los Angeles Times | 4 Oct 2004 |
| Ambient Works | Brian Eno | New York Times | 18 Oct 2004 |
| Antics | Interpol | Los Angeles Times | 11 Oct 2004 |
| Around the Sun | R.E.M. | Los Angeles Times | 4 Oct2004 |
| | | Frankfurter Allgemeine | 31 Oct 2004 |
| Artist's choice: Emmylou Harris | Emmylou Harris | Los Angeles Times | 1 Nov 2004 |
| Artist's choice: Norah Jones | Norah Jones | Los Angeles Times | 1 Nov 2004 |
| Arty Party | Schwarz | NRC Handelsblad | 21 Oct 2004 |
| Astronaut | Duran Duran | Los Angeles Times | 1 Nov 2004 |
| The Au Harem d'Archimede | Ricardo Villalobos | Volkskrant | 22 Oct 2004 |
| Auténtico | Gilberto Santa Rosa | Los Angeles Times | 18 Oct 2004 |
| Back | Richard Cameron | NRC Handelsblad | 3 Oct 2004 |
| Backwards into the Backwoods | Stian Carstensen | Frankfurter Allgemeine | 17 Oct 2004 |
| Baden-Baden | Michaela Melián | Sueddeutsche Zeitung | 16 Dec 2004 |
| Be As You Are | Kenny Chesney | New York Times | 25 Jan 2005 |
| Be Here | Keith Urban | Los Angeles Times | 11 Oct 2004 |
| Before the Poison | Marianne Faithfull | Volkskrant | 29 Oct 2004 |
| | | NRC Handelsblad | 16 Oct 2004 |
| | | New York Times | 25 Jan 2005 |
| Blondie | Ada | New York Times | 25 Oct 2004 |
| Brian Wilson presents Smile | Brian Wilson | New York Times | 3 Oct 2004 |
| Buena Vista Social Club presents: Manuel Guajiro Mirabal | Manuel Guajiro Mirabal | Volkskrant | 29 Oct 2004 |
| Burned Mind | Wolf Eyes | Sueddeutsche Zeitung | 20 Jan 2005 |
| The Chronicles of Life and Death | Good Charlotte | Los Angeles Times | 11 Oct 2004 |
| Color Series | Donnacha Costello | New York Times | 31 Dec 2004 |
| Con Mucho Swing | Roberto Torres & the Cha Cha Cha All Stars | Los Angeles Times | 18 Oct 2004 |
| The Concretes | The Concretes | Volkskrant | 15 Oct 2004 |
| Country Got Soul, volume 2 | Various artists | Volkskrant | 22 Oct 2004 |
| Crosby & Nash | Crosby & Nash | Frankfurter Allgemeine | 17 Oct 2004 |
| Crunk Juice | Lil Jon | New York Times | 29 Nov 2004 |
| Dear Heather | Leonard Cohen | Los Angeles Times | 1 Nov 2004 |
| | | Volkskrant | 29 Oct 2004 |
| Déjà Voodoo | Gov't Mule | NRC Handelsblad | 30 Oct 2004 |
| Déjà Vu All Over Again | John Fogerty | Frankfurter Allgemeine | 17 Oct 2004 |
| | | NRC Handelsblad | 10 Oct 2004 |
| The Delivery Man | Elvis Costello | NRC Handelsblad | 2 Oct 2004 |
| deSol | deSol | New York Times | 8 Nov 2004 |
| Different Days | L'Altra | New York Times | 25 Jan 2005 |
| Dirty Laundry: The Soul of Black Country | Various Artists | Sueddeutsche Zeitung | 18 Nov 2004 |
| Dusty | Fred J. Eaglesmith | Volkskrant | 22 Oct 2004 |
| Ebba | Jakönigja | Sueddeutsche Zeitung | 17 Feb 2005 |
| El Rock de Mi Pueblo | Carlos Vives | Los Angeles Times | 4 Oct 2004 |
| El Viaje a Ninguna Parte | Enrique Bunbury | Los Angeles Times | 11 Oct 2004 |
| Everything I've Got in My Pocket | Minnie Driver | Frankfurter Allgemeine | 6 Oct 2004 |

