Modelling Participation, Engaging Difference: Public Participatory Music Events in Sheffield

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Abstract

Exploring the nature and significance of "participation" has ostensibly been at the heart of ethnomusicological study since at least the mid-twentieth century, yet the development of a "more refined vocabulary for distinguishing between competing models of participation" (Jenkins, Ito and boyd 2016, 181) has received little attention. This thesis is based on situated fieldwork at public participatory music events in the city of Sheffield – including open mics, jazz jam sessions, and instrumental folk sessions – and is supplemented with contextualising survey data from participants of comparable events across the UK. These events host "participatory performance" (Turino 2008), ostensibly being oriented towards openness and inclusivity, and thus represent ideal environments for developing a better understanding of the dynamics of participation.

Fieldwork findings are first considered in light of commonly referenced models of "community". These are argued to function as useful points of departure for further theorisation, but as prone to supporting unnuanced readings of the relationships between participating individuals, which may be impersonal or antagonistic. Ensuing discussion of the relationship between public participatory music events and the Sheffield music "ecology" (Behr et al. 2016) highlights the economic and "opportunistic" (Frith 2022) motivations and cultural policy changes informing a shift away from the hosting of small-scale presentational events in favour of participatory ones. The inclusivity of public participatory music events is connected to the establishment and maintenance of "cosmopolitan politesse" (Rapport 2012), and some of the encountered strategies for securing this - relating to structural organisation, demographic exclusion, and the regulation of objects - are reviewed.

The thesis concludes that enduring participation is dependent on co-participants perceiving one another's engagement to be compatible with their own. Two original models – one relating to practical engagement with repertoire, and the other relating to subjective motivation and evaluation – are provided to illuminate potential sources of conflict.

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Declaration

I, the author, confirm that the Thesis is my own work. I am aware of the University's Guidance on the Use of Unfair Means (www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/unfair-means). This work has not been previously presented for an award at this, or any other, university.

An excerpt of this thesis (from the "Opportunities" section of chapter four) has been published as: Knowles, Tim. 2017. "English Folk Law: A Brief Introduction to Pub Licensing." *International Journal of Traditional Arts* 1: 1-4.

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Chapter One – Introduction

Understanding "Participation"

Although of increasing interest to scholars of a range of disciplines over the past twenty-five years, "participation" is typically discussed uncritically, as though it is a simple term the meaning of which can be taken for granted in academic work. As Andrew Killick points out in his review of a recent edited collection on musical participation, "there is hardly any attempt in the book to define the terms 'taking part' or 'participation'. The two expressions are used synonymously" (2016, 79-80). Such ambiguity also appears to be sustained in other disciplines concerned with "participation", with scholars of "participatory culture" calling for a "more refined vocabulary for distinguishing between competing models of participation" (Jenkins, Ito and boyd 2016, 181). In music studies "participation" has primarily been cited in relation to amateur activity (cf. Pitts 2005) and is thus associated with the study of those whose livelihood is not dependent on music-based work. There has been a sustained argument in the academic literature for amateur musical participation to be encouraged for its positive effects on social progress and the development of a sense of belonging, and endorsement of this has been the primary agenda of the burgeoning Community Music movement (cf. Higgins 2012). The use of "participation" to specifically reference projects of this nature has charged the term with positive connotations but has also seen it disconnected from alternative readings and broader applications.

Engaged in the study of "people making music" (Titon 1996, xxii), scholars of ethnomusicology examine how and why individuals participate in musical practices, and have demonstrated a propensity for explaining socio-musical phenomena through the production of theoretical models intended for application beyond the case study in relation to which they were originally devised (cf. Rice 2017). One of the more influential models of recent times has been developed by Thomas Turino (2008), who suggests that musical performance might be interpreted in relation to two distinct forms, the "presentational" and the "participatory". In *presentational* performance there is a clear distinction between the performer(s) and their audience, with the delivery of a polished and engaging performance typically representing the highest ideal. In contrast, in a *participatory* performance all those present are invited to take part in the performance, most commonly through the production of sound or complementary movement (e.g. dancing), with the finesse of the participants' activities being of lesser concern than their contribution to an inclusive atmosphere.

Turning his attention from performance to musical structure, Turino summarises, "Participatory music is *not for listening apart from doing*; presentational music is prepared by musicians for others to listen to" (ibid., 52), highlighting that the participatory/presentational character of the social event will typically be reflected in the structure and aesthetics of the music. The musical forms associated with presentational performance usually focus on providing opportunities for spectacle, emphasising individual display and virtuosic passages. In contrast, the musical forms associated with participatory performance tend to incorporate "densely overlapping textures, wide tunings, consistently loud volume, and buzzy timbres" (ibid., 46, emphasis in original). This functions to draw

attention away from the contributions of individuals, mitigating performance anxiety through the provision of a "a *cloaking function* that helps inspire musical participation" (ibid.).[1] Both forms of performance entail participation, but only in cases of the latter type is the promotion of participation the primary objective.

Turino is not the first to allude to this distinction – a participatory orientation of performance is noted in some ethnographies of music-making in Africa (e.g. Keil 1979; Chernoff 1981) and the United States of America (Small 1987), and the distinction is addressed theoretically by Blaukopf (1992) – but his work substantially develops these models, and is innovative in its consideration of a musical form (American Contra dance) that is primarily practised in a modern, Western country, as being participatory in the sense that he outlines.[2] Reflection on this model makes evident the extent to which the discourses surrounding Western music have normalised "performance" as synonymous with *presentation* (e.g. Cook 2013). This view is pervasive to the point that an individual playing music alone (without an audience) is generally assumed to be preparing for, and aspiring to, presentational performance (Killick 2006). Playing music collectively without an audience is often justified, on similar grounds, as "rehearsal", connoting preparation for an upcoming presentational performance. Turino's agenda – to highlight that musical performance is not exclusively oriented to presentation and that participatory musical practices can be observed around the world (including in "modern" Western countries) – is an important and timely one.

Turino (2008, 87-92) describes the participatory and presentational as "continua", identifying the potential for the merging of aspects from each "field".[3] He identifies two examples – Prespa Albanian weddings (Sugarman 1997), and karaoke (Hale 1997) – that cannot be comfortably bracketed as entirely participatory or presentational in nature. Turino refers to these as examples of "sequential" (as opposed to "simultaneous") participatory performance (Turino 2008, 48-51), so defined on the basis of those present moving between the roles of audience member and performer. He explains that such events provide a "participatory frame" in which an enforced expectation that everyone present will perform across the course of the event (and in the process showcase varying degrees of technical proficiency) functions to ease individual anxieties around participation. Describing karaoke in the United States, Turino notes how, "in a society where participatory traditions are not particularly developed, people need extra encouragement and direct guidance" (to establish that "this is only play") which "paradoxically allows participants to play at being presentational performers" (Turino 2008, 51).

The music events examined in this thesis are essentially participatory in structure, and Turino's framework is appropriate and useful for quickly making the distinction between these events and presentational concerts or gigs (and rehearsals organised in preparation for these). However, with a view to exploring precisely how individuals interpret, engage with, perpetuate, or undermine the

[1] Keil (1966) similarly noted that simple, repetitive musical forms function to encourage participation.

[2] Klisala Harrison's (2020) *Music Downtown Eastside* is a recent example of an ethnomusicological text that adopts Turino's distinction, specifically in the categorisation of music events in the city of Vancouver, Canada.

[3] David Camlin (2014) suggests interpreting the participatory and presentational as opposing poles of a spectrum.

participatory frame, it should be noted that this thesis employs "participatory" as an ostensible descriptor.[4] This interpretation acknowledges the possibility of an event with a participatory "frame" (e.g. an instrumental folk session) not seeming to function as such when subjected to closer scrutiny, or with a subtle change of conditions (e.g. if performers establish an atmosphere of competition rather than inclusivity; if a notable percentage of those in attendance are not expected to perform).

Published Accounts

Academic accounts of participatory music-making in the West remain limited in number and scope.[5] Studies of music have tended to take an identifiable genre or tradition as their focus, and sought out the activities of representative practitioners, culture-bearers, and purists, sometimes to the exclusion of other musical activity occurring in the same vicinity.[6] Public events, such as those at which I have conducted fieldwork, have been largely overlooked. One reason for this is that they are interpreted as presenting poor quality, under-rehearsed renditions of a wide variety of material that is performed to a higher standard (or is ascribed greater authenticity) by fixed groups of select individuals elsewhere (Camlin 2014). Morcom (2022) speculates that the practice-based approach that has been established in the study of ethnomusicology has made it "important to work with accomplished performers rather than lowly ones or those who had to give up, and, mostly, to be based in major centers" (490). She concludes that due to this dynamic, "Hidden musicians, genres, and places tend to stay so, and the dynamics that make them do too" (ibid.).

Anthropologist Ruth Finnegan's status as a contented yet inquisitive amateur musician was conducive to her producing the seminal work to which Morcom alludes, *The Hidden Musicians* (2007), in which she provides an extensive ethnographic account of grassroots music-making in Milton Keynes in the 1980s. Finnegan describes a diversity of events associated with numerous different musical worlds, referring to shared musical activities and routines as representing musical "pathways".[7] Her ethnography includes folk and jazz events, but she alludes to these being prepared for with collective rehearsal,[8] which is not the case for the participatory events that I am studying.

The contribution of Finnegan's work is substantial, but its findings predate the digital era and cannot be taken as fully representative of contemporary practices. Notably absent from *The Hidden Musicians* is any reference to "open mic" events, which have prominent fixture of urban music scenes since its publication. The most extensive work on open mics that are dedicated to musical

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[5] Some examples that bear limited relevance to the focus of this thesis but remain notable include Caroline Bithell's (2014) work on activities associated with the "Natural Voice movement", and the substantial body of work on liturgical and devotional music practices (e.g. Wagner 2019; Porter 2020).

[6] Dunn's (1980) *The Fellowship of Song* exemplifies this in providing thorough details of the lives and music of elderly rural folk singers and treating the instrumental interjections of some American tourists as a distraction and a nuisance.

[7] "A series of known and regular routes which people chose – or were led into – and which they both kept open and extended through their actions. These 'pathways' more or less coincided with the varying musical 'worlds' […] but avoid the misleading overtones of concreteness, stability, boundedness and comprehensiveness associated with the term 'world'." (Finnegan 2007, 305-306)

[8] Finnegan does cite a 1981 advertisement for a "jam session" (2007, 227), but no further detail is provided.

performance (as opposed to stand-up comedy and spoken word poetry events that also employ the same format) is by Marcus Aldridge (2006; 2013), who conducted ethnographic fieldwork in New York City, offering an interesting comparison to the context of my own research in a relatively small, English city. The extent of academic publication on musical open mics in the United Kingdom is quite limited. One example is a chapter by Edensor, Hepburn and Richards (2014) on the open mic scene in Manchester, that characterises the format as an "enabling realm" (145), conducive to a "non-exclusive, non-judgemental, liberal and supportive environment" (ibid., 153). Another is an article by Behr (2012) that refers to three case studies in Edinburgh, effectively situating the open mics within the broader context of the local music scene. It also includes a rare and valuable anecdote of an event that "collapsed into acrimony and social discord" (ibid., 570). Some non-academic publications (e.g. Christie 2011, 2020; Wallington 2012) are instructive in their depiction of the national scale and scope of the phenomenon and provide colourful first-hand accounts of the experience of attending that are not entirely positive. Recently produced academic texts, such as Kenny and Young's (2022) article on African migrant's experiences of an open mic in Galway, Ireland, and Lambe's (2023) PhD thesis on "queer open mics" in California and New Jersey, introduce broader representation into the discourse.

Open mic events have some superficial structural similarities to folk clubs, in that both essentially entail Turino's *sequential* participatory performance. Folk clubs have been a prominent focus of publications on the performance of traditional music in the United Kingdom (e.g. Hield and Mansfield 2020; Bean 2014), but their typical conditions of access (usually occurring in a reserved section of a public house, and sometimes with paid entry), ideological orientation (both in terms of sometimes strict etiquette, and the selection and treatment of repertoire), and emphasis on unaccompanied vocal performance, place them beyond the remit of this study, which instead considers folk *sessions*, which are typically more public-facing and relaxed. Folk sessions are neatly characterised in MacKinnon's *British Folk Scene* (1993), and Fairbairn (1994) offers a compelling account of how the structure of folk sessions in Ireland has changed over the course of the twentieth century that is highly relatable to my study of similar events in England. Stock's (2004) ethnographic study of a folk session at a now defunct Sheffield pub represents the first significant ethnomusicological study of an English instrumental folk session. Although highly detailed, the general application of Stock's conclusions is limited by the atypical nature of the event he attended, which functioned as a rehearsal for a group of enthusiasts seeking to perform local repertoire prepared by a key participant, rather than as a public participatory event.[9] Stock also neglects to mention the broader context of folk sessions occurring in the same venue during the period that his fieldwork was conducted, which includes an earlier incarnation of one of my own case studies. The Northeast folk session described by Keegan-Phipps (2013) is more similar to the events at which I have conducted fieldwork, and he offers a valuable update to earlier publications through examination of participants' employment of technology at the event. The differences of attitude, and the negative – sometimes forceful – responses demonstrated in some of his anecdotes are particularly relevant to the content of this thesis.

[9] My casual conversations with folk musicians who attended the event documented by Stock depicted it as being "conservative".

Historical accounts of jazz jam sessions present them as being one of the more antagonistic examples of participatory music-making. These primarily focus on events that took place in 1940s New York, the participants of which are heralded as responsible for the "birth of bebop" (DeVeaux 1997), a distinct sub-genre of jazz, the conventions and repertoire of which have had a lasting influence on jazz performance practice in both presentational and participatory contexts. Like DeVeaux, Cameron (1954), Gooley (2011), and Walker (2010) conclude that the appeal of jazz jam sessions to participants was that they were, unlike gigs, private affairs which only admitted professional musicians, often with an emphasis on competitive playing. More recent ethnographic studies of jazz jam sessions in New York City (e.g. Gazit 2015; Pinheiro 2012) describe similar circumstances, but focus on the potential of these events to overcome identity-based discrimination:

> Despite its hidden exclusions and hierarchies, the Vodou session privileges incorporation precisely because it generates personal contact that would not be otherwise available. It requires no invitation, no prior familiarity with any participant, and no affiliation with any particular group. It includes participants of different racial, gender and ethnic groups and facilitates interactions across racial, gender, and ethnic lines. Most importantly, it privileges musical competence, a set of learned skills, over other markers of social belonging. (Gazit 2015, 45)

Literature on jazz in Britain has followed a similar trajectory, from historical work focused on professional, presentational contexts (e.g. Newton 1961; Heining 2012), to more recent work on cultural inclusion, such as the various outputs of the Open University's 2009-2011 "What is Black British Jazz?" research project, including Doffman's (2013) article on jazz jam sessions in contemporary London.[10] He describes how the "fragmented and rather limited nature of the London scene" prior to the last few decades had "prevented the critical mass of players and audiences required to enable a productive milieu", with the much more vibrant contemporary scene including "ten to fifteen venues that host sessions across London" (Doffman 2013, 73). The "Tomorrow's Warriors" session, associated with a broader educational initiative focused on providing young Black musicians with developmental opportunities, is contrasted with the more typical professional sessions (specifically at *Ronnie Scott's* Jazz Club) deemed to have historically excluded Black performers.

As this brief overview reveals, academic texts on participatory music-making often (though not always) function as glowing testimonials, celebrating participatory events as an inclusive phenomenon existing in stark contrast to more conventional presentational music-making activities. This is evocative of Mark Slobin's characterisation of Finnegan's *Hidden Musicians* as not "hint[ing] at so much as a gram of the oppositional in every kilo of co-optation" (1993, 41), and ought to invite scrutiny. Live musical "participation" is characterised by interpersonal interaction,[11] and the

[10] As is the case for the open mic format, the relative scarcity of scholarship on jam sessions in the United Kingdom may suggest that the public participatory jazz jam session is a relatively recent phenomenon in the country.

[11] Scholars of participatory culture (e.g. Jenkins 1992) take the view that the private consumption of media can

influential work of Christopher Small – in a manner highly reminiscent of the sociologist Howard Becker's influential *Art Worlds* (1982) – drew attention to the contributions that non-performers (e.g. sound technicians, promoters, audience members) make to public instances of "musicking" (Small 1998). The potential for divergent perceptions and expectations that result in discord is therefore quite substantial, with Erving Goffman, most prominently identified with the school of *symbolic interactionism*, noting how

> If persons are to come together into a focused gathering and stay for a time, then certain "system problems" will have to be solved: the participants will have to submit to rules of recruitment, to limits on overt hostility, and to some division of labour. (1961, 8)

Many accounts of participatory music-making read as though these difficulties are automatically and irrevocably solved by the structure of the event. Goffman's peer Herbert Blumer warns against this as a common misconception, depicting individuals as active, analytical *agents*, and social life as inevitably dynamic and precarious:

> In dealing with collectivities and with joint action one can easily be trapped in an erroneous position by failing to recognize that the joint action of the collectivity is an interlinkage of the separate acts of the participants. This failure leads one to overlook the fact that a joint action always has to undergo a process of formation; even though it may be a well-established and repetitive form of social action, each instance of it has to be formed anew. (1969, 17)

This thesis posits that events dedicated to participatory music-making are not *necessarily* inclusive, and that a useful interpretative model should be accommodating of personal agency and subjectivity, and should pay particular attention to instances of discord and transgression.

Research Questions

This thesis seeks to develop a "more refined vocabulary" for the discussion of participation, as is sought by Jenkins, Ito and boyd (2016, 181). It takes several key questions as points of departure: How are public participatory events established and sustained? What is the social relationship between participants, and how might this best be illuminated and understood? What is the significance of the broader environment in shaping the character of public participatory music events? How is power/authority distributed, and how is this regulated to ensure that events remain inclusive? What is the function of objects – both concrete (e.g. instruments; written music) and abstract (e.g. repertoire) – at these events, and how are these interpreted and appropriated by participants? These questions are intended to address different facets of the overarching concern, which is how, and the extent to which, these events can fulfil their ostensible claim to prioritise and facilitate inclusivity.

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constitute a form of participation, and therefore, that people need not interact with others directly in order to be participating. Killick (2006) introduced a helpful contrasting term, "holication", in which the performing individual enjoys total, isolated involvement.

Methodology

As a graduate of the University of Sheffield MA in Ethnomusicology and an active local musician I was already a regular attendee of a range of public participatory events in the city before beginning this research project. It was this familiarity that inspired my confidence in the feasibility of (and insights to be gleaned from) considering folk sessions, jazz jam sessions, and open mic events together in a single research project. This may therefore seem like an unequivocal example of "ethnomusicology at home" (Stock and Chou 2008), and perhaps even more so for my being a white man born and raised in Northern England (the prominent demographic at these events) with prior experience and training in the performance of the straight-ahead jazz, instrumental folk, and popular song repertoire prominent at the events at which I was conducting fieldwork. My musical practice regimen and professional activity across the associated genres was certainly advantageous in my being able to easily interpret musical aspects of fieldwork data, but even in cases where my fellow participants were aware of my background (which they often were not) I do not feel like this caused my status to be notably elevated (the outcome described by Baily (2001)) above that of more regular attendees.

There were advantages to my professional status being little known and commented upon, such as my avoiding the inconvenience of being called to perform in a manner that hampered the effectiveness of my undertaking participant observation (an experience described by Flood (2017)), or potentially making other participants too nervous to behave as they might otherwise in my presence. While there were occasional instances in which knowledge of my status as a researcher seemed to cause some slight uneasiness in those who presumably now felt like they were being observed, I do not recall encountering direct antagonism to my project, as was experienced, for example, by Cottrell (2004, 19). The events at which I felt most "at home" and appreciated were the instrumental folk sessions that I had engaged with for the longest period of time: at which I understood myself to be less knowledgeable of and technically accomplished in the activity at hand than many of the other attendees, and where many of my fellow participants took an active interest in my ongoing research project.[12]

Ethical approval for the conduct of official ethnographic fieldwork was applied for and successfully granted at the outset of the project in the summer of 2015. Participant observation was begun in earnest, focusing on regular attendance at a small number of representative events (most consistently the Ceilidhsoc instrumental folk session; Green Room open mic; and White Lion jazz jam session), supplemented with occasional visits to other public participatory events of interest as I became aware of them. Fieldnotes were typed up immediately after events (often in the early hours of the morning), usually with the aide-memoire of some discretely documented observations noted on my phone while in attendance.

[12] This contrasts with Webster's experience of "research fatigue" at Fagan's (a pub located on Broad Lane, on the University of Sheffield campus): "The University of Sheffield's Music Department is renowned for its ethnomusicological research, and the close vicinity of Fagan's to the department goes some way to explaining the lack of surprise given to me by the attendees." (Webster 2011, 69, footnote 34).

One-to-one interviews with friends and acquaintances associated with the events I was attending were begun early in the process, with the audio being digitally recorded in a quiet location and later typed up in full with the aid of *Express Scribe* transcription software. My approach to interviews was intentionally open and only semi-structured, as I wanted to allow the conversation to drift across to the themes deemed most significant by my interviewees. Common themes emerged early in the interview process, informing my questions in the interviews that followed. My interviewees would frequently apologise for believing themselves to have pursued a conversational tangent of limited relevance. This content was often equally, if not more instructive than the answers given in direct response to my questions, and the gratitude that my interviewees expressed for the opportunity to explore their own reflections and conceptualisations without mitigation made it clear that this relaxed approach did much to contribute to the building of rapport.

It may have been this more relaxed approach to interviews that revealed some of the most illuminating findings of the research. The experiences of female participants can be easily overlooked by male researchers of public participatory music events, both because male researchers are likely to lack relatable experience, and because female participants may be reluctant to speak candidly about their experiences with a man that they do not anticipate being particularly sympathetic. During his fieldwork in the 1990s New York jazz scene, ethnomusicologist Travis Jackson found that his "attempt to include female musicians in my sample was hampered by their tacit refusals, even in those situations where other musicians or scene participants vouched for me" (Jackson 2012, 17). Female researchers are perhaps less likely to encounter this issue, but will struggle to compile a meaningful ethnography of the experiences of women in a music scene within which few women participate, and may be subjected to similar obstacles on the basis of their gender (cf. Appert and Lawrence 2020). The result is an everyday example of what Lyotard termed the *Differend*:

> You are informed that human beings endowed with language were placed in a situation such that none of them is now able to tell about it. Most of them disappeared then, and the survivors rarely speak about it. When they do speak about it, their testimony bears only upon a minute part of this situation. (Lyotard 1988, 1)

In essence, if we are dependent on those with direct experience of being excluded to highlight their exclusion, but they are, as a result, not present to share their perspective, then such exclusion is likely to go unnoticed, or at least be poorly documented. My existing friendships with female musicians across Sheffield had made me aware of the discrimination they face due to gender; and my track record of supporting and working with female musicians (for example, as a member of Genevieve Carver and the Unsung, whose second album and theatre piece "A Beautiful Way to Be Crazy" was dedicated to exploring the experiences of women in the music industry) may have resulted in some female interviewees being more willing to participate in my research project and candidly discuss their experiences and concerns.

To supplement the findings of my local fieldwork with broader context, I posted an exploratory question on a popular online forum for the sharing of British traditional musical materials. The

responses to this (ranging from the supportive and generous to the curt and derisory) made me realise that the rigour of my findings could be further substantiated via the distribution of an online survey. The survey was issued through various relevant pages on Facebook, and forwarded to contacts I anticipated might be interested, many of whom passed it on to other interested parties. The initial survey questions were designed to ascertain basic biographical details to help contextualise individual responses, including age, profession, specific participatory events attended in the past two years (indicating the breadth of attendance within a set period), frequency of attendance, perceived role(s) at these events, and the instrument(s) played there. Forty-four people, dispersed across the United Kingdom and of a diverse demographic range, completed the questionnaire, providing open responses of varying degrees of detail. The responses primarily related to the experience of attending events in British cities (usually local to the respondent) and helped to establish common characteristics and key distinctions between events of different kinds and in different locations. In documenting the expectations and experiences of participants, the survey revealed common tropes (e.g. the frequently noted frustration with those who "don't listen") that informed the structure and conclusions of the final thesis. As is to be expected, a couple of participants misunderstood the remit of the research project (assuming it to relate to gigs or rehearsals), and others did not engage with the necessary sincerity or openness (e.g. one respondent perceived a question on performance practice to "miss the point of traditional music sessions", without offering a corrective).

The broad remit of this research project has resulted in some relevant activities and aspects being necessarily overlooked. For example, there is a rich tradition of folk singing events in and around Sheffield (cf. Russell 2004; Hield 2010), and whilst I did attend several (most notably the traditional carols at the Royal Hotel pub in Dungworth) during my period of fieldwork, my own musical interests, expertise, and social contacts led me to gravitate towards events primarily focused on instrumental music and popular song performance. Of these, karaoke is another relevant and notable public participatory musical practice present in Sheffield, exploration of which would surely have produced interesting insights, but that time constraints prohibited me from addressing.

Some ethnomusicologists may query the absence of musical transcription and analysis from this thesis. Such a methodology is effective as a means of better understanding nuanced technical aspects of musical performance,[13] but I have concluded that it offers little in service of the socio-theoretical focus and agenda of this study, which instead follows the fieldwork-into-model orientation of texts such as Turino's (2008) *Music as Social Life* and Finnegan's (2007) *The Hidden Musicians*.

Chapter Summary

The chapters of this thesis might be framed in relation to basically interrogative terms. Chapter two explores *what* constitutes public participatory music events, providing three prominent examples

[13] This is adeptly demonstrated by the likes of Berliner (1994) and Monson (1996) in relation to jazz improvisation; and can be found in my earlier exploration of improvisational aspects of English folk music, which includes transcription and analysis of an instrumental folk session performance (Knowles 2013).

from my fieldwork and drawing parallels between them. Chapter three considers *who* attends these events, and *how* these individuals might be grouped, arguing that established models of "community" can be used as productive points of departure for interpreting fieldwork data, but may be prone to presenting an essentialist and reductive depiction of events and their social dynamics if not subjected to appropriate critique. Chapter four explores the significance of *where* public participatory music events take place, and the relationship between music-making and the "live music ecology" (Behr et al. 2016) within which it occurs. Chapter five investigates *how* events function to promote participation without lapsing into disorder, highlighting the paradox of exclusion entailed by effective efforts to include. Chapter six concludes the thesis, contemplating *why* public participatory music events are able to succeed in accommodating diversity, presenting two original theoretical models focused on the potential sources of tension between participants.

Chapter Two – Events

Finnegan's (2007) *The Hidden Musicians* noted some common ground between the different musical "pathways" that she explored during her substantial fieldwork in 1980s Milton Keynes. Referencing Becker's (1982) "Art Worlds", she introduces different musical worlds (e.g. "folk", "jazz", etc) as being

> [D]istinguishable not just by their musical styles but also by other social conventions: in the people who took part, their values, their shared understandings and practices, modes of production and distribution, and the social organisation of their collective musical practices. (Finnegan 2007, 31-2).

Whilst this approach delivered insights for Finnegan that remain pertinent to contemporary studies, I have instead chosen to group events on the basis of their shared participatory function, without emphasising objective genre categories. There are several reasons for this decision. Firstly, a single open mic – a form of event which does not appear in Finnegan's account – can be attended by a diverse range of performers, the combined repertoire of whom may be drawn from a wide array of different genres (as Finnegan would identify them). Secondly, my interlocutors were very vocal about and critical of the differences that they perceived between events that Finnegan would have treated as being essentially representative of one another on the basis of similar stylistic aesthetics:

> Open mics are very different from sessions, but I think, as well, there's two very different types of [folk] sessions. There's the Ceilidhsoc session, where just everybody joins in with the tune, and nobody ever sings a song, or very occasionally; and there's the more folk club type session, you know, old bloke with a guitar, old bloke with a guitar, old bloke with a guitar, going round in a circle, which is almost the opposite of a whole bunch of young people all just joining in together. (Chris interview)

Those I spoke to during my fieldwork also often drew my attention to the parallels between different participatory events that Finnegan would have interpreted as belonging to different "musical worlds":

> A lot of what you're trying to make sense of in the observations that you make are as much to do with the character of this as a small-town, local amateur event as they are to do with the nature of jam sessions. (Pete interview)

Finally, ethnomusicologists have placed emphasis on examining the processes and meanings at play in specific time-bound locales (e.g. Stone and Stone 1981). Categorising events as being of a common broader type (i.e. public participatory music events) can be helpful in inviting considered comparison, but emphasis on nebulous concepts (e.g. genre labelling) risks imprecision and dependence on assumptions and generalisations. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a brief introduction to three enduring events at which participant observation was conducted, and to identify key traits that justify their being considered alongside one another as examples of public participatory music events.

White Lion Jazz Jam Session

My interviewee Pete Lyons traces the origins of jazz jam sessions in Sheffield to the development of the institution now known as "Sheffield Jazz", but originally conceived as "Hurlfield Jazz", named after the Hurlfield School in which a regular adult jazz class began operating in approximately 1978. The organisers of this event ran an associated weekly jazz performance night at the Pomona pub on Ecclesall Road, with one night a month being run as a jam session. Other notable jazz jam sessions appeared at the "Old Grindstone" pub in Crookes in the early 1990s,[14] and at the "Art Room" café/bar on Campo Lane in the mid-2000s. According to Pete, the latter venue was closed and reopened with a new name ("Boho"), and under new management that was not interested in continuing to host the jam session. In response to this occurrence, a former participant of the defunct Art Room jam session approached the landlord of the "White Lion" pub in Heeley, who subsequently agreed to host a regular jazz jam session on the evening of the first Tuesday of each month.