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|---|---|---|---|
| Frances the Mute | Mars Volta | Sueddeutsche Zeitung | 17 Mar 2005 |
| From a Basement on the Hill | Elliott Smith | Los Angeles Times | 11 Oct 2004 |
| | | Volkskrant | 22 Oct 2004 |
| | | NRC Handelsblad | 17 Oct 2004 |
| Futures | Jimmy Eat World | Los Angeles Times | 1 Nov 2004 |
| | | New York Times | 9 Nov 2004 |
| Genius Loves Company | Ray Charles | NRC Handelsblad | 14 Oct 2004 |
| Godfather Buried Alive | Shyne | NRC Handelsblad | 3 Oct 2004 |
| Golddiggas Headnodders & Pholk Songs | The Beautiful South | NRC Handelsblad | 31 Oct 2004 |
| Greatest Hits | Goldie Lookin Chain | NRC Handelsblad | 31 Oct 2004 |
| Greatest Hits | Thin Lizzy | Frankfurter Allgemeine | 10 Oct 2004 |
| Grey Will Fade | Charlotte Hatherley | Sueddeutsche Zeitung | 17 Feb 2005 |
| Guerilla City | Guerilla Black | Los Angeles Times | 4 Oct 2004 |
| Guitar Fo | Sékou Bembya Diabaté | Volkskrant | 29 Oct 2004 |
| Has Been | William Shatner | Volkskrant | 22 Oct 2004 |
| Hurricane Bar | Mando Diao | Volkskrant | 15 Oct 2004 |
| ID | Kasabian | NRC Handelsblad | 28 Oct 2004 |
| Ladies' Love Oracle | Grant Lee Phillips | Volkskrant | 22 Oct 2004 |
| The Late Great Daniel Johnston | Various artists | Volkskrant | 15 Oct 2004 |
| Let There Be Morning | The Perishers | New York Times | 31 Dec 2004 |
| Let's Bottle Bohemia | The Thrills | Los Angeles Times | 4 Oct 2004 |
| | | NRC Handelsblad | 12 Oct 2004 |
| | | Sueddeutsche Zeitung | 17 Feb 2005 |
| Leviathan | Mastodon | New York Times | 28 Dec 2004 |
| Live at Budokan | Dream Theater | Sueddeutsche Zeitung | 18 Nov 2004 |
| London Calling | The Clash | New York Times | 18 Oct 2004 |
| Lonely Runs Both Ways | Alison Krauss & Union Station | Sueddeutsche Zeitung | 16 Dec 2004 |
| | | New York Times | 6 Dec 2004 |
| Loupita | Kristofer Åström | Frankfurter Allgemeine | 3 Oct 2004 |
| Manzanita | Mai Doi Todd | New York Times | 25 Jan 2005 |
| Mapou | René Lacaille | Volkskrant | 29 Oct 2004 |
| Memento | Booka Shade | Sueddeutsche Zeitung | 18 Nov 2004 |
| Mi Sangre | Juanes | Los Angeles Times | 18 Oct 2004 |
| Miami / The Las Vegas Story | The Gun Club | Volkskrant | 22 Oct 2004 |
| Miracle: A Celebration of New Life | Celine Dion | Los Angeles Times | 1 Nov 2004 |
| Nancy Sinatra | Nancy Sinatra | Volkskrant | 29 Oct 2004 |
| | | Frankfurter Allgemeine | 20 Oct 2004 |
| Nashville | Josh Rouse | Sueddeutsche Zeitung | 17 Feb 2005 |
| Night Sessions | Chris Botti | NRC Handelsblad | 31 Oct 2004 |
| No Cities Left | The Dears | Volkskrant | 29 Oct 2004 |
| No Soy de Nadie | Pepe Aguilar | Los Angeles Times | 18 Oct 2004 |
| On My Own Two Feet | Granian | New York Times | 8 Nov 2004 |
| Origin, Vol. 1 | The Soundtrack of Our Lives | NRC Handelsblad | 24 Oct 2004 |
| Out of Breach | Mu | Sueddeutsche Zeitung | 17 Mar 2005 |
| Palookaville | Fatboy Slim | Volkskrant | 22 Oct 2004 |
| Perfect | Intwine | Volkskrant | 15 Oct 2004 |
| Please Describe Yourself | Dogs Die in Hot Cars | New York Times | 18 Oct 2004 |
| Reves Mechaniques | The Hacker | Volkskrant | 22 Oct 2004 |
| The Revolution Starts…Now | Steve Earle | Frankfurter Allgemeine | 24 Oct 2004 |
| Sabou | Mory Kanté | NRC Handelsblad | 24 Oct 2004 |
| Seafarer's Song | Ketil Bjørnstad | Frankfurter Allgemeine | 17 Oct 2004 |
| Set Yourself on Fire | Stars | New York Times | 31 Dec 2004 |
| Shangri-La | Mark Knopfler | Frankfurter Allgemeine | 17 Oct 2004 |
| The Slow Wonder | A.C. Newman | Sueddeutsche Zeitung | 18 Nov 2004 |
| So Jealous | Tegan and Sara | Los Angeles Times | 4 Oct 2004 |
| Songbook: Volume 1 | Super Furry Animals | Volkskrant | 22 Oct 2004 |
| Still Not Getting Any | Simple Plan | New York Times | 9 Nov 2004 |