Beginning in approximately 2007, The White Lion jazz jam session was originally facilitated by Pete Lyons and Jude Sacker, who were tutors at the weekly Sheffield Jazz workshops. Pete and Jude were initially paid by the venue, but the proprietor subsequently decided to cease payment. For a while, Pete continued to fulfil the role of facilitator on an unpaid basis, before relinquishing it to two of his saxophone students who were regular attendees of the event. The jazz jam session has now operated at the White Lion once a month for over a decade and continues to be attended primarily by individuals who have attended the weekly jazz workshop run in the King Edward VII School (which my interviewees inform me is divided into six stable groups of approximately ten students each, based on ability). Operating on the first Tuesday of the month from 8.30pm until 11pm, the success of the jam session spawned an additional session, organised by bassist Kate Whittaker, on the third Monday of each month at the same time and venue.

Based on his experience of jam sessions in Sheffield and London, Pete succinctly situates the White Lion jazz jam session within the broader context of similar events:

> The White Lion is a jam session, but it's an amateur one without a paid rhythm section. […] There's the [type] where somebody is paid to provide the rhythm section and facilitate the evening as a player, and has enough experience and competence to do that, and the purpose of it is to encourage as many people as possible to turn up and participate – that's a *real* jam session. And there's the one that is an adjunct to somebody's gig, and it's usually there for a different reason than facilitating people getting up and having a play: it's usually there to increase the kudos of the bandleader, or as a way of the bandleader persuading the venue proprietor that they can get more people into the building. (Pete interview)

During my fieldwork period I attended jazz events that corresponded to all three of the formats

[14] In an online panel discussion with the regional music organisation Jazz North, established Sheffield-based jazz vocalist and bass player Nicola Farnon identified the Grindstone session as the place at which she met many of the other now-established Sheffield jazz musicians when she first arrived in the city.

described by Pete (i.e. amateur; professionally facilitated; and adjunct). My particular focus on the White Lion jam session is due to it being one of the most enduring and most conveniently situated of these events, allowing me to cultivate a good level of familiarity with the venue and recurrent attendees.

The White Lion jazz jam sessions are unlike the other events at which I conducted participant observation in so far as their organisers do not make use of social media platforms to promote them, instead relying on word-of-mouth (notably at the associated jazz workshops), signage inside and (on the night of the event) outside of the venue, and sign-ups to an electronic mailing list (through the provision of an email address to the organisers). The events are advertised to those on the mailing list approximately two weeks in advance, with the same email inviting rhythm section (piano/guitar, bass and drum kit) players (whose accompaniment is considered essential for both aesthetic and practical reasons) to volunteer themselves to commit to attending the session.

The event officially begins at 8pm, although it is often closer to 9pm before coordinated performance of jazz repertoire begins. Participants often use the intermittent time to prepare their instruments, sort through “charts” (written music), and exchange greetings. The jam session occupies the main room of the pub, populated with fixed benches around its edges, moveable chairs and tables in its centre, and a quiz machine on its periphery. Performers occupy the far end of the room, with the rhythm players setting up their equipment in advance to face the open-plan main body of the pub. Non-performing attendees may sit around the performance space, stand at its perimeter, or withdraw to the open bar area to purchase a drink or hold a conversation within earshot of the performance. A separate bar and series of small rooms allows patrons to visit the pub without necessarily coming into contact with session participants, but access to the pub toilets entails skirting the edge of the performance space, and the small rear garden (where patrons go to smoke) can only be accessed by walking through it.

The instrumentation that I have observed at the White Lion jazz jam session includes electric piano (on which different sound patches are sometimes employed), drum kit, electric or double bass, guitar (usually electric), various saxophones, trumpet, trombone, violin, and the occasional vocalist. Participants are expected to provide their own amplification if required, but in my capacity as a participating bassist and guitarist I often gratefully accepted offers to use the amplifiers of other participants to avoid further cluttering of the busy performance space.

Pete succinctly summarises the role of conventions involved in realising the jazz jam session performance:

> The mechanisms that enable a jazz jam session to work […] are the same as that of a pick-up gig with a bunch of people that you've never met before. […] You play things that are part of the standard repertoire, and you use the standard organisational devices to begin the piece, to play through the thematic material, to divvy up the solos, to play the thematic material again at the end, and to finish in a coherent fashion. And there's a set of methods that are used to achieve that, which everybody at a certain level of experience and competence is

> familiar with. […] If you go to a jam session in order to have a play, then the organisational framework has to be of that kind, [or] else people wouldn't get a play. There'd be time wasted dealing with how to organise what's going on musically, […] so there has to be that bedrock of *taken-for-granted*. That's why people will go and play *All the Things You Are* for the millionth time, because you can just do it, and everybody gets a play, and that's the purpose of it. (Pete interview)

More recently the invitation email has included a guide to session etiquette (in the form of a brief list), proposed with a view to ensuring that "everyone has equal opportunity to participate". Participants were originally encouraged to write their name and the tune that they would like to play on a roster that is passed around throughout the evening, but this system was so frequently overlooked in favour of brief discussion that the email now stipulates that tunes only be listed if the session is busy (a situation in which it is perceived as being more likely that less confident or outspoken participants will not otherwise secure an opportunity to play the tunes of their choosing). It is asked that requested tunes be drawn from the "Real Book 6th Edition", published by Hal Leonard (2005), which contains some of the most prominent and approachable jazz "standard" repertoire from the late 1920s to the early 1970s, and which participants are expected to own and bring along to the event. It is specified that those who wish to play repertoire that does not appear in the book must provide sheet music in both concert and transposing pitches to enable all present to participate as easily as possible, and that vocalists must provide sheet music written in their preferred key (rather than expecting accompanists to transpose by sight, as is common practice for professional jazz performers).

The conventional structure of a jazz performance begins with the simultaneous statement of a "head" (composed melody), followed by all (or most) of the performers taking it in turns to solo over the harmonic scheme provided by the rhythm section, before the head is again repeated to close the performance. Who will take a solo, and in what order, is usually coordinated in the course of performance through gestural exchanges, though players will sometimes initiate a solo without having been invited to do so. It is generally understood that there is a maximum number of participants able to perform in a given role in the performance of a piece of repertoire. This is usually limited to a single drummer and bass player and one or two harmonic accompanists (e.g. guitar and/or keyboard), in order to reduce the likelihood of extensive harmonic and rhythmic clashes in the accompaniment; a number of "frontline" players (usually horn players, who are expected to play the melody in the absence of a vocalist, and to play individual solos) that is very unlikely to exceed five; and, if in attendance, a single vocalist. If there are more participants in attendance at the event, then some degree of rotation of personnel in each role is anticipated between pieces. Other guidelines have been introduced at the White Lion jazz jam session to ensure a rotation of personnel and repertoire, including potential participants only being permitted to join in if already on stage ("not from the audience"); a maximum of four soloists per tune; and swapping with any other participants-in-waiting for the same role (i.e. as the drummer; or as one of the front-line players) after two tunes.

CeilidhSoc Session

The University of Sheffield Ceilidh Society, more commonly referred to as "CeilidhSoc", originated in 1989 as the university "Folk Society". My interviewee Steve Yates, who was involved in establishing the society while studying for a Masters degree at the university, explained how the group organised and promoted ceilidh dances in the larger indoor spaces available around the university (i.e. the Octagon, Halifax Hall, and the Blind Institute). Since I first became aware of them in 2012 I have observed these ceilidhs to have taken place on a fortnightly basis throughout the autumn and spring semesters at "The Edge", a large central activity space located in the Endcliffe student village. The ceilidhs have enjoyed immense success, on occasion drawing close to 200 participants. It is perhaps due to the location in which the dances take place - being convenient and highly visible to the concentration of students living in Endcliffe village - and the discounted admission fee available to members of the society, that CeilidhSoc has claimed the largest membership of any of the University Union student societies (of which there are around 300) on multiple occasions in its 35-year history.

The CeilidhSoc instrumental session was established, in conjunction with (but separate to) the ceilidhs, at the Red House pub on Solly Street around 1990, where it continued to operate until 2006 (Mike interview). It has since relocated to various pubs within what is deemed to be a reasonable walking distance from the university, including the University Arms, The Bath Hotel, Dada, The Three Cranes, Shakespeare's, moving from a Tuesday evening to a Wednesday at the The Doctor's Orders, and ultimately relocating to its current location of the Dog & Partridge pub on Trippet Lane. Due to its affiliation with the university society, the typical demographic of participants has been notably younger than that of an average folk session, and when I first attended in 2013 many of the regular participants were graduates and postgraduate students in their late 20s and early 30s. There is a trend of generations of CeilidhSoc alumni going on to form independent splinter sessions at venues across the city (notably at Fagan's, The Three Tuns, and Shakespeare's). The majority of the folk session fieldwork related in this thesis was undertaken at the Shakespeare's event, which operated under the aegis of CeilidhSoc until 2016 before continuing as an independently run session when the official CeilidhSoc session relocated to The Doctor's Orders.

The CeilidhSoc sessions have typically taken place in the largest available space of the hosting pub. In Shakespeare's, this is the "Bard's Bar", a long, thin room which serves as one of two available thoroughfares to the pub's large garden, and which contains a jukebox (only ever operated during the session as a point of novelty) and a dartboard. Seating consists of long tables with benches either side, with tables often being pushed to the wall so that session participants sit in two inward facing rows with an aisle between them. This allows participants to face each other unobstructed while they play, and to visit the bar or toilet without requiring others to move. Non-participants, who are sometimes guests of those playing, may occupy the other tables and play darts. Pub patrons who are unfamiliar with the session may applaud the musicians, making comments and asking questions that make clear that they have interpreted the session as a prepared performance delivered for their benefit. Instruments commonly played at the event include the fiddle, tin whistle, acoustic guitar, mandolin, various "squeezeboxes" (e.g. accordion, melodeon, and concertina), and portable

percussion instruments such as the bodhran and cajon. Less common instruments that have been played by participants include the harp, clarinet, alto saxophone, cello, ukulele bass, erhu, and synthesizer, but these are considered unusual and idiosyncratic.[15]

Tunes are played simultaneously by all who wish to play along, and participants will usually attempt to do so with all but the most complex and unusual tunes. The resulting approximation is conducive to a "heterophonic" texture, further exaggerated by the introduction of subtle variations in ornamentation and phrasing between one player and the next. Common tune types include jigs, reels, polkas, and slip jigs, most of which have between two and four sections that are usually repeated (e.g. AABBCC), sometimes with slightly different endings on repeat. Harmonic accompaniment is typically provided by instruments capable of delivering it (e.g. guitars and squeezeboxes), often combining sustained drone notes (usually on the tonic or dominant) and conventional chord formulae.

Tunes are usually spontaneously initiated by individuals who begin playing in the hope that others will play along with them, and are repeated several times, sometimes as part of a connected "set" of two or three different tunes. It is conventional for the instigator of the first tune to remain the default leader for the duration of the set, cueing the next piece with a shout, often of the new key (if known) primarily for the benefit of accompanists. Changes may also be signalled with the raising of a leg, as is more typical for wind players (whose mouths are preoccupied with the execution of the current tune). Tunes may be selected through discussion, or coaxed from shy individuals by others, with the contribution of material representing somewhat of a rite of passage. My attempts to play along quietly with unfamiliar tunes as a means of learning them were tolerated at the CeilidhSoc session as an earnest attempt to participate, where this approach was met with open disapproval (to the effect of "if you don't know the tune, don't play it!") at some other events. As I identified in my MA thesis (Knowles 2013), the original source of the tunes is often unknown or considered of limited importance by participants of the CeilidhSoc session (quite unlike the session described by Stock (2004)).

As well as inclusion on signage in the hosting pub that lists regular events, and mention on an official Facebook page, instrumental folk sessions operating in association with CeilidhSoc are promoted at the ceilidhs, and it has historically been taken as a basic responsibility of the societal committee members to ensure adequate attendance to facilitate the participation of any new or impromptu attendees.[16] Since the Shakespeare's session began operating independently of CeilidhSoc, this responsibility has become more of a polite obligation than an official commitment, with participants using a private Facebook page to establish whether an adequate number of people are intending to attend, opting to reschedule if this is not the case. The extended opening hours of Shakespeare's has been conducive to a relaxed approach to the timing of the session. In the mid-2010s CeilidhSoc offered a free hour-long music workshop at 8pm, delivered by a designated member of the society committee and intended to integrate neophytes into the session, and this made 9pm a logical choice

[15] Stock (2004) participated in the Red House session as a bassoon player.
[16] Occasional lapses in the fulfilment of this obligation have been a recurrent source of tension over the years.

for the beginning of the official session. However, the presence of less advanced players who had attended the earlier workshop and a calculated aspiration to include them in session proceedings resulted in the first hour or so of the session being dedicated to less challenging repertoire (including that covered in the workshop), with more advanced players often preferring to arrive after 10pm. The Doctor's Orders insisted that the session finish by 10.30pm, and it was decided by the committee that an earlier start time would need to be more strictly observed to maximise playing opportunity across the evening. It was dissatisfaction with these circumstances that prompted relocation of the event to the Dog & Partridge.