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|---|---|---|---|
| Street's Disciple | Nas | Sueddeutsche Zeitung | 16 Dec 2004 |
| Suit / Sweat | Nelly | NRC Handelsblad | 24 Oct 2004 |
| Sweet & Sour, Hot y Spicy | Ely Guerra | Los Angeles Times | 18 Oct 2004 |
| Tepid Peppermint Wonderland: A Retrospective | The Brian Jonestown Massacre | Sueddeutsche Zeitung | 20 Jan 2005 |
| Thank God | Doyle Lawson & Quicksilver | New York Times | 6 Dec 2004 |
| Tired of the Moon | Benjamin B. | NRC Handelsblad | 27 Oct 2004 |
| Underfed | Plush | Sueddeutsche Zeitung | 20 Jan 2005 |
| Unfinished Business | R. Kelly & Jay-Z | Los Angeles Times | 1 Nov 2004 |
| Universal Studio | The Delgados | New York Times | 18 Oct 2004 |
| The Universe of Absence | Gary Lucas & Jozef van Wissem | NRC Handelsblad | 3 Oct 2004 |
| Up All Night | Razorlight | Frankfurter Allgemeine | 24 Oct 2004 |
| Violence in the Snowy Fields | Dolorean | New York Times | 25 Oct 2004 |
| Voz | Tété Alhinho | NRC Handelsblad | 31 Oct 2004 |
| Waiting for Angels | Martin Carthy | Volkskrant | 15 Oct 2004 |
| The Wall Against Our Back | Two Cow Garage | NRC Handelsblad | 23 Oct 2004 |
| Weather | Lunik | Frankfurter Allgemeine | 31 Oct 2004 |
| Wind in the Wires | Patrick Wolf | Sueddeutsche Zeitung | 17 Mar 2005 |

# APPENDIX B

**Table A: Text strings used to recognize aesthetic criteria**

***AUTHENTICITY***: gives it heart and authenticity, sounded inauthentic, sounds like just another cog in the music factory, anything more than clever marketing, an exercise in pointless artifice, has shaken off much of the affectation
***AUTHORSHIP***: with 11 of her own compositions on her album, is based mostly on his own material, she put her pen to paper only twice in this batch of tunes
***BEAUTY***: gorgeous albums, a beautiful warm, melody as punishing as it is beautiful, beautiful music, music this beautiful,
***CATCHINESS***: catchy beats, youll find yourself humming after just a few hearings, tracks are infectious, the hooks arent as grabby, wickedly addictive
***CLICHÉ***: minus the cliche, avoids Latin pop cliches, avoid the 80s postpunk cliches, refreshingly uncliched way with romantic cliches, collections of rap clichés
***COMMITMENT/DRIVE***: the music sounds like indifference, it wont be due to a lack of swagger and determination, slipping into cruise control, showy professionalism trumping real passion
***CONSISTENCY***: a cohesive wellconceived collection, the result is uneven, band works as a marvelously cohesive unit, arent strong enough to bind the songs inextricably together,
***CREATIVITY***: group with this much passion and imagination, flex their creative muscles, creative run, the creative arsenal, groups creativity, imaginative mind
***EDGINESS***: harderedged, are still edgy, will delight listeners craving aural edginess, ragged and raw
***EFFORT/EASE***: easy to enjoy, they are more accessible, doesnt go down as easily, requires an investment of time and attention, the real crowdpleaser
***ENERGY***: sparks fly, an energetic cut, zesty, has energy, most explosive albums
***ENGROSSMENT***: the most absorbing, most compelling, this work is so involving, most engaging track, gripping, engrossing
***ENTERTAINMENT***: on its own terms thats perfectly entertaining, proves provocative and entertaining, entertainingly preposterous, as fun as it is familiar, sounds less like reality rap and more like jolly good fun
***EXCITEMENT***: one of the most exciting revival albums, its hard to get worked up by, still deliver rousing records, would bore everyone to infinity, can get tiring
***FUNCTIONALITY***: makes for perfectly pleasant background noise, pleasant enough for dinner music, is basically a party record, makes better dancefloor fodder
***EXPRESSIVITY***: expresses himself, nakedly personal, one of todays most revealing, soulsearching, shes completely walled herself off from genuine emotion, rather than viewing her depths
***FOCUS***: brings added focus and point of view, sense of purpose, speak with the purpose and ambition, most focused offering in a long time
***FRESHNESS***: fresh approach, hot and fresh, fresh arrangements, freshness and spark jumps out of her songs, as fresh as your latest heartache, remaining fresh and forceful, stalecheese

***HOT***: how to keep the salsa hot and fresh, adds some real fire, displays as much fire as finesse, three hottest male performers, one of the years hottest rappers, a hot beat
***INNOVATION***: explores new ground, isnt exactly breaking the mold here, is familiar territory, arent revolutionary, wildly inventive, pioneering
***INTELLIGENCE***: an intelligent mind, smart and dynamic new work, clever lyrical bites
***LASTING***: promises to last, doesnt have such staying power, another forgettable album, the attraction proves fleeting, doesnt have the timelessness, band for the ages
***MAGNETISM***: a seductive soundtrack, attractive but dark sound, an enchanting cadence, entrancing, bewitching
***MOVING***: its just as heartstirring, give you goose bumps, moving, touching, stirring, poignant
***ORIGINALITY***: sounds exactly like any anonymous, cliches and music production styles that have been pioneered by other artists, favors a generic, never quite escapes its proven pop formula, rather than resurrect the generic characters and stock situations
***OVERELABORATE***: arrangements are sometimes overblown, unfortunate tendency productionwise to gild the lily particularly by adding showers of musical sparkles, songs are dressed up by busy orchestral arrangements, is unnecessarily puffed up
***POWERFULNESS***: the results are equally powerful, dont pack the musical punch, a strong collection, sounds vivid detailed and forceful
***RAWNESS***: bristled with the raw passions, the raw emotions, raw and ragged, raw quaver in her untamed voice, replaces much of the wit and rawness
***SINCERITY***: his sincerity plays well throughout, robs the former of its sincerity, the bands outright honesty, earnest
***SKILL***: the pair show increased command and craft, agile verbal skills, far more skilled than, is writing better than ever, muchimproved singing, voice sounds better than ever
***SMOOTHNESS***: smooth lyrical and melodic set, silky resonant baritone, persona of smoothness and warmth
***SUBSTANCE***: isnt ready to risk adding depth, puffed up with soapbubble ideas, the material is a little too obvious, tackle serious subjects, looks at social issues
***SUBTLETY***: displays as much fire as finesse, songs come alive with elegant and subtly, subtle harmonies, subtle rumba bass, is so delicate and sweet
***SWEETNESS***: a melody as sweet as, sweetest harmonies, saccharine, theres a corny sweetness, sugary hooks, verges toward sugar high preciosity
***TALENT***: an immensely gifted, supremely talented, multitalented, reveals more about his talent and potential, gift for melody and quirky lyricism
***UNIQUE***: something unique, one of the most distinctive voices, the potential to create something unique and potent, stakes a claim on a unique and fascinating turf
***WARM/COLD***: is a warm if sometimes unsettling, by warm folk and country textures, warm intimate vocals, lack of the warmth and wit, a beautiful warm, cold and detached