Green Room Open Mic

The weekly Monday night open mic event at the centrally located "Green Room" bar on Division Street was frequently cited by my interviewees as being either highly significant to them personally ("If I was going to do an open mic, or even a gig, anywhere in the world, it'd just be at the Green Room" (Stewis interview); "Literally my whole life is the Green Room" (Marie interview)), or as a successful and popular open mic which had some influence on the design of their own event ("Obviously Monday is the Green Room" (Jane interview)). Taking place in the main room of the venue in front of a large window visible from the street, the open mic runs from 8pm until midnight each Monday. The event's origins can be traced to the late 2000s, originally being organised and facilitated by two established Sheffield pop/rock musicians. After a short hiatus around 2009, the open mic resumed with Glenn Jackson as facilitator (a role sometimes referred to as "compere" or "host"), being rebranded as "The Monday Club". Glenn is an esteemed local musician who had his first experience of running an open mic in the early 1990s:

> I ended up getting a job at the Slug and Fiddle from my uncle, the drummer who'd put me onto this contact, and said "Van Morrison's guitarist has moved to Sheffield and opened a live music venue", and it was the Slug and Fiddle. And this guy, Herbie Armstrong, I got to know him, and we got on really well, and I ended up in his band, and my brother ended up drumming for him. And he'd started, at his new venue, well, I guess you'd call it an "open mic" or a "jam session"; you could either jam or you could get up on your own. (Glenn interview)

Seeking to retain this blurring of an open mic and jam session format at the Monday Club, Glenn provides a range of equipment that participants are welcome to use:

> I get here early, set all the gear up, tune all the guitars, tune the drum kit, get the levels right, soundcheck the mics, get the lights nice and stuff like that, and when it's good to go it's kind of in the public's hands then. (Glenn interview)

The event is organised using a sign-up sheet that is placed on the bar in front of the compere's mixing desk (facing the performance space), and participants add their name (or the name of their act) to this sheet to secure a slot that is, at least officially, 15 minutes or three songs in length. The majority of the performers use this opportunity to sing rock and pop songs (both originals and covers), accompanying themselves on guitar or keyboard, but the available equipment also gives participants the option of inviting (or receiving offers from) others to perform in an ensemble with

them, often without prior collective preparation. The event has an unusually broad reportorial remit, with notable hosted examples beyond the more common troubadours and pop/rock ensembles including classical vocalists and rappers performing to prepared backing tracks (the use of which is controversial and even prohibited at many other open mics); instrumental folk, jazz, and blues ensembles; spoken word poets; magicians; and dancers of various traditions (including Appalachian clog, and burlesque). The Monday Club is promoted using a dedicated public Facebook page curated by Glenn, on which he regularly posts celebratory live videos and pictures of performers at the open mic. The character of the Monday Club is very similar to that of a Manchester-based open mic event described by Edensor et al.:

> Advanced musical skill is not a prerequisite. There is an atmosphere of support and encouragement for first-timers and those who lack advanced musical skill or confidence on stage, the antithesis of talent shows at which judges pronounce on the talent of the performer. Almost all levels of proficiency are tolerated and even the most mundane or haphazard efforts will be applauded by an audience willing to accept almost anyone who is willing to give it a go. (Edensor et al. 2015, 151)

Glenn notes that the running of the list in order is "the only rule" (Glenn interview) governing the structure of the event, but there are some exceptions made to this established process. Firstly, participants travelling in from out of town may contact the compere ahead of the event to request a slot at a certain time, thus ensuring their journey is not in vain. Secondly, Glenn will sometimes ask regulars (who may perform similar, if not identical material from one week to the next) if they are willing to let those who are new to the event perform before them:

> I always say "look, if there's somebody who's not been in, not got up yet, or not had chance, do you mind if they go on first?". […] So in a way it's not like manoeuvring people as such, as just asking permission, rather - "do you mind if we mix it up a bit?" (Glenn interview)

Thirdly, "featured artists" – who are, at some open mics, booked well in advance and offered a substantially longer performance slot, and sometimes even payment – may be offered a slightly extended slot at the Green Room on the basis of it making a contribution to their career whilst being anticipated to function as a polished performance that will attract audience interest:

> If somebody's advertising something or pushing something, or needs help with promoting something, and has said "can I come down and do a spot and push it?", then I don't mind that, of course. But it don't have to be too long - I think 20 minutes, 25 minutes tops is probably, […] pushing it. If I would say normally "you put your name on the list you get three songs", five songs could be good for a featured artist, I think. Not too much, you know? Don't go on for too long. […] And also I'm going to make sure whatever featured artist is really good. (Glenn interview)

Participants will sometimes commit to the performance of repertoire that overruns the allocated slot (e.g. through performing extended improvised solos), but Glenn uses a number of strategies to mitigate this issue. If providing accompaniment to the performer, he will offer subtle musical hints, gesture, or address them quietly recommending that they bring the performance to an end. If not

performing, Glenn notes how "ultimately I'm in charge of the PA" and will utilise this control to mute the microphones or introduce background music to signal the end of the performance.

Conclusion: Common Features

These case studies demonstrate a series of common features that are broadly representative of the public participatory music events that I encountered during my fieldwork (and are reflective of published accounts of other events of this type). The events take place in characteristically similar venues – notably pubs and bars – on regular weekday evenings, and they are free to attend. During my fieldwork I was made aware of one event – a jazz jam session at The Library, Attercliffe – that tried charging participants to cover the cost of a paid rhythm section, but the event quickly closed down for reasons outlined by Carole:

> They wanted to charge a fiver to go in and jam with the house band. Well the house band comprised of people like [a double bassist], who I'm playing with at the White Lion for free. With all respect to [the player], I'm not going to pay a fiver to see [them] play when I can go to the White Lion and jam with [them] for free! (Carole interview)

Another common feature of public participatory music events is that they are open to members of the public in the capacity of both participant and onlooker. All of the encountered events also have some degree of organisational oversight, be that in the form of an officially designated facilitator (as is the case for every open mic that I have encountered), or participants who shoulder some responsibility for convening and coordinating the event (sometimes unofficially). In these aspects, the public participatory music events that I have described above are essentially very similar in character to "community music" "workshops", which represent a form of "collaborative arts activity that seeks to articulate, engage, and address the needs, experiences, and aspirations of the participants and as such is defined by its method of work and aims, rather than by any art form itself" (Higgins 2012, 14).[17] The orientation of community music events is essentially remedial, taking the form of an "*active intervention* between a music leader or facilitator and participants" (ibid., 21, emphasis added), directed primarily towards obtaining positive social outcomes. This clearly distinguishes such events from those that I have attended in my fieldwork, the function of which is primarily oriented towards entertainment, personal learning, and (for venues, and many facilitators) profit.

The events that I have attended are also characterised by a foundational repertoire that is intended to facilitate participation. This may be explicitly identified in the name of the event, as is the case with CeilidhSoc, which is dedicated to the breadth of instrumental ceilidh repertoire. Other examples are more restrictive, such as the Sheffield "Eurosession", dedicated to the performance of folk tune repertoire of European origin; or Martin Christie's "Electronic Music Open Mic" ("EMOM"), at which performances are expected to incorporate electronic instrumentation. Foundational repertoire can also be shaped or implied by the technology available in the space, for

[17] Examples of the open mic format being used in community music or therapeutic settings can be found in DeNora (2013) and Harrison (2020).

example, the regular presence of “house” amplifiers and a drum kit at the Green Room enables, and effectively invites, participants to “jam” on classic rock songs, the normalcy of which would be mitigated by impracticality were this equipment not provided. Foundational repertoire can also be shaped by the ready availability and accessibility of media, as is the case with the Real Book at the White Lion jazz jam session. There is also a degree to which participants who encounter each other at different public participatory music events become familiar with each other’s repertorial choices. Mutual familiarity with this repertoire makes it an expedient choice for facilitating participation, and it is common for such pieces to appear across similar events that share participants. Faulkner and Becker describe this process in the case of jazz gigs in the United States:

> Groups of players who don’t always play together nevertheless eventually acquire a shared repertoire. They may not have rehearsed, but they have played the same things together many times, in various combinations, and thus have developed what might be called network-specific repertoires, bodies of material they can expect others in the group to know and be ready to play, because they have done it often in the past. […] Geographic areas develop community-wide musical repertoires as, over the years, the local players work with one another and come to know substantial amounts of material in common. (Faulkner and Becker 2009, 187)

Another common characteristic of these events is that, unlike formal presentational performance contexts, they are intentionally unplanned or spontaneous in one aspect or more. In the case of events dedicated to simultaneous participation, the inclusion of whomever is in attendance results in performances of a necessarily ephemeral character, as the unplanned combination of participating individuals deliver renditions of pieces with a minimum of prior coordination. While open mic nights may entail individual performers delivering polished renditions of prepared repertoire, spontaneity is usually introduced by the social composition of attendees being unplanned and, at least in part, unexpected. Jack, compere of the “Rotunda Sessions” open mic, describes having to book in acts to ensure a full bill, yet still insists on retaining a flexibility to the order of the evening, and inviting participants to vary their contributions:

> To begin with – partly because people didn’t really know about it, and we hadn’t really got any regulars or anything like that – we were having to sort of book it. […] Even though it was an open mic, we were having to book the acts in. We’ve got 8 slots. If you email us a week in advance you can have one, and we’ll have you a slot reserved, and the lineup will be decided based on when people arrive, or if people need to get off early, or whatever. It’s not going to be a rigid “these are your stage times”. It’s still just going to be 3 songs, you know, […] turn up, do whatever you want. […] We were concerned that we were literally having the same eight people every time, so we had to sort of say, “it’s nice man, what you’re doing, but now take a month and try and do some new ones, rather than coming and doing the same three songs every time.” (Jack interview)

Having established commonalities between the public participatory music events encountered during fieldwork, the following chapter will explore some of the academic approaches taken to the definition and interpretation of human collectivities as a means to illuminating the social dynamics

at play at public participatory music events. Chapter four will then take a closer look at the impact of contextual factors on the character of music events in Sheffield, before chapter five addresses how different elements of public participatory events may be regulated to shape the character of participation.

Chapter Three – Communities

Focusing on seemingly isolated, non-Western kinship groups, early anthropologists (and comparative musicologists) grouped individuals based on their genealogy, in the belief that racial biology was a significant determinant of the human experience of music and the world. By the mid-twentieth century, anthropologists – whose work has provided the major socio-theoretical foundations of ethnomusicology since Merriam's 1964 *Anthropology of Music* – had largely discarded the (theoretically ineffective and ethically problematic) biological model in favour of viewing "culture" as the significant determinant of experience, and thus of character. This perspective was famously espoused by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz:

> Men without culture [...] would be unworkable monstrosities with very few useful instincts, fewer recognizable sentiments, and no intellect: mental basket cases. (1973, 49)

Fieldwork thus sought to identify cultural traits and behaviours that the studied social group appeared to have in common, with elder "culture bearers" – those possessing the greatest quantity of experience - being interpreted as able to provide the fullest account of *their* culture, in terms of both historical reach and depth of understanding. The introduction of Paul F. Berliner's *The Soul of Mbira* is a good example of this, detailing the ethnomusicologist's excitement about the prospect of meeting "Bandambira", whom he describes as "a member of the oldest living generation of mbira players", and therefore "likely to have a great knowledge of the history and oral traditions associated with the mbira" (1993, 3). This account is particularly interesting because Bandambira chose to consistently mislead Berliner before finally deciding (in the face of other local people whispering in the background, "No, don't tell him; it's our secret!", or "Oh, tell him; he's our friend now" (ibid., 7)) to divulge this information. Berliner's emphasis is on Bandambira's apparently superior knowledge, and his positioning in the social hierarchy that rendered him the accepted deliberator as to what to share with the fieldworker and when. A seemingly overlooked aspect of this account is that there was demonstrably not a uniformity of understanding or opinion among the people of whom Bandambira was presented by Berliner as being a representative.

Anthropology underwent a "crisis of representation" in the 1980s, as practitioners became concerned over the extent to which they were, in their publications, super-imposing their own ideas (and ideals) over those of the people that they studied (Clifford and Marcus 1986). In the light of the contribution of a series of autoethnographic publications (of which Paul Rabinow's 1977 *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco* is a seminal example), fieldworkers began to acknowledge their own reflexivity and "self-consciousness", which had historically been stifled in the name of aspirations to a scientific "objectivity" that was increasingly recognised as unattainable for, and inappropriate to, qualitative social science. Many anthropologists also made explicit effort to ascribe the same complexity and individuality that they acknowledged within and among themselves to the people that they studied (e.g. Shostak 1981; Dwyer 1982; Cohen 1994; Rapport 1997). Just as Rabinow was famously critical of his older anthropological mentor, Clifford Geertz, it is conceivable that not all of the Shona people would feel represented by the words or actions of Bandambira.

Though the theory and practice of ethnomusicology remains tightly bound with that of anthropology (e.g. the disciplines are frequently taught and researched in the same academic departments), ethnomusicological work still almost always takes the aggregate social unit as a default point of departure; with the activities, aptitudes, and attitudes of whom frequently being interpreted (implicitly or explicitly) as homogeneous, and thus discernible through the interrogation of representative individuals.

When ethnomusicologists have focused their work on individuals this has usually been on the assumption of the individuals examined being somehow ordinary to a parent culture, and thus representative of it (e.g. Rice 1994); or – as is common to music studies more broadly – culturally renowned and significant to the point of embodying and/or influencing the character of the broader culture to which they are considered to belong (e.g. Danielson 1997; Stock 1996). The orientation of this work contrasts with that of the above-mentioned anthropologists, who have focused on individuals to illustrate and emphasise the characteristics, tastes and experiences of any one individual as being unique to that of any other. Though ethnomusicologists have conceded to the complex and unique nature of the individual (e.g. Keil et al. 1993; Turino 2008, 101), the challenge this poses to the validity and accuracy of ethnomusicological accounts – that might be read as essentialising and synecdochical in this regard – has only quite recently been addressed directly (e.g. Stock 2001; Ruskin and Rice 2012).

Ethnomusicologists have largely persisted in contemplating the people studied as an essentially united collective, commonly evoking the concept of "community" when focusing on sub-groupings of populations of the modernised West. Raymond Williams identifies the historical uses of the term "community" to refer to "actual social groups", in the form of a state, district, or small organised society; or to "a particular quality of relationship", possessed by those "holding something in common", "a sense of common identity and characteristics" (1983, 75). The term, in the latter of the interpretations identified by Williams, is commonly applied to participatory music groups by ethnomusicologists (e.g. Hield 2010; Bithell 2014). This is, at least in part, because participants commonly use and identify with the term, as I found to be the case for my own interviewees:

> There was a definite sort of *community* of people there. (Owain interview, speaking of fond memories of CeilidhSoc events)
>
> We're doing this because we like to do it, and it seems to serve a bit of a *community* function. I've met a bunch of musicians through it, and we help a bunch of musicians who've met each other through it. (Jack interview)
>
> I love traditional music, it moves me greatly, and I also love the sense of *community*. (Q34.17)[18]

Note that my interviewees' usage of the word "community" is sentimental, connotative of the user's sense of membership, or approval of the group discussed. This is the function of the term in common

[18] Citations presented in this format refer to online survey responses, with the first number identifying the individual respondent, and the second number identifying the question to which the quotation is responding. The full list of survey questions is included as an appendix to this thesis.

parlance; it "seems never to be used unfavourably, and never to be given any positive opposing or distinguishing term" (Williams 1983, 76). Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman argues that the function of the concept of "community" is to remediate the alienating effects of modern capitalist society, standing for "the kind of world which is not, regrettably, available to us – but which we would dearly wish to inhabit and which we hope to repossess" (2000, 3). In his influential book on nationalism, Benedict Anderson similarly concluded that "all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined" (1983, 15).

Given its frequent characterisation as a purely conceptual construct, it is perhaps surprising that "community" continues to be evoked casually in much academic work, in which it often "signifies something vague and ill-defined, an excuse for not thinking hard enough about what exactly it is that people do have in common" (Day 2006, 2). This is still commonly the case in music studies, in spite of indictments from figures such as popular music scholars Negus and Velasquez that strongly advise against the uncritiqued endorsement of the significance of cultural or collective identity: "too often identity seems to be a conclusion to be illustrated through a case study rather than an idea to be interrogated, explored and then expanded, or perhaps even abandoned" (2002, 134).

"Community" is problematic to the extent that the term is evidently polysemous, but often employed without adequate clarification or qualification; seemingly on the grounds of conveniently negating the need to identify all of the specific individuals to whom the researcher's observations (supposedly) apply. The overall orientation of my thesis urges for a shift in focus away from social groups and onto objects as points of interaction between individuals. For all of its (frequently obfuscating) shortcomings, rather than recommending the abrupt abandonment of the concept and terminology of "community", I suggest that it deserves further interrogation for two key reasons. Firstly, the people among whom we conduct fieldwork often do identify themselves as being members of, or excluded from, distinct social groups, and their perception of this is significant to, and impactful upon their values and lived experience. The emic significance of this identification of self and other would render any ethnographic account from which it is entirely omitted problematically unrepresentative. Secondly, I agree with Vered Amit's assessment that the multiplicity of interpretations of "community" make it a "genus of concepts", and therefore "good to think with" (2010, 358); and with her conclusion that a "more effective working model of community", rather than seeking to classify individuals into groups, "must […] focus on the uncertainties arising in the intersection between the idea and actualization of sociation" (ibid.). Taking Amit's lead, I will thus engage critically with some common interpretations of "community" presented in popular ("folk") and academic discourse, using it to structure the discussion, whilst simultaneously exposing the shortcomings of the uncritical adoption of the term and a singular interpretation of its scope.

This chapter is divided into four main sections, each addressing a different model of "community". The first of these considers community as based on apparent likeness between members, focusing on a model developed by the ethnomusicologist Kay Kaufman Shelemay (2011). The second section considers the interpretation of community as defined by subjective sentiment, and particularly the concept of boundaries that establish the insider/outsider status of individuals. The work of

psychologists McMillan and Chavis (1986) has been highly influential in regard to this interpretation. The third section focuses on the interpretation of community as built around common practice, as has been most notably espoused by the anthropologist Jean Lave and educational theorist Etienne Wenger, both together (1991) and separately (Wenger 1998). The final section addresses the interpretation of community as built around common symbols, as is succinctly advanced in the work of anthropologist Anthony Cohen (1985).

Communities of Shared Characteristics

Shelemay's (2011) article in the *Journal of the American Musicological Association* presents a relatively recent effort to produce a model of the formation of human collectivities in relation to the study of music. She chooses to define such in terms of "community", seeking to "redefine and deepen approaches to the term", rather than "casting about for nominal alternatives" (350), some of which – "scene", "subculture", "art world" and "musical pathway" – she addresses briefly. Drawing primarily on her fieldwork with Ethiopian American immigrants, Shelemay develops a tripartite model of community formation. Communities, she argues, may be the product of "inherited or ascribed factors" ("descent"); "specific ideological commitments or connections" ("dissent"); or "individual volition" ("affinity") (2011, 374).

Shelemay's model neatly summarises the approaches typical of different disciplines in the selection and discussion of social groups. Anthropologists and ethnomusicologists studying apparently isolated kinship groups (as were the primary focus of early fieldwork in these disciplines) identified the "community" of study as those who lived their whole lives in the company of a small number of others due to familial *descent*, without access to alternative lifeways or cultural repertoires. In contrast, American sociologists (particularly those of the "Chicago School") and scholars of what has become known as "British Cultural Studies", have keenly studied the lifestyles of social groups who exist within or alongside, but reject, or are excluded by, middle class, mainstream, "Western" society. American sociologists have been particularly interested in the unconventional lifestyles and behaviours of jazz musicians (e.g. Becker 1963; Merriam and Mack 1960), while scholars of British Cultural Studies have been especially interested in youth subcultures, such as punk (Hebdige 1979) and goth (Hodkinson 2002). The authors essentially interpret the activities of these groups as constituting *dissent*. Ethnographic studies of amateur and fan engagement with popular music have emphasised the role of personal *affinity* – for both musical forms, and famous musical personalities (e.g. Cavicchi 1998) – as a primary motivation for engagement, and connection between individuals.

Accounts from individual participants of the CeilidhSoc session of how they initially became involved with folk music can be interpreted with reference to Shelemay's categories. Descent is a commonly evoked narrative in regard to the perceived human composition of the British folk scene, and there certainly are individuals whose initial engagement might be convincingly categorised as such:

> I got into folk music through my parents, indirectly. [...] They've been folkies for a long time; since they met essentially, so in their twenties, I guess. They started wanting a new [...] hobby [...] so they started to take up folk dancing [...], which they still do, to this day. So they got into it and they met lots of friends, so they started going to festivals, and then when me and my

> sister came along we just got taken to festivals as a matter of course. So I've been going to Sidmouth [an annually occurring folk festival in southern England] since I was one year old. (Owain interview)

There is also a common perception among participants of the folk scene that accounts such as Owain's represent by far the most typical route into folk participation, as Ollie illustrates:

> All of the people I know – young people folkies I know – are second generation at least. A lot of their parents got into folk music in the '70s, the second folk revival. They grew up being taken to festivals, and got into it that way. (Ollie interview)

While it has historically been, and remains, commonplace for multiple musicians to emerge from the same family, the notion of this being particularly the case among performers of traditional musics may have developed popular currency, at least in part as a result of the many renowned professional folk practitioners who actively promote their familial relationships and regularly engage in collaborative projects with family members (for example, in the English folk scene specifically, Martin and Eliza Carthy; Sandra and Nancy Kerr; The Copper Family; The Unthanks). While my own knowledge of the broader British folk scene testifies to a notable (but by no means absolute) degree of family engagement among folk practitioners, this need not necessarily constitute "descent" in the conventional sense. Ollie's own account is particularly interesting, as he acknowledges that it represents an inversion of the classic descent narrative:

> I grew up listening to classical music, because that was on in the house. My parents don't know anything about music, but they like music, Dad in particular. This one track by Fairport Convention was played at primary school [...] as we went in and out of assembly for about a week, I think. And I really liked it, asked the teacher if I could borrow the CD, and [...] it just went from there. [...] [Dad] and Mum have been to a couple of folk gigs whilst I've been living away, so, yeah, the transition has very definitely been the other way around. Dad's now started [traditional Morris] dancing himself. (Ollie interview)

Several of the CeilidhSoc participants that I interviewed attributed their introduction to folk music to their school and instrumental teachers, rather than to members of their own family. Nicola began attending folk sessions in her teens with her Dad and a supportive guitar teacher, though recounts how her initial, pointed enthusiasm for folk music exceeded that of her parents, and was felt to be in defiance of the wishes of her then violin teacher:

> [We were] not a particularly folkie family then, but [Dad] had a few records, and I always thought the fiddle was cool, so seven-year-old me wanted to play the fiddle. And I was the only one in the school that – because where I live is very brass orientated – [...] wanted to play the violin. [...] I had a teacher who was very much, "you must do this", and I did not want to do that, and he wouldn't bend his teaching method. [...] So we didn't really agree on anything whatsoever, and I started teaching myself from an Irish fiddle book, and learning by ear, and just kind of playing that. (Nicola interview)

Whilst Nicola did eventually attend folk events with a parent, her account suggests, as is the case for Ollie, that her parent's engagement with folk participation was inspired by, and perhaps largely in support of, their child's affinity for the music. The language Nicola uses in recounting how her interest diverged from that which was expected of her peer group, and was resisted by her violin teacher, presents a strong case for her interest constituting *dissent* from conventional and institutionalised norms.

Alé came to Sheffield from Seville, Spain for an ERASMUS year of study, and had some previous experience of playing the recorder, but identified no significant engagement with folk music prior to encountering it in the University of Sheffield Students' Union:

> That's how I started going to sessions: I just found [CeilidhSoc] in the activities fair in the university, second semester. I saw them dancing some ceilidh in the middle of the alley, and I just loved it, and I wanted to join in. (Alé interview)

As with Ollie and Nicola, Alé's parents were forthcoming in their support of their son's emerging interest, as embodied in their gifting him with a bodhran (a frame drum, strongly associated with Irish traditional music).

As these examples illustrate, the early experiences of each of these musicians can be interpreted and essentially categorised in line with Shelemay's model (Owain's introduction most apparently constituting *descent*, Nicola's *dissent*, and Ollie and Alé's *affinity*). Although there is some notable common ground in their experiences – parental encouragement, and engagement with a form of music that they each acknowledge to be niche within the context of mainstream society – the biographies of these co-participants may seem too disparate to support a clear claim to them representing a single community on these grounds. Shelemay goes some way to mitigating this by identifying the three community types as falling on a continuum (with descent and affinity on each end and dissent in the middle):

> At moments, multiple communities can be superimposed in one "real place" or within a single musical event. Depending on the ethnographic or historical data, a given musical community may be more clearly located along one region of the continuum […]. Another might span the entire length of the continuum at a given point in time or generate different communities at different historical moments. (2011, 376)

In the case of CeilidhSoc, explaining diversity in participants' backgrounds as representing multiple communities would seem illogical given that the origins of their participation in folk music (be they related to descent, dissent, or affinity) seemed to have no significant or consistent bearing on their experience of participation in the session or on their perception of themselves as a group. Similarly, arguing that CeilidhSoc represents a community that "spans the entire length of the continuum" (ibid.) would seem to undermine the usefulness of the model, given that it is intended to highlight meaningful and consistent commonalities between individuals. This leaves the option of considering CeilidhSoc as being "more clearly located along one region of the continuum" (ibid.). Beyond the initial context of their exposure, it can be assumed that CeilidhSoc participants continue to engage with folk music and each other of their own individual volition, suggesting the enduring significance

of *affinity* to their participation, making this perhaps the most prominent, and therefore ostensibly defining aspect of the CeilidhSoc "community" more generally.

However, this latter interpretation is not particularly satisfactory either, as it necessarily entails overstating the commonalities between individuals and presenting a reductive and essentialising account of their motives and relationships. Affinity may be more varied than the "sheer sonic attraction" and reverence of "the role of a charismatic musician or performer" that Shelemay attributes to communities of fandom (2011, 374), and it should not be taken for granted that even these two identified aspects will constitute things for which all fans have an affinity. In his ethnographic research into the engagement of disadvantaged youths in Newcastle upon Tyne with "new monkey" (a rapid form of electronic dance music, related to Spanish Makina, and notably characterised by the inclusion of synthetic "chipmunk" vocals), Rimmer (2010) provides an example of individuals choosing to consistently engage with a form of music without possessing initial enthusiasm for its sound:

> Many listeners find new monkey to be an intense, unusual and far from immediately inviting listening experience. Not only was it generally disliked by the centre's youth workers, by the lads' parents and many of the other young people I spoke to across the city, it even took some time, several of the lads admitted, until it revealed its particular charms to them. (262)

In a similar example drawn from my own fieldwork, an established local musician, at a public participatory music event that he frequently came to observe, commented to me that the general standard of the performance made it consistently unpleasant to listen to, and that he would be embarrassed to participate in it. Surprised by this statement, I asked him why, given his assessment, he continued to attend so regularly, to which he simply responded, "for the craic". While the rather uncharitable assessment made by this person might be interpreted as an exaggeration given that the performance was evidently not offensive enough to their sensibilities to drive them away, this example does illustrate that those who engage with musical events are not always enamoured with the sonic experience of doing so.

It is quite typical of participants of public participatory events to attend and scrutinise many of the regular events in their area, persevering in attending those that they most favour. Drawing on Stebbins (1992) concept of "value commitment", Pitts, Robinson, and Goh (2015, 130) posit that "there are no unhappy amateurs, since those who no longer value their involvement will leave their performing group, either seeking out another ensemble that better suits their needs, or ceasing their musical activities altogether." The assertion that amateur participants who persevere are fundamentally "happy" with the nature of the events at which they participate is challenged by my fieldwork findings, which suggest that participants are frequently dissatisfied with one or more aspects of the events that they regularly attend. For example, one survey respondent was critical of the structure of a regularly attended event:

> [The order of performers is] determined by a facilitator at the place I go most regularly - I hate that. Everyone should be under an obligation to join in with everything. So it doesn't matter who starts. (Q8.21)

This respondent did not specify the events or location in which they were attending, and it is quite possible that they continued to attend the event discussed for a lack of alternatives in their local area. Hield and Mansfield (2020, 9) note, with regard to folk singing sessions, that those living in areas without a vibrant music scene "may have little choice [but to] adjust to the structure of locally-available events." I would suggest that the need to make concessions also applies to those with more options from which to choose, as my interviews indicated that while participants show a preference for some events over others, even those preferred are usually recognised to be less than ideal in some way(s). Rather than suggesting that regular participants of an event are "happy" with it, it may be more measured to suggest that they continue to attend so long as they anticipate the benefits of doing so to outweigh the costs, and, most likely, fully expect to experience variable degrees of enjoyment as they do so.

This section has demonstrated that models of community that are based on an apparent likeness between individuals are necessarily reductive. Even the most foundational assumptions that we are likely to make as researchers – e.g. that regular participants of musical activity share a basic appreciation for the music that they encounter there – may not prove to be correct, and such assumptions can function to obstruct more informative lines of enquiry. It would therefore be more accurate and illuminating to consider public participatory music events as constituting a convergence of individuals with a diversity of past experiences, reasons for attending, and assessments of the event in which they are participating together, as opposed to constituting a community based on commonalities in these aspects.

Communities of Sentiment

Rather than conceptualising individuals as representing a community on the basis of assumed likeness, a more grounded approach to modelling community might entail considering the extent to which participants conceptualise themselves as a distinct group:

> You can call someone a "folkie", and it doesn't just mean someone who likes or plays folk music. I think it's a little bit more than that. There is a certain *sense of community*...? A certain sense of people actually, you know, feeling like this is a thing. (Ollie interview)

As Ollie's remark illustrates, belonging to a community is not just a matter of external classification, but something felt; a "sense of community". In their influential article, McMillan and Chavis define a "sense of community" as

> a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together. (1986, 9)

By their definition there are four elements essential to the development and maintenance of a sense of community; the perception of a *shared emotional connection* with the other participants; *integration and fulfilment of needs*; *membership* (boundaries; emotional safety; a sense of belonging and identification; personal investment; and a common symbol system); and mutual

influence (of each individual on the group, and the group on the individuals composing it). In order to interrogate the extent to which the participants of the events at which I conducted fieldwork felt a "sense of community", this section of the chapter will reflect upon the intensity of the relationships between co-participants.

Taken at face value, many of the participants who attend the public participatory music events at which I conducted fieldwork clearly enjoy a "shared emotional connection". I encountered numerous instances of participants celebrating one another's birthdays and successes and comforting one another in times of need or sadness. Many of these relationships transcend the event itself, and some prove to be especially enduring. My informant Owain told me that he often video messages a friend, now living in Canada, who used to be a regular attendee of the CeilidhSoc session. It is also quite common for significant romantic relationships to develop between co-participants. For Ray, who has been a central organiser of the Shakespeare's session since 2016, active friendship with fellow participants takes precedence:

> I think that's the best way to have sessions. It should be, you know, a sense of being around friends first, and then being about playing tunes second, I think. (Ray interview)

Similar examples of emotional connection can be given of the Green Room open mic night, at which the degree of familiarity between some of the regular attendees is apparent in their affectionate interactions, and in the way that they fondly sing along with one another's performances, including of original songs with which they have become familiar through repeat performances at the event.

It is quite common for participants of the CeilidhSoc session and the Green Room open mic to support each other's creative efforts outside of the context of the event at which they became familiar. For example, a cohort of regular participants at the CeilidhSoc session reliably attended presentational performances by my folk trio (with fellow session participants Owain and Nicola) at various venues across the city. At the Green Room, a regular participant produced a music video for one of his band's original songs, in which many of the other participants willingly made cameo appearances without payment.[19]

The White Lion jazz session presents a stark contrast in this regard. Casual conversations with those at the event, and interviews with my informants, suggest that many of the participants know very little about one another. Jonathan, who has regularly attended the event for the last five years, notes:

> I'm not familiar with people. Not many. Only a couple […] I go out of my way to talk to people more there than normal places, but I don't know hardly any of them. (Jonathan interview)

Carole describes limitations to the depth of the relationship she has with fellow participants of local jazz jam sessions:

[19] Isembard's Wheel. "Isembard's Wheel – Turner's Bones [Official Video]". *Youtube*. Published April 6, 2017. 5.52. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qwu4NG5ek4E.