*CHARM*: most charming soul singles of the year, with music this charming playful and witty, boundless charm, exerts a peculiar charm that increases with repeated listening
*DIRECTNESS*: more direct and uptempo lp, employs a roaring straightforwardness, streamlined straightforward,

*EFFECTIVITY*: a teasingly effective, with a predictable but effective, settles into an ineffective, with less effective results
*FORMULA*: sound formulaic, tended to sound formulaic and dull, typify the bands formula, The formula clicks nearly as well, he engineered the most unstoppable hitmaking formula
*GRACEFULNESS*: hes a graceful and consistent singer and writer, Raw power has rarely sounded this graceful and articulate, beauty and grace, a band hitting its stride easily and gracefully, only half of the 10 songs possess the bristling dynamics or eloquent grace, theres some slinky charm, slinky stanky stuff
*INDULGENCE*: indulged without being indulgent, too often selfindulgent, tend to be less about songs than chops, suffers from a strange and rare ailment under indulgence
*INSPIRATION*: without much inspiration, an inspired reading, we get lackluster rockedout narratives with loads of video appeal about colorfully named characters, the rest of the tunes on this New Yorkers first album are less inspired
*INTERESTING*: gets more interesting, one of the more recent and least interesting entries, keep things interesting
*LUSHNESS*: lush full bodied vocals, combines lush textured melodies with brighteyed and bushytailed vocals, her lush intense, with lush atmospheres conveying a weariness, are not quite as lush as
*MELODIC*: gleaming melodic metal popular with radio and video programmers, hangs his overwrought lyrics on strong melodic hooks, are melodious and interestingly arranged
*POLISH*: allow it to add up to more than a catalogue of pointless polished licks, is savvy and polished, spitshine production job, sound avoids the overpolished
*PRETENTION*: a frivolous poseur is preferable to a pretentious one, if you can clamber through the layers of pretension, less pretentious, wants desperately to say something serious
*PROPULSIVE*: are not quite as propulsive, propulsive
*RELEVANCE*: whose relevance seems to diminish, making it too easy not to care, to prove it has something to contribute, but hes no relic
*REPETITIVENESS*: dont seem worried about repetition creeping in, other songs with their excess of vocals are repetitive, leaves him less subject to repetition, lyrics are empty and repetitive, is simply repeating himself
*SENTIMENTAL*: couldnt have salvaged hopelessly schmaltzy ballads, in the midst of the forgettable sappy tunes, could easily sound sappy, vocals are emotive, but its just bogus melodrama
*SHINING*: a scintillating style, glisten with, shimmering track, textures shimmer, shimmering
*SPARSENESS*: spare austere sound, again is overly sparse, lean feisty raw
*VERSATILITY*: is backed up by astounding musical verve and versatility, none too varied, narrow musical range, even stretches out a bit
*WEIGHT*: Lightweight is the operative word for much of her solo album, with even the most lightweight material, there isnt enough heavyweight material here, contrasting a down n dirty bottom with lighter than air, arent too heavy,

**BOLDNESS/DARING**: a bold attempt, boldly immersed in his own journey, a daring artist, could have done something more daring
**AMBITION**: even more ambitious, lack of ambition, are still ambitious, undeniable ambition, speak with the purpose and ambition

**PROMISE**: an otherwise promising, had enough promise, a promising, keep the promise alive, promising newcomers, reveals more about his talent and potential
**ARTISTRY**: a more artful and thoughtful work, artistically astute, demanding and artful, confuses detailed description with artistic insight, with a clumsy artlessness
**PROGRESS**: they take a massive step, taking what amounts to a bold step, evolution as a rapper, has made remarkable artistic leaps, firm but small step toward that breakthrough, too little progress
**DISTINCTIVE**: extraordinary vocals, unremarkable and chameleonlike, remarkable artistic self portraits, a remarkable new talent, is unmatched at, exquisite young vocalist, standing out from the pack
**SOPHISTICATE**: most sophisticated, sophisticated, the sophistication of
**ELEGANCE**: elegant quintet, street elegance,
**URGENCY**: theres nothing that conveys urgency, a moment or two of alarm and urgency, song whose urgency
**GRITTY**: gritty gangster material, gravelvoiced, replace country grittiness, gritty
**SOLIDNESS**: a solid album, solid collection, solid contemporary pop
**IRRESISTIBILITY**: refrain you cant resist, hardtoresist track, irresistible and varied rhythms, could use a few more irresistible choruses, irresistible beats, irresistible
**SOOTHING**: a musical tour as relaxing as a ride in a hammock, soothing sounds, calming flow, hypnotic moods
**PARTICIPATORY**: an effervescent singalong, to accommodate highschool singalongs, the keepitsingalongable ethos, singalongable, singalong number, family singalongs
**TRADITIONAL**: more traditional, refreshingly oldfashioned, as old as Adam and Eve, Everything stays the same, are helping to save a lovely worldclass music from slipping into stale nostalgia
**SATISFYING**: it is the intense satisfying feeling of the music that matters, so why is it often unsatisfying, with equally satisfying results, studio wizardry produces a gratifying main dish

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Legend: criteria that appear in both sets of reviews (bold and italicized), only in 1985-86 (italicized), and only in 2004-05 (bold)

# APPENDIX C

**Table A: 12 Cluster solution of HCA**

| Cluster | Artists |
|---|---|
| Cluster 1 | Dilated Peoples, Gwen Stefani, Prince, Janet Jackson, Mos Def, N.E.R.D.,The Cure, Sahara Hotnights, U2, JC Chasez, The Roots, R. Kelly, The Donnas, Good Charlotte, Ludacris, D12, Destiny's Child, Xzibit, Sum 41, Brandy, Kylie Minogue, Scissor Sisters, Nelly, Gomez, Jem, Ashlee Simpson, George Michael, Snoop Dogg, Rufus Wainwright, Voodoo Child, Avril Lavigne, Cypress Hill, Usher, Nelly, Beastie Boys, Lloyd Banks, Green Day, Brian Wilson, Courtney Love, Duran Duran, The Used, The Get Up Kids, Eminem, 213, Talib Kweli, Method Man,Incubus, The Libertines, Papa Roach, Phantom Planet, Jimmy Eat World, Alanis Morissette |
| Cluster 2 | William Shatner,Auf Der Maur,Le Tigre,Trans Am,Clinic,The Coral,The Veils,Muse,Badly Drawn Boy,The Cooper Temple Clause,Stereolab,The Vines,Sondre Lerche,The Silent League,The Hidden Cameras,UNKLE,Athlete,French Kicks,Lambchop,Orbital,Hope Of The States,Tortoise,Fatboy Slim,Preston School Of Industry,The Concretes,The Music,Har Mar Superstar,Lostprophets,Keane,R.E.M.,Midnight Movies,The Datsuns,Lambchop,Tegan And Sara,The Prodigy,Handsome Boy Modeling School,Razorlight,The Killers |
| Cluster 3 | Earlimart,Son Ambulance,Chingy,The Mooney Suzuki,Pedro The Lion,Mary Lou Lord,Melissa Etheridge,Lenny Kravitz,Mase,I Am The World Trade Center,Phish,The Special Goodness,Taking Back Sunday,The Catheters,Blondie,Hanson,Maritime,LL Cool J,Lisa Loeb,Vanessa Carlton,Elf Power, Martina Topley-Bird, Camera Obscura, Saliva, Statistics, Paul Westerberg, Washington Social Club, Simple Plan, The Crystal Method,Heiruspecs,Tift Merritt,Kimya Dawson,Kenny Chesney,Uncle Kracker,Sigur Ros |
| Cluster 4 | Mono, Manic Street Preachers, Shyne, Raphael Saadiq, Panda Bear, Migala, Blue States, Gold Chains And Sue Cie, Frank Black,Frausdots,Memphis,Client,The Sunshine Fix,Matt Pond PA,Helmet,Five For Fighting,Anita Baker,The Corrs,Wagon Christ,Seachange,Paul Weller,Dirty Vegas,Joan Of Arc,k.d. lang,Ashanti |
| Cluster 5 | Onelinedrawing,Guided Voices,Nick Cave And The Bad Seeds,Blonde Redhead,Wilco,Q And Not U,The Delgados,A.C. Newman,The Streets,Madvillain,Secret Machines,Squarepusher,The Good Life,Mark Lanegan Band,Lali Puna,Liars,Brian Wilson,Comets On Fire,The Hives,Einsturzende Neubauten,M83,Adem,The Von Bondies,Modest Mouse,Pinback,Of Montreal,Tom Waits,Savath & Savalas,The Walkmen,The Arcade Fire,Sparta,The Fall,Loretta Lynn,The Blood Brothers,Mum,Morrissey,John Vanderslice,The Mountain Goats,The Polyphonic Spree,Oneida,Death From Above 1979,The Hold Steady,Destroyer,The Futureheads,Hayden,Sonic Youth,Animal Collective,Air,Interpol,Bjork,Wolf Eyes,PJ Harvey,The Fiery |