> I know them in terms of talking about music. Our common denominator is music. I suppose unless you become close friends and meet them in other social contexts you totally rely on that common denominator. Our life is music, and talking about the jazz numbers. (Carole interview)

There are several reasons why the extent of anonymity between participants at the White Lion jazz jam session might be greater than at other public participatory music events. Firstly, the event occurs monthly, rather than weekly. This can make it very easy for those with other commitments to miss the event for several months in a row, and difficult for participants to distinguish those who attend regularly without doing so themselves. I have, on more than one occasion, been introduced to another participant at the White Lion only to find that I was later referring to them in my fieldnotes with a misremembered name, or that I had simply forgotten our earlier interaction due to a large amount of time passing between my encounters with them. If I, taking notes on, and actively seeking to become familiar with, the people and happenings at this event, struggle to remember various names and faces, it is little surprise that many of the participants experience similar lapses, and resultantly feel like relative strangers to many of their co-participants.

Secondly, the means through which the White Lion jazz jam session is organised and promoted is not as conducive to familiarity among participants as strategies that make use of social media. Many of the participatory events in Sheffield – such as the CeilidhSoc session, Tuesday night Shakespeare's folk session, "Ukulele Sundays", and the Yellow Arch "Rhythm Theory" jam – engage in exchanges on Facebook prior to the event to ensure that a sufficient number of participants will attend. New participants are quickly directed to this resource to facilitate their future participation, and in the process, can easily become familiar with those who are invested enough in the event to help organise it (both by name, and, thanks to the presence of Facebook profile pictures that typically depict the individual in profile, by sight also). In contrast, The White Lion jazz session is organised using an electronic mailing list, providing less information to aid in the establishment of familiarity.[20]

It became clear during my fieldwork that many who attend the White Lion Jazz session do not read or respond to the circulated emails. An informal conversation with two regular participants outside of the venue revealed that neither of them, even after having attended for many years, knew who the organisers of the event were. This will most likely only be obvious to those who attend to the emails signed off by the official organisers, two individuals who rarely attend together and who often entrust other regulars to unofficially oversee proceedings in their absence. Whilst identifying authority figures is straightforward at an event explicitly facilitated by a compere or a band, such is not the case at the White Lion session. Over the course of my fieldwork by far the most vocal and involved (in so far as they both play in the majority of the pieces performed) of the regularly attending participants have been two guitar players, neither of whom are official organisers, and one of whom rarely stays for the duration of the event nor commits to attending via email.

[20] I contacted my informant Kate via the email address from which she promotes her Monday night jazz session at the White Lion, having co-participated with her a couple of times over the previous year. After our interview she offered to put me in touch with other participants, noting that unsolicited email contact alone can do little to reassure potential informants that they are not interacting with a "stalker".

Thirdly, the jazz session participants I interviewed generally seemed very aware of, and quite content with their lack of familiarity with, and to, one another. Carole was unaware that a regular co-participant at a couple of different jam sessions worked as a lawyer, and she does not consider it important for others to know about her employment history (prior to retirement):

> They didn't know and they didn't care. It didn't matter […] It's not a conscious thing, you know, "oh good, I can go along and nobody will know who I am". It's just not important. It's not what we're there for. (Carole interview)

The "shared emotional connection" identified by McMillan and Chavis as typical of what is sensed to be a community is not in evidence at the White Lion jazz session, in so far as participants do not usually demonstrate, or expect to develop deep personal knowledge of, and bonds with one another. The above quotations are reminiscent of William Bruce Cameron's seminal article from 1954, "Sociological Notes on the Jam Session":

> The bond which unites jazzmen is so strong that differences in other things can be ignored. It is this which fosters the widely recognized tolerance of jazzmen toward race, religion, and class. Some do-gooders naively believe that a jazzman's tolerance is a high-minded fellow-feeling. It is fellow-feeling, but it does not stem from the kind of high-mindedness they seek. The jazzman tolerates these differences because they do not matter. It is easy to be tolerant in areas where one does not care, and the only thing he cares about seriously is jazz. Thus tolerance extends to homosexuals, wife-beaters, schizophrenics, draft-dodgers, alcoholics, drug addicts, and what-have-you, if only they are jazzmen. And no special stigma attaches to "characters" who are not, since by definition all non-jazzmen are "squares" and one is hardly worse than another […] Personal eccentricities of all sorts are regarded with tolerant amusement as long as they do not interfere with the music. (Cameron 1954, 181)

While bonding is more abundantly in evidence among the participants at some of the other (non-jazz) events that I have attended, the more detached perspective presented above is not exclusive to participants of jazz jam sessions. For example, one of my questionnaire respondents describes the relationships he has with fellow participants in folk sessions in Scotland, and at English folk festivals as follows:

> Very much focused on the music with little wider personal interaction - I rarely know or ask what people work at, where they live or what their relationship status is, unless it affects their availability to play. (Q24.24)

Perhaps surprisingly, the more superficial, activity-oriented relationships noted between participants at the White Lion jazz session may function to make events feel more inclusive to new participants, rather than less. Writing of groups dedicated to leisure activities and political affiliations, the sociologist Robert Putnam noted the distinction between communities oriented towards either *bonding* or *bridging*. The former "are, by choice or necessity, inward looking and tend to reinforce exclusive identities and homogeneous groups", while the latter "are outward looking and encompass people across diverse social cleavages" (2000, 22). The format and promotion of public participatory music events is ostensibly oriented to *bridging*, inviting

participation from anyone who might be interested in taking part in accordance with the guidelines of the event. In practice, groups of regulars who come to recognise each other as such, and forge significant relationships and routines, can resultantly become more invested in the established *bonding* community of which they feel themselves to be a part, perceiving newcomers as a disruptive nuisance, or a threat to the status quo. If sensed by newcomers, this can function to deter them from returning to the event or venue:

> I don't return to [folk] clubs/places that do not extend a warm welcome to newcomers and believe it or not there are some. (Q13.18)

The sardonic "believe it or not" in this statement seems entirely warranted by the overwhelmingly positive depictions of social context to be found in many accounts of music-making. Slobin notes this tendency in his discussion of Finnegan's revered study of grassroots music-making in Milton Keynes:

> [N]othing [Finnegan] says hints at so much as a gram of the oppositional in every kilo of co-optation. Even rock turns out to be nonconfrontational… all of Finnegan's people end up feeling the same way about music. (1993, 42)

Finnegan's work is in stark contrast to accounts such as Martin Christie's non-academic, semi-autobiographical writing on attendance of open mic nights at which performers are frequently ignored or heckled by other attendees. In one case Christie even recounts being assaulted outside a venue, seemingly because the assailant took a dim view of Christie's earlier performance (2011, 163). Conflict is by no means limited to open mics: Stokes (1994, 9-10) relays an anecdote of an unwanted guitar player being attacked with an axe for playing at an Irish folk session; and competitive, discouraging behaviour is so commonplace at jazz jam sessions as to have been assigned its own terminology ("vibing"). One of the strengths of McMillan and Chavis's work, therefore, is that their model interprets membership of a community to be complex, sanctioned, and potentially fragile in the face of conflicting interests or opinions among co-participants, in a manner overlooked by the more positive terminology of Putnam ("bridging" and "bonding").

My own fieldwork revealed conflict to take the form of impolite exclusion far more often than it did of physical or verbal altercation. One of my interviewees described his limited enthusiasm for the folk sessions at a particular Sheffield venue on this basis:

> [It's] bit of a closed shop in terms of musicians who already know each other; who are already friends, and just are happy doing what they do. And they'll put up with other people if they have to, but they'd prefer to just do what they're doing. (Anonymised interviewee)

Hield and Mansfield note the presence of a status hierarchy at folk clubs based on frequency of attendance:

> On one level, everyone present is a member of the group; however, there remains a hierarchy distinguishing the frequent attendees of a club from its casual participants. On a positive note this creates a sense of bonding and community, giving regular members stalwart status.

> However, this has the potential to generate a cliquey atmosphere, which many organisers take steps to challenge (2020, 12).

As with folk clubs, embedded "cliques" have been noted as a common problem by both attendees and organisers of public participatory events, and organisers that do not strive to maintain inclusivity risk their events gaining a reputation for exclusive behaviour. This can take the form of social dynamics and conversational focus, as my interviewee Davey describes at open mics:

> It's not that anybody's really hostile to new people coming in, that I've found. It's kind of intrinsic bitchiness from people that are always there, because of like, changing relationships and stuff. […] They're a haven for gossip, and there's a lot of what goes on because of like what they are; a group of people who are there a lot together. It's the same with anything. People who are together, people who are in the same space a lot, will end up forming different kinds of relationships which can work out really well, or which can also probably go a bit sour, which does make a difference to the kind of energy and the vibe. (Davey interview)

The formation of embedded cliques can ultimately function to reduce the opportunity for new attendees to participate. For example, the organiser of a once popular but now defunct open mic described how a clique of regular attendees ostracised newcomers, and identified a loophole in the structure of the event that enabled them to maximise their time performing together:

> It seemed quite cliquey, because there was a group of people that came each week, and […] became, you know, the majority of the show. […] If newcomers came […], they got on stage, they asked if anyone wanted to accompany them, and they got ignored. But then some people would get on as a full band to do a performance, and someone that they'd never known, who comes every week, would just jump on stage and hijack what they were doing. There was a group of ten people that came each week. Sometimes they'd play as a band, sometimes a full band. Sometimes they'd play as a four piece or a three piece, but rather than putting their name down as a band, they'd each put their name down individually, so that same band would technically get twenty slots, rather than two or three. And again, I think that upset a lot of people who had not been down before, because they thought "well, those five people have already been on stage four times, and I've not had my slot yet", and then they might not even get to play at all. (Jane interview)

Some of the possible steps that might be taken to unseat such cliques can prove ruinous to the viability of an event. In the case of this open mic, the venue management decided to resolve the issue by dissolving the event, on the grounds of the clique's activities dissuading potential newcomers from attending to such an extent that the event was no longer financially viable for the venue. Endorsement of an event that was gaining a reputation for exclusivity was also considered to be doing damage to the reputation of the venue.

Cliques are not necessarily embedded within a particular event, but may rove or relocate. The open and polite nature of public participatory events, especially those at which a relaxed stance is taken to organisation, and which remain oriented towards Putnam's *bridging*, may be particularly

vulnerable to roving cliques who may strive to collectively reorient activity towards their own agenda. One of my interviewees describes their negative experiences with a domineering group at a prominent English folk festival, who they subsequently encountered as an embedded clique at a local session:

> There was a time, to be fair, when people who were involved in organising and running [a large and prominent ceilidh organisation] did tend to hunt sessions in packs, and just play what the hell they wanted to play. […] That's why I didn't go to [a particular local session] for about a year. I turned up at the first one, "oh, it's those people". Partly my fault for not giving them a chance, because I know they're lovely people now, but at the time there was a lot of session hunting […] It was such a clique – lots of different little cliques – but they were very unwilling to let me into their bubble. (Anonymised interviewee)

Ray recounts similar experiences at folk festivals:

> We've had a few sessions at festivals where you've established a session in a beer tent, say, playing along playing tunes, and you'll have generally younger musicians that are sort of there with their mates, especially a lot of the orchestra-based folk groups that you see going around now. And they're all very good, and they all play the same sort of music, and they will come and they'll initially join the session, and gradually build their own session, and take over the space, to the point that the original people don't want to play there anymore because they're alienated from the session they started. That happens most festivals I think at least once." (Ray Interview)

Participants of the White Lion jazz jam session similarly spoke of a small group of proficient performers who would historically attend together, override the existing list system and closely direct individuals in a manner that resulted in some regular participants abandoning the event entirely.

Note how in each of these instances – at an open mic, folk session, and jazz jam session – the presence of an established group introduced a hierarchy to proceedings that ultimately functioned to exclude participants. It is interesting to note that the behaviours and interactions of the participants in these cliques might satisfy the criteria for a "sense of community" (*shared emotional connection*; *integration and fulfilment of needs*; *membership*; mutual *influence*), but that the co-optation of an event by a *bonding* community functions to undermine any aspirations to retain openness and inclusivity.

I was initially surprised to hear that roving cliques had the capacity to drive away existing regulars, as I assumed that domineering behaviour from new participants would be quickly quashed by a show of resistance. There are several possible reasons as to why this is not what happened. The first is the absence of an accepted, dedicated authority figure responsible for ensuring fairness of participation. The second is the absence of a strong personal connection between the participants, such that they would be less likely to voice their personal dissatisfaction with the clique's behaviour to one another. The third is that not all of the other participants would necessarily feel aggrieved by

the behaviour, perhaps enjoying the opportunity to listen to or keep up with this group of unusually confident and capable players.

The presence of a dedicated authority figure does not necessarily prevent the formation of dominant, exclusive cliques. I do not know the perspective of the compere of the aforementioned open mic (a different individual to the organiser quoted) on this issue, whether they took any further countermeasures, or even perceived the noted activity as an issue requiring a solution. The identified "clique" of regulars was evidently very committed to and positive about the event, and it would be quite reasonable for the compere to support their actions on the grounds of interpreting their repeat attendance as both desirable for the venue management and necessary for his continued employment. The perception of favouritism from the compere – towards participants for whom the standard rules are either not rigorously enforced or are explicitly bent – is a very common criticism of some public participatory music events. Davey relates an instance in which he arrived early at an open mic in order to secure an early performance slot:

> That really annoyed me on Monday […] We got there early deliberately because we couldn't stop around. We needed to be home pretty early, so we were like third on the list. It had filled up to like eight or nine slots, and [two familiar, older musicians arrive], and […] they're appearing on stage second, and it was like, why? (Davey interview)

Davey has extensive experience of playing open mics across England, and has compered several different open mics in Sheffield, including a regular event at The Forest pub. I asked him why he thought the incident that he had just related unfolded as it had done, and his response neatly highlights the conflicting obligations, to maintaining fairness and to honouring personal relationships, that can be felt by comperes of these events:

> Maybe [the compere] thinks it'll make his jam night look good if someone with, like, a good reputation is going to play at a prime time, or he's worried that […] they'd probably leave if they weren't going to be playing pretty quickly. So I think [the compere] would rather them play. I just think it's unfair. I think the list is the list, stick to the list. […] If people can't stick around put them on, but there's certain people that just go every time and expect to be put on when they want. […] I've got people who come to the Forest [that] kind of do that. They expect to play just because, you know, they're my friend, and "hey, I'm here". (Davey interview)

Chris, who succeeded Davey as compere of the Forest open mic, acknowledges the importance of fairness, but highlights an additional obligation that he feels to ensuring that the order of performers is interesting and varied:

> I always try and keep it transparently fair, you know, like you put people on pretty much in the order that they arrive, or you switch a few round - if like, maybe you don't want two poets next to each other, or two girl singers next to each other, or whatever, or you've got a couple of duos - you just shuffle people a little bit, but you try and keep it really transparent so people know what they're going to get and when they're going to get it. (Chris interview)

Davey and Chris's remarks make clear that maintaining perceived "fairness" through rigorous observance of protocol can be at odds with accommodating individuals with special circumstances, and with trying to include attendees who are looking to be entertained as observers of the proceedings. They both agree that personal relationships should not impact upon how the events are run, and take pride in their efforts to make others feel accommodated and included (i.e. prioritising *bridging* over *bonding*) while condemning preferential treatment. Chris suggests that failure to uphold these standards is the reason for another local open mic's dwindling attendance:

> I don't think [the comperes] in any way deliberately excluded people, or in way deliberately made it unfair, but I just think maybe if they sort of prioritised people that they knew were good, and their friends, it wasn't always completely clear, transparent, and obvious who would get to perform, and maybe someone who wasn't very good might get forgotten about. I don't know, just the vibe didn't seem the same as what we're trying to do, and maybe that's why it dropped off. (Chris interview)

This section has illustrated how the development of a "sense of community" (*shared emotional connection*; *integration and fulfilment of needs*; *membership*; mutual *influence*) is typically associated with the presence of exclusive social cliques. However advantageous and fulfilling for those who feel a sense of membership, embedded or roving cliques function to disrupt routines that were established to ensure fairness of participation, deterring new participants and alienating regulars who do not identify with the clique (be it embedded or roving). The presence of cliques threatens the ostensible inclusivity and hospitality (i.e. bridging) that both participants and organisers identify as crucial to the success of public participatory music events. It therefore makes little sense to contemplate events of this type, in general, as communities of sentiment.

Communities of Practice

The two models of community that have been examined so far are respectively premised in objective and subjective approaches to identity. What I have referred to as "communities of likeness" are so defined on the basis of apparent similarities between individuals, as can be ascribed by outsiders and used by them to justify definition of a distinct, reified group. This is a convenient way of categorising people and can be politically empowering when embraced by a group of individuals who willingly identify themselves with a common characteristic (e.g. "LGBTQ+"). The etic deployment of this kind of categorisation frequently lacks nuance and is prone to reducing individuals to the most generalisable of their characteristics and perpetuating essentialist narratives. What I have referred to as "communities of sentiment" are defined by the positive regard within which community members hold each other. This form of "community" defies etic ascription and is dependent on the collected individuals voluntarily identifying themselves as a group. Consideration of this model has helped to expose some of the social dynamics that I have observed at public participatory music events, but does not represent an ideal model for interpreting events that are characterised by an openness to newcomers, as is at least ostensibly the case for public participatory events.

The third model of community to be considered in this chapter is the "community of practice", which

entered common parlance with the publications of Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger in the 1990s. Primarily a model of "situated learning", Lave and Wenger (1991) suggested that individuals become absorbed into social groupings through a process of "legitimate peripheral participation", in which they engage with and learn from "old-timers", and become legitimate participants of the community through their commitment to this process and the development of proficiency. Unlike in the models discussed so far, Lave and Wenger's use of the term "community" does not "imply necessarily co-presence, a well-defined, identifiable group or socially visible boundaries", but "participation in an activity system about which participants share understandings concerning what they are doing and what that means for their lives and for their communities" (1991, 98). This was further developed by Wenger (1998, 73), who stipulated that a community of practice entails the presence of *mutual engagement*; *joint enterprise*; and *shared repertoire*. In essence, a community of practice is a group of people who engage in a common activity, and who purportedly interpret that activity and its purpose in the same way.

This model of community is appealing for its apparent simplicity, as it can embrace the diversity of backgrounds and approaches in evidence at many public participatory music events without insisting that participants share a significant social bond. Wenger's description of claims processors is equally fitting of the participants that I encountered during my own fieldwork:

> Some are young, some old; some conservative, some liberal; some outgoing, some introverted. They are different from one another and have different personal aspirations and problems. […] Not only are claims processors different to start with, but working together creates differences as well as similarities. They specialize, gain a reputation, make trouble, and distinguish themselves, as much as they develop shared ways of doing things. (1998, 75)

Wenger's model is appealing for its inclusiveness and adaptability, but this complicates its ease of application to an ethnomusicological case study. For example, CeilidhSoc might be considered a distinct community of practice, but many of its regular attendees also attend other public participatory folk music events in Sheffield, introducing a crossover of personnel and tune repertoire that might make the local folk scene at large seem a better fit for the "community of practice" label. Attendance at folk festivals has resulted in many of the more dedicated local folk musicians becoming familiar with a network of other "folkies" across the country, and the (often impromptu) folk sessions associated with such festivals (similar to those described by Kisliuk (1988) in the context of American bluegrass festivals) are often highlighted as hubs for the sharing of repertoire and approaches to playing it. These broader networks would still seem to satisfy Wenger's (1998) criteria of joint enterprise, mutual engagement, and shared repertoire, meaning that the CeilidhSoc session, local folk scene, and broader British folk scene might all have some claim to the status of a community of practice. Wenger recognises this, and responds by introducing the concept of the "constellation of interconnected practices":

> Some configurations are too far removed from the scope of engagement of participants, too broad, too diverse, or too diffuse to be usefully treated as single communities of practice. This is true not only of very large configurations (the global economy, speakers of a language, a

> city, a social movement) but also of some smaller ones (a factory, an office, or a school). Whereas treating such configurations as single communities of practice would gloss over the discontinuities that are integral to their very structure, they can profitably be viewed as *constellations* of interconnected practices. (Wenger 1998, 126-7)

Here Wenger relinquishes the determination of what might be "usefully treated as single communities of practice" to the interpreter's discretion, while also acknowledging the discontinuities that are likely to emerge between diffuse groups of practitioners who demonstrate some crossover in their practice.

The diffuse availability of audio recordings, print publications and online media has enabled the same compositions – "shared repertoire" – to be performed at events across the world that do not have participants in common. When practitioners from different environments do meet, expectations as to how repertoire ought to be performed can prove to be divergent to the point of causing disruption, as is illustrated by my interviewee Owain's second-hand account of the experiences of another CeilidhSoc participant:

> He's living out in [his home city, in North America] at the moment. He was desperate to play music, [so] he went to every session he could find, and got absolutely everyone's back turned on him at an Irish session there because he wasn't playing trad Irish tunes in a trad Irish style. People would not play while he was playing, and then asked him not to come next time. (Owain interview)

This account serves to illustrate how the shared "repertoire" of a musical community of practice transcends purely compositional information (as might be transcribed in Western staff notation), but also includes, according to Wenger, "styles"; "discourses"; "various elements" and their meanings; "tools, artifacts, representations"; "events"; new and old "terms"; "stories"; and "routines" (Wenger 1998, 95). Engagement with these broader aspects of cultural life has become standard amongst ethnomusicologists since publications such as Steven Feld's (1982) *Sound and Sentiment* demonstrated the essential connection between musical and extra-musical cultural repertoire for the historically isolated Kaluli people of Papua New Guinea. Unlike the highly routine and regimented Sheffield folk session described by Stock (2004), most of the public participatory music events that I attended during fieldwork involved repertoire (both musical and extra-musical) that was vast and varied, accommodating of newcomers, and frequently not representative of consensus. An attempt to identify a definitively representative repertoire in this context would risk imitating the problematic collecting and categorising practices of early twentieth century "musical folklorists",[21] challenging the ease of application of Wenger's model to public participatory music events.

Owain's description of his friend's exclusion can also be contemplated from the perspective of "joint enterprise", with the enterprise of the regular participants clashing with that of the interloper.

[21] The "collecting" activities of early twentieth century "musical folklorists" has since been identified as leading to conclusions lacking in veracity, on the basis of the fieldworkers determining which of the gathered repertoire ought to be considered representative of the common practice of "folk" performers (e.g. Harker 1985).

Wenger defines a community of practice as being a “communal regime of mutual accountability”, under which participants experience and normalise certain behaviours:

> While some aspects of accountability may be reified – rules, policies, standards, goals – those that are not are no less significant. Becoming good at something involves developing specialized sensitivities, an aesthetic sense, and refined perceptions that are brought to bear on making judgments about the qualities of a product or an action. That these become shared in a community of practice is what allows participants to negotiate the appropriateness of what they do. (Wenger 1998, 81)

While the above anecdote of a participant being excluded does seem to be a reasonably coherent example of “specialized sensitivities, an aesthetic sense, and refined perceptions” (ibid.) as common to the regular participants, my fieldwork findings suggest that this is atypical. Complaints of others being inconsiderate and lacking sensitivity, commonly articulated as “not listening”, were very common throughout my fieldwork, and this was frequently identified as something that questionnaire respondents did not like about the events that they attended:

> Q12.18: Sometimes it is awkward if people have too much ego and no awareness of the existing vibe at a session and not enough sensitivity to stop and observe what is already happening before piling in with something that just feels out of place in an overconfident way....
>
> Q18.18: Sometimes people are a little insensitive or unaware of others, or don’t follow etiquette (which is usually fairly clear).

All the musicians that I interviewed seemed confident that they had a good grasp of what represents appropriate behaviour at the public participatory events that they attended, and they often highlighted instances that they perceived to represent a clear transgression. Some examples of this can reasonably be attributed to a lack of awareness, such as in the case outlined by Owain in his discussion of folk sessions built around simultaneous participation:

> Say you had a really good teacher that could teach you violin or whatever, you could become a really great individual virtuoso violin player, and then go to a session and not understand why, after your fifth tune in a row without stopping, without listening or looking at anyone else, people are like, “oh, this is quite dull now”. Whereas you could get another violin player who's just learned by going to sessions their whole life, who will play those five tunes, but they'll do it over the course of an evening, with lots of other tunes interspersed with other people. You know, everyone will enjoy that much more, or I would enjoy that much more. […] A good session musician knows when to shut up, for one thing, or knows when to listen more, or to take the lead, or when to back off. Which is very different to sort of, total showmanship musicians who quite often just want to play and play and play, and dominate, and that's fine, but that doesn't work very well in a session, I don't think. (Owain interview)

Nicola similarly highlights how participants who are engaged and considerate of others are likely to

be more appreciated than insensitive players who are otherwise technically proficient:

> There's a lot of people that go to a lot of sessions that aren't […] the most technically competent musicians, but people enjoy playing with them because they're willing to turn up and join in with everything. I think that's just as important […] as being an amazing musician, because some people that are amazing musicians […] just play tunes that nobody else can join in with, or, like, they play it really fast like no one can join in with, and after a while those people don't come back again. (Nicola interview)

However, there is also a potential clash between the stated ideals of "know[ing] when to shut up" and "join[ing] in with everything". An accepted policy of always attempting to join in gives all participants the maximum opportunity to participate throughout the event, but it also functions to provide cover and support for nervous performers:

> The worst thing in the world is to start playing a tune and no one joins in, and people have a conversation, when actually what you want is another person to sit there, and even if they don't know the tune to try to figure it out, play along, and do something to make you feel like you're not doing it alone. (Ray interview)

A questionnaire respondent who stated that "everyone should be under an obligation to join in with everything […] so it doesn't matter who starts" (Q8, 21) might have been referring to either or both opportunity-forming or support-giving advantages to this policy.

On the other hand, the policy of always joining in can be interpreted as limiting the opportunity for individual expression, including the introduction of new material. Nicola recounts an instant in which a session participant was overpowered by others who did not give him ample opportunity to establish the piece he was playing before presuming to know what it was and playing over him:

> There's a tune like The Rusty Gulley, which is the 3/2 hornpipe, which is played a lot in the North of England, and a bit in the South, but there's a tune that's really similar. And this guy started it at a session, it was a really busy, loud room and no one could hear him. And he played the first few notes, and everyone went "it's the Rusty Gulley", because it's the same notes, and the same structure, and he got really pissed off and stormed out, because he was playing [a different tune]. (Nicola interview)

Ollie recounts a similar experience, highlighting a clash in attitudes:

> I was in a session once and somebody started a tune, and I tried to join in, and she just stopped and said, "you don't know where it's going", and carried on playing. I was like, "don't play it in a session then; or if you do, I'm going to try and join in, because that's what it's about". Yeah, that annoyed me quite a lot. (Ollie interview)

Wenger suggests that a refined aesthetic sense and shared standard of "appropriateness" allows members of a community of practice to negotiate towards an ideal. His earlier collaborative work with Lave stresses that "participation is always based on situated negotiated and renegotiated

meaning in the world" (1991, 51). However, note how none of the above accounts result in an attempt to negotiate: participants are presented as either co-existing in a state of obliviousness or discomfort, or as abandoning the event on the grounds of their dissatisfaction, but never as explicitly attempting to negotiate towards a mutually satisfactory resolution. Pete was a much-celebrated facilitator of the White Lion jazz jam session for several years, and, despite his supervision, and the notable overlap between the attendees of the session and the Sheffield Jazz Workshop – which one might anticipate would introduce a degree of stability and uniformity – he characterised the event as "antagonistic":

> I don't see the jam session as anything to do with learning how to play jazz really. It might be to do with learning how to survive in an antagonistic environment while people are trying to play jazz, but that's a different matter. (Pete interview)

The concept of communities of practice was originated as a model of learning, but it may be that what participants of public participatory events acquire from their experiences is not so much the mastery of a shared repertoire (interpreted in the broadest sense) or clarity as to the nature of a joint enterprise, as an awareness of the complexities and demands of navigating the range of different repertoires and enterprises that individuals bring to the situation.