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|---|---|
| | Furnaces,Mouse On Mars,Devendra Banhart,Magnetic Fields,Dungen,Lone Pigeon,cLOUDDEAD,Les Savy Fav,Ted Leo & The Pharmacists,Devendra Banhart,TV On The Radio,Elliott Smith,Sufjan Stevens,Junior Boys,Beta Band,Franz Ferdinand,Elbow,Psapp |
| Cluster 6 | Roni Size,Travis Morrison,The Icarus Line,Radio 4,Miss Kittin,VHS Or Beta,Styrofoam,Phoenix,Colder,!!! [Chik Chik Chik],Jesse Malin,The Goodie Mob,The X-Ecutioners,Nas,The Zutons,The Faint,The Fever,Rob Sonic,Fantomas,Bumblebeez 81,Pink Grease,Cake,Chicks On Speed,The Thermals,Ratatat,Headset,The Eternals,Broken Spindles,Beep Beep,The Helio Sequence,Cut Copy |
| Cluster 7 | Joss Stone,Joseph Arthur,John Cale,Sam Phillips,The Clash,A Perfect Circle,Candi Staton,Jolie Holland,Jill Scott,Patti Smith,Leonard Cohen,Beenie Man,The Cure,Nirvana,Elvis Costello,Aerosmith,Angie Stone,Norah Jones |
| Cluster 8 | McLusky,Danger Mouse,MF Doom,Northern State,Dizzee Rascal,Mobb Deep,Cee-Lo,Camper Van Beethoven,Murs,Bad Religion,Kanye West,Division Of Laura Lee,Viktor Vaughn,Chromeo,Kittie,Jean Grae,Dizzee Rascal,Skinny Puppy,Mission Of Burma,Jadakiss,Rjd2,De La Soul,Twista,Drive-Truckers,Slum Village,Ghostface Killah,The Dillinger Escape Plan,Beans,These Arms Are Snakes,Brand Nubian,Young Buck |
| Cluster 9 | The Eighties Matchbox B-Line Disaster,Two Lone Swordsmen,Eagles Of Death Metal,The Radio Dept.,The Soft Pink Truth,They Might Be Giants,Violet Indiana,Fripp & Eno,Low,Moving Units,Mark Knopfler,The Orb,The Mendoza Line,Ikara Colt,Volcano I'm Still Excited!!,Gary Jules,Automato,Mandarin,Electrelane,Steve Earle,Bent,Felix Da Housecat,Lisa Gerrard & Patrick Cassidy,Velvet Revolver,Mull Historical Society,The (International) Noise Conspiracy,Nellie McKay,Bravecaptain,Ian Broudie,John Frusciante,John Squire,Lou Reed,Jonathan Richman,Reverend Horton Heat,The Coral,Beans,The Dears,The Open,The Charlatans,Willy Mason |
| Cluster 10 | The Mae Shi,Masta Ace,Masta Killa,Patti Scialfa,k-os,Ghost,Alan Jackson,Juliana Hatfield,The Citizens,Talking Heads,Br. Danielson,David Byrne,The Hiss,Tim McGraw,Tears For Fears,Windsor For The Derby,Mary Chapin Carpenter,The Sadies,Giant Sand,Jim White,Call & Response,Mike Ladd,Ministry,Pan Sonic,Sally Timms,90 Day Men,The Twilight Singers,Various Artists,Los Lobos,The Bad Plus,Matthew Sweet,Cam'ron,David Holmes |
| Cluster 11 | Deerhoof,Afrika Bambaataa,Chris Robinson,Silkworm,Aveo,The Anomoanon,Juana Molina,Fennesz,Mice Parade,Califone,Blockhead,Poster Children,OOIOO,Rachel Goswell,Blues Explosion,Now It's Overhead,Richard Buckner,Black Dice,David Kilgour,Jay Farrar,Ken Stringfellow,Macha,Thalia Zedek,Kinski,Royal City,Broken Social Scene,Xiu Xiu,The Album Leaf,Radian,The Paper Chase,All Night Radio,El-P,On! Air! Library!,Jim Guthrie,Rogue Wave,The New Year,Jason Molina,To Rococo Rot,Erick Sermon,Engine Down,Kpt.Michi.Gan |

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|---|---|
| Cluster 12 | Willard Grant Conspiracy,Elton John,Tanya Donelly,Alison Krauss & Union Station,Kings Of Convenience,Neko Case,Probot,John Frusciante,Robyn Hitchcock,Mirah,The Cardigans,Cowboy Junkies,Slipknot,Eric Clapton,Zero 7,Mekons,Ambulance Ltd,Luna,Ani DiFranco,Ron Sexsmith,Indigo Girls,Trash Can Sinatras,Allison Moorer,The Divine Comedy,Rilo Kiley,Starsailor,Delays,Lamb,The Black Keys,Iron & Wine,Old 97's,American Music Club,Rachael Yamagata,Grant-Lee Phillips,Ben Kweller,The Elected,For Stars,The Thrills,Nancy Sinatra,Diana Krall,The Finn Brothers,The Church,Snow Patrol |

# NEDERLANDSE SAMENVATTING ('Dutch summary')

## Classificaties in populaire muziek
## Discoursen en betekenisstructuren in Amerikaanse, Nederlandse en Duitse popmuziekrecensies

Popmuziek is een van de culturele genres – naast onder meer film, fotografie en jazz – die in de tweede helft van de twintigste eeuw schijnbaar in culturele status en aanzien is gestegen. De veronderstelde stijging van populaire muziek binnen de culturele hiërarchie lijkt onderdeel van een meer omvangrijke verandering in de culturele classificatiesystemen van westerse samenlevingen. Culturele classificatiesystemen lijken minder hiërarchisch, meer gedifferentieerd, minder universeel en minder sterk afgegrensd te zijn. Als één van de indicatoren voor de esthetische mobiliteit van popmuziek binnen het classificatiesysteem wordt gewoonlijk gewezen op het groeiende belang en omvang van een secundair kritisch discours binnen de popmuziek. Het doel van deze dissertatie is om longitudinale veranderingen en crossnationale verschillen in de inhoud van dit kritisch discours te onderzoeken. Hoe classificeren en evalueren muziekrecensenten populaire muziek? Van welke evaluatieve repertoires maken ze daarbij gebruik en hoe trekken ze grenzen tussen genres binnen de popmuziek? Welke betekenisstructuren hanteren recensenten in hun percepties en evaluaties van popmuziekalbums?

In Hoofdstuk 2 vergelijk ik de evaluatieve repertoires van popmuziekrecensenten schrijvend voor elite kranten in Nederland, Duitsland en de Verenigde Staten. In deze drie landen is een groeiende mate van aandacht voor het genre popmuziek zichtbaar. De vraag is echter in hoeverre recensenten in deze drie landen van elkaar verschillen in de kwalitatieve wijze waarop ze over popmuziek schrijven. Allereerst worden verschillende mogelijke legitimatiestrategieën onderscheiden en beschreven. De literatuur over de legitimatie van culturele genres richt de aandacht voornamelijk op het gebruik van traditionele artistieke criteria door critici binnen 'populaire' culturele velden. Deze critici zouden daarmee pogen aan te tonen dat ook populaire cultuur kan voldoen aan de esthetische standaarden en criteria van de 'serieuze' kunst en daarmee de status van deze genres proberen te verhogen. In dit

hoofdstuk betoog ik dat ook andere legitimatiestrategieën onderscheiden kunnen worden. In plaats van het 'assimileren' van populaire cultuur binnen de traditionele esthetiek kunnen critici ook een 'emancipatoire' strategie volgen waarin de esthetiek en status van populaire cultuur *als* populaire cultuur door critici wordt gebruikt en gelegitimeerd. Vervolgens beargumenteer ik dat de keuze voor een van deze legitimatiestrategieën – gemeten aan het gebruik van enerzijds traditionele esthetische criteria en anderzijds criteria van een 'populaire esthetiek' – afhankelijk kan zijn van de bredere culturele classificatiestructuur binnen deze landen. Op basis van een ideaaltypische karakterisering van de culturele classificatiesystemen van deze drie landen in termen van hun hiërarchie, universaliteit en grenssterkte verwacht ik verschillen te zien in de relatieve dominantie van evaluatieve repertoires in het kritisch discours van critici in de verschillende landen. De inhoudsanalyse van muziekrecensies laat zien dat er inderdaad significante verschillen zijn in de kwalitatieve wijze waarop Nederlandse, Amerikaanse en Duitse critici popmuziek beoordelen en dat deze overeenkomen met de ontwikkelde theoretische verwachtingen over de relatie tussen culturele classificatiesystemen en keuzes voor legitimatiestrategieën.

In Hoofdstuk 3 vervolg ik de crossnationale analyse van de inhoud van het kritisch discours van popmuziekcritici in Nederland en de Verenigde Staten door gebruik te maken van de 'mentions technique' ontwikkeld door Rosengren. Hier vergelijk ik de 'frame of reference' van popmuziekrecensenten door te onderzoeken welke artiesten als vergelijkingsmateriaal worden gebruikt bij het beoordelen en classificeren van popmuziekartiesten. Enerzijds analyseer ik de compositie van het 'frame of reference' in termen van de soorten erkenning die 'mentions' (artiesten die als vergelijking worden gebruikt) hebben ontvangen binnen het (nationale) veld van de popmuziek. Ik onderscheid hier kritische erkenning, professionele erkenning en populaire erkenning. Anderzijds richt ik mij op de sociale logica van vergelijkingen binnen recensies door de relatie 'wie wordt met wie vergeleken' te analyseren in termen van de sociale karakteristieken van artiesten zoals ras. De analyse van de compositie van de referentiekaders ('frames of reference') van Amerikaanse en Nederlandse recensenten laat zien dat deze overeenkomen wat betreft de professionele en kritische erkenning maar verschilt qua populaire erkenning van de artiesten.

Vergeleken met hun Nederlandse collega's gebruiken Amerikaanse recensenten vaker commercieel succesvolle artiesten als vergelijkingsmateriaal. De analyse van de sociale logica laat zien dat zowel Amerikaanse als Nederlandse recensenten popmuziek percipiëren en evalueren binnen raciale kaders: de raciale grenzen zijn dermate vervlochten geraakt met de muzikale genre categorieën binnen de popmuziek dat ras een vanzelfsprekende ('taken for granted') categorie is geworden binnen de evaluatie en classificatie van popmuziek, ook in waarneming- en waarderingstructuren van actoren in sociale contexten als Nederland waar de macrostructuur deze symbolische grens niet zou suggereren.

In Hoofdstuk 4 richt ik mij op longitudinale veranderingen in de classificatie en evaluatie van popmuziek in het discours van recensenten van de Amerikaanse krant de *Los Angeles Times*. Het doel van dit hoofdstuk is zowel methodologisch als inhoudelijk. Het methodologische doel is het ontwikkelen van een formele analyse van relationele betekenisstructuren binnen het discours van critici door een combinatie van 'structuralistische' theorieën over betekenisstructuren met de technieken van de sociale netwerkanalyse. Door het analyseren van de relaties tussen enerzijds genre categorieën en anderzijds esthetische codes is het mogelijk om een 'esthetische discours ruimte' te modeleren waarin genres ecologische *niche* posities innemen. Door de *niche overlap* van genres met elkaar te meten kan de genre structuur als een systeem van betekenissen worden gevisualiseerd en geanalyseerd. Het inhoudelijke doel is door een vergelijking van de betekenisstructuur van het discours van *Los Angeles Times* critici in twee tijdsperioden – 1985-86 en 2004-2005 – mogelijke veranderingen in de classificatiestructuur in kaart te brengen. Uit de vergelijking wordt een proces zichtbaar van grensvervaging en toenemend 'isomofisme' in de betekenissen van popmuziekgenres. Ook de grens tussen twee exemplarische genres – 'rock' en 'pop' – tot in de jaren tachtig beschouwd als hiërarchisch geordende genres en een 'artistieke' versus 'commerciële' vorm van populaire muziek – lijkt aan symbolische relevantie te hebben ingeboet voor critici. Dit wijst erop dat ook binnen het veld van de popmuziek hiërarchische verschillen afnemen, in elk geval in de perceptie van critici schrijvend voor een invloedrijke krant als de *Los Angeles Times*. Veranderingen op institutioneel niveau binnen de muziekindustrie en het ontstaan van een 'open systeem van productie' worden aangedragen als

mogelijke verklaring voor het vervagen van de symbolische grenzen tussen popmuziekgenres.

In Hoofdstuk 5 onderzoek ik mogelijke homologieën tussen structuren binnen het veld van de kritische receptie en structuren binnen het veld van de productie van popmuziek. Met behulp van een gedetailleerde relationele dataset die informatie bevat over welke publicatiemedia op welke wijze (in termen van esthetisch codes en oordeel) welke popmuziekalbums waarderen, modeleer ik een relationele 'kritische discours ruimte' bestaande uit (de onderlinge relaties tussen) publicaties, esthetische codes en waarderingen waarin popmuziekalbums (en hun muzieklabels) gepositioneerd zijn. De analyse van de homologie tussen posities in de 'kritische discours ruimte' en de posities in het veld van de productie laat zien dat het 'materiële' onderscheid tussen 'onafhankelijke' en *'major'* platenmaatschappijen verankerd en gearticuleerd wordt in verschillende symbolisch posities in de 'kritische discours ruimte'. Dit suggereert dat ook het veld van de populaire muziek de bijna universele tendens vertoont om een symbolisch pertinente grens te ontwikkelen tussen, wat Bourdieu heeft genoemd, het subveld van de 'kleinschalige' versus 'grootschalige' cultuurproductie.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alex van Venrooij (1975) studied sociology and philosophy at the University of Amsterdam and in 2001 received his Master's degree (cum laude) in theoretical sociology. After graduating he worked for two years as a junior lecturer at the University of Amsterdam where he mainly taught courses on classical and modern sociological theory. In December 2003 he started his Ph.D. project at Erasmus University in Rotterdam at the Department for Arts and Culture Studies as part of the NWO funded VICI-project 'Cultural Classification Systems in Transition'. During this time he was a visiting student at the graduate school of sociology at Emory University in Atlanta, USA and the University of California, Santa Barbara, USA. Between September 2007 and September 2009 he was a lecturer at the Department for Arts and Culture Studies. In September 2009 he was appointed assistant professor in the sociology of art and culture at this same department.

He has published (together with Giselinde Kuipers) on the history of the Dutch sociology journal Amsterdams Sociologisch Tijdschrift in *Amsterdams Sociologisch Tijdschrift* 31 (4): 448-466, a sociological reflection on the novel *American Psycho* by Brett Easton Ellis in the Dutch sociology journal *Sociologie* 1(3): 225-228 and on cultural sociology in the US in *Sociologie* 4(2): 225-228. Chapters from this dissertation on the evaluation and classification of popular music have been published or are in press at *Cultural Sociology*, *American Behavioral Scientist* and *Poetics*.