Lave and Wenger (1991) draw attention to the potential for conflict between "newcomers" and "old timers", so named on the basis of the extent of their "sustained participation in a community of practice" (56). While the authors are keen not to "reduce the end point of centripetal participation in a community of practice to a uniform or univocal 'center,' or to a linear notion of skill acquisition" (ibid., 36), the inherent assumption of the work is that those who have engaged for longer, and experienced more, will have acquired greater mastery of the relevant skills (or shared repertoire, as Wenger would later define it). Although the potential for conflict between newcomers and old timers at participatory events is certainly conceivable (and some of the anecdotes above might be readily interpreted as examples of such), with regard to this binary, Cox surmises the following:

> [It] is probably not adequate to explain all the power forces within a community, let alone those that structure it from outside. It does not consider the potential for conflict among old timers themselves or indeed among newcomers. (Cox 2005, 529)

Many of the conflicts to be observed at participatory events are significant precisely because they involve individuals who are not straightforwardly "newcomers" or "old timers", and who may misidentify the extent and significance of each other's experiences and abilities. This is certainly the case when considering participants' engagement and status within the broader "constellation" of related practice. Owain's depiction of his North American friend's experiences of exclusion highlights this issue:

> [The other participants would] tell him stories of someone they know in Ireland, and he's like, lived in England for however [many] years, like, "yeah, but my cousin *what's-it* actually lives in Ireland". They'd never actually been to Ireland, but they were playing at a trad Irish session three and a half thousand-, four thousand miles away, and then turning their back on someone

> who's had a, well, what I would say is a much more broad musical upbringing, or musical experience at least, playing CeilidhSoc and many other sessions here. (Owain interview)

Ray provides another example that highlights the context-specific nature of relative competence and seniority:

> I came from a village down south where there was one folk session that was very traditional, and boring, and popular with people who'd picked up an instrument in their fifties, so it was very easy to be very good. I was instantly one of the best people in the room in spite of not playing for that long. Then come up to Sheffield and meet people that are playing, they're studying music in university, at degree level, and you're trying to fit in with them and […] it's a bit nuts. [It] knocks your confidence dramatically going from being the best to being dramatically not that good. (Ray interview)

These examples demonstrate the potential for ambiguity in Lave and Wenger's chosen terminology, and thus challenge the usefulness of the binary. Ray's example highlights how age (which is implicitly evoked by the terminology of "old timer") does not necessarily correlate with activity-specific competence. Inter-generational tension is a particularly common topic of conversation in folk music discourse, as Keegan-Phipps summarises in his study of the Traditional music degree at Newcastle University:

> Essentially, the stereotypical "old folk musician" dislikes the stereotypical "young folk musician" for his or her tendency to play tunes too quickly, without enough "feeling" for the music, and with too great an interest in complex arrangement. Meanwhile, the stereotypical "young folk musician" is bored by the slow and uninteresting playing of the stereotypical "old folk musician", attributing these features to a lack of technical ability and creativity. (Keegan-Phipps 2008, 308)

I did encounter stereotyping of this kind during my fieldwork. For example, comparison of the below statements from two of my interviewees, the first in their twenties, and the latter a retiree, is revealing in this regard:

> You'll hear any number of older folkies basically saying, "oh, the standard of music [...] performance amongst these young people is astounding", and I think some of them find that threatening, because there are these young people coming over here playing this music that they've been playing for thirty-five years, they've only been playing for three years and they're doing it better than them, or with more technical prowess, and have serious issues with people's level of musicianship. (Anonymised interviewee)

> I've been in sessions where it's been bloody irritating, where my wife who doesn't play but likes the music will be sitting, and it's like "are you not playing?", and it's more or less, you know, pressure to move and let a real musician have a seat. You know what I mean? But that's young people. And a lot of people in sessions I think [are] young musicians who want to make a career, want to be heard and seen playing, and it's a way of getting exposure, so there's an

> element of “it's important that I am seen” […]. In the past you went to a [folk] club, and did a spot, but now there aren't many clubs you do it in the session scene and you get seen, and you get your repertoire and your practising in, and then what you do is you form a ceilidh band and you get to the festivals. Festivals is what they're all wanting to be at. (Anonymised interviewee)

These responses are essentially mutually validating, and reflect the findings of a large survey on the listening habits of the British public, which identified

> the profoundly divided nature of musical taste, one which predominantly pitches younger respondents – passionately committed to new and emerging musical forms – against older ones, whose musical tastes are much less innovative. This division cross cuts those of class and educational inequality (Savage and Gayo 2011, 353)

This highlights how the interests of participants at different stages of the life course will likely differ, and that this will influence participant behaviour at events. The significance of such generational difference has long been noted in sociological work. Almost a century ago, Mannheim made the observation that age and social class

> endow the individuals sharing in them with a common location in the social and historical process, and thereby limit them to a specific range of potential experience, predisposing them for a certain characteristic mode of thought and experience, and a characteristic type of historically relevant action […]. Inherent in a *positive* sense in every location is a tendency pointing towards certain definite modes of behaviour, feeling, and thought (Mannheim, 1952 [1927], 291).

Sociological studies have long traced the connection between popular music trends and youth culture (e.g. Cohen 1972; Frith 1981), a connection the salience of which academics have only sought to reconsider relatively recently (e.g. Hesmondhalgh 2005). Though the nature of interaction between individuals who identify one another as being the product of a different generation is little examined, my fieldwork suggests that this can frequently govern expectations regarding status, behaviour, and values. My interviewee Jack provides an example that illustrates how repertorial choices vary between differently-aged performers at open mic events:

> It is interesting that there tends to be an age for the people who are covering Ed Sheeran. If you were to shut your eyes you could, with a fairly high degree of accuracy, guess the age of the person based on the covers that they do, or the age and the interests of the person based on the covers that they do. […] We had a chaotic night when we were on tour where we took a last-minute gig in Bakewell, and [the audience] were sort of astounded that I didn’t know any Ed Sheeran covers. I was like “I’m just the wrong age for that”. I was doing this before Ed Sheeran was. He was never an influence on me doing this. But if you’re 20, and you’re doing music, like “guy and guitar” music, he’s going to be on one level or another a positive influence or a negative influence. Like, you’ll either be actively trying to ape things that Ed Sheeran’s done or avoid certain things that Ed Sheeran’s done depending on your opinion of him. (Jack

interview)

Jack acknowledges the significance of Ed Sheeran's music, but does not identify with it, at least in part on the basis of perceiving it to represent or belong to a different demographic group. Similarly, Keegan-Phipps identifies that the younger generation of folk musicians are inclined to rebel against the older generation:

> The generational dispute model, which illustrates the considerable extent to which the younger generation of musicians are able to break away from the aesthetic judgements of their older tutors, would appear to totally disprove the very possibility of a canon-forming pedagogy in folk music: no matter what musical values are impressed upon them, the "younger generation" will make their own selections. (Keegan-Phipps 2008, 310)

Nicola's comments testify to a reluctance among younger musicians to uncritically absorb the values of players from older generations:

> Quite a lot of the [19]60s generation […] have the attitude – not all, by any means, not all at all – but I've been told, after a performance people have come up saying "oh, you can't do that". And I just think "well, your generation reinvented the folk scene in the sixties more or less, based on American singer-songwriting", so I think it's really cheeky of them to tell us "you can't do it" when they invented the whole thing. So that always irritates me. I don't like being told that. (Nicola interview)

These examples hint at how status may depend more on the personal and social characteristics of the practitioner – or at least others' perception of them – than on their ability to engage in the activity at the level of other established participants. Individual participants may be implicitly or explicitly excluded on the basis of their personal characteristics (e.g. their age or gender), regardless of how honed and complementary their directly relevant practical abilities might be. This was strongly apparent at a weekly jazz jam session that I attended in 2015, in which a small number of young, early career professional musicians (including myself) were regularly subjected to condescending scrutiny from older amateur participants and audience members.[22] The emphasis that Wenger's (1998) communities of practice model places on mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire overlooks the nuanced nature of hierarchies, internal conflicts, discrimination, and exclusion that can persist in spite of these criteria for "community" status being met. This interpretation of community can shine a light on the nature of practice but has limited usefulness for studies focused on interpersonal dynamics.

Conclusion: Symbolic Communities?

This chapter has provided an overview of three prominent and often intersecting models of community, highlighting the strengths and limitations of each in terms of its capacity to support

[22] This included a female vocalist (who has since garnered numerous accolades and endorsements for her improvisational and compositional abilities) being told by an older audience member with no apparent performance experience to "just sing the tune"; and a very inebriated older regular telling me "I have more musical ability in my little finger than you have in your whole body."

nuanced and accurate interpretations of public participatory music events. Shelemay (2011) presents musical communities as historically being interpreted as the product of descent, dissent, or affinity. In so doing, she effectively postulates that individuals can be considered as representing a community on the basis of common characteristics that are objectively identifiable by the researcher. In application to public participatory music events, Shelemay's model can help to direct inquiry into the backgrounds of participants and to categorise this information, but it ultimately struggles to account for ethnographic heterogeneity and invites generalisation that is likely to be inaccurate or obfuscatory. The work of McMillan and Chavis (1986) takes a more subjective approach, based around a group's sense of themselves as a community. Consideration of this model helps to expose the nature of the relationships between individuals, including hierarchies, and the potential for division between groups of co-participants. However, successfully inclusive public participatory music events are often identified as those that do not appear to support the formation of this kind of community, and sometimes actively oppose it. Rather than focusing on people, Wenger's (1998) model of community instead focuses on the aspects of practice that they appear to share. His approach highlights important elements of shared activity, and is more accommodating of individual differences between individuals than the work of Shelemay or McMillan and Chavis, but its presentation of social status and interpersonal relationships is simplistic in its assumed linearity.

The primary limitation of each of these approaches takes the form of an underlying assumption, regarding the extent to which characteristics, sentiments, or practices, respectively, are shared and significant. They all seek to establish common ground between individuals, rather than considering the value of focusing on their differences. Anthropologist Anthony Cohen takes a different approach, presenting communities as composed of distinct individuals who engage with the same symbols, but without necessarily interpreting these symbols in the same way as one another:

> The community itself and everything within it, conceptual as well as material, has a symbolic dimension, and, further, […] this dimension does not exist as some kind of consensus of sentiment. Rather, it exists as something for people 'to think with'. The symbols of community are mental constructs. (1985, 19)

Like McMillan and Chavis (1986), Cohen stresses that while community members recognise both similarities and differences between themselves and their community peers, the extent of this recognition is a "matter of feeling" rather than an "objective" assessment (Cohen 1985, 21). However, he does not assume the sharing of symbols to be evidence of shared characteristics or sentiments:

> [Community members] suppose themselves to be more like each other than like the members of other communities. This is precisely because, although the meanings they attach to the symbols may differ, they share the symbols. Indeed, their common ownership of symbols may be so intense that they may be quite unaware or unconcerned that they attach to them meanings which differ from those of their fellows. (ibid.)

Unlike "community of practice" theorists, Cohen interprets communal engagement with materials and concepts as both symbolic and subjective, noting that "symbols are effective because they are imprecise" (ibid.):

> [Symbols are the] ideal media through which people can speak a 'common' language, behave in apparently similar ways, participate in the 'same' rituals, pray to the 'same' gods, wear similar clothes, and so forth, without subordinating themselves to a tyranny of orthodoxy. Individuality and commonality are thus reconcilable. Just as the 'common form' of the symbol aggregates the various meanings assigned to it, so the symbolic repertoire of a community aggregates the individualities and other differences found within the community and provides the means for their expression, interpretation and containment. […] It continuously transforms the reality of difference into the appearance of similarity with such efficacy that people can still invest the 'community' with ideological integrity. It unites them in their opposition, both to each other, and to those 'outside'. It thereby constitutes, and gives reality to, the community's boundaries. (ibid.)

In interpreting the community as a collation of individuals who perceive themselves as a collective in opposition to outsiders, Cohen also acknowledges the existence of complex hierarchies, and the potential for conflict and exclusion, that he notes to be easily overlooked by the "superficial ethnographer":

> The unqualified attribution of egalitarianism to a community generally results from mistaking the absence of structures of differentiation - say, class, or formal hierarchies of power and authority - for the apparent absence of differentiation as such. The means by which people mark out and recognize status may often be concealed from the superficial ethnographer, masked as they often are, beneath protestations of equality and the paucity of institutional expressions of *in*equality. (ibid., 33)

Cohen's interpretation represents a productive point of departure for the study of public participatory music events, as it acknowledges the subjective experience and impacts of community as a mental construct without neglecting or negating the individuality and autonomy of participants and the existence and significance of interpersonal conflict. If interaction with symbols is understood as being "mediated by the idiosyncratic experience of the individual" (Cohen 1985, 14), then it is clear that attempts to generalise from accounts of a limited sample of participants will lead to conclusions that are inaccurate and reductive. This having been demonstrated to be the case, the remaining chapters will instead focus on aspects that can be documented with greater clarity and interpreted with greater consistency and nuance. The next chapter will consider the immediate environment, and the broader geographical, legal, and economic context, within which public participatory music events take place. The closing chapters will consider the symbolic elements (both material and conceptual) encountered at events and the ways in which participants may interact with and through them.

Chapter Four – Ecologies

In October 2014, the anonymous curators of the website *www.GigsandBands.com* – which has the ostensible aim of "help[ing] artists gain exposure" – published an original opinion piece entitled "5 reasons why open mic nights are killing live music." Employing a cynical tone throughout, the article states that open mics are "an 'open' invitation for musicians to be exploited and are leading to the death of paid gigs".[23] The criticisms stated include a concern that the (presumed to be low) quality of the performances delivered at open mic events reflect badly on the local music scene at large, deterring potential audiences; that they are run by an exclusive "self elected elite"; that income from these events goes to the brewery and the compere, rather than to the performers, who ought to be paid for their services; and that there are frequently too many open mic events, resulting in acts who perform at them becoming "background noise" to small and unappreciative audiences.

The popular response to the article, evident in the large number of comments posted by visitors to the site, both upon its initial release and since, was strongly divided between those who disagree with the points raised (and the scathing tone in which they are articulated), and those who are similarly critical of open mics. In what is presented as, and criticised by many commenters for being, an insincere attempt to appease the former, the curators posted an additional, alternative article the following day entitled "5 reasons why open mics are a good thing".[24] The cited pros of open mics include that they present an appropriate and supportive environment in which amateurs and aspirants can enjoy, or gain valuable experience of, live performance; provide additional income for venues that may otherwise be forced to close due to lack of funds; and facilitate information exchange, self-promotion, and friendship between participants and attendees.

The essential contention presented in these two articles relates to the relationship between open mic events and local live music activity more broadly. Discussion of this relationship is useful beyond documenting, validating, or disproving the opposing stances represented in the two articles. It is an accepted tenet of ethnomusicology that musical practices are tempered by the geographic, demographic, and material nature and affordances of the environment in which they take place (Feld 1984, 387). This perspective has become more nuanced since the publication of Schramm's 1982 article on free music events in New York, "Explorations in Urban Ethnomusicology: Hard Lessons from the Spectacularly Ordinary", the title of which indicates the common (and ethnocentric) perception among the (majority Western European and North American) ethnomusicologists of the era that Western urban environments constituted a familiar, and therefore well-understood entity to those engaged with the discipline. Though innovative in its focus, Schramm's article is typical of early urban ethnomusicology in its emphasis on the shared characteristics of cities in general, rather than on the distinct characteristics of each of them:

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[23] Gigsandbands.com. "5 Reasons Why Open Mic Nights Are Killing Live Music". Accessed July 21, 2020. http://www.gigsandbands.com/5-reasons-why-open-mic-nights-are-killing-live-music.

[24] Gigsandbands.com. "5 Reasons Why Open Mic Nights Are a Good Thing". Accessed July 21, 2020. http://www.gigsandbands.com/5-reasons-why-open-mic-nights-are-a-good-thing.

> Cross-cultural generalization, important for theory construction, is better served by a conception of the urban as essential rather than accidental. The very term urban invites such generalization. All urban areas, despite their distinctiveness, belong to a worldwide network of analogous entities bound together by political, economic, and ideological interests. They all possess a measure of ambiguity born of an inner-directedness toward their national culture, and an outer-directedness toward the rest of the world with which they are in continual contact. (Schramm 1982, 12)

More recent ethnographically informed interpretations of the connection between music and urban environments demonstrate greater nuance and specificity. Research across multiple disciplines has moved beyond treating place as "simply an inert geographical setting for social and cultural activity", to exploring place as a concept that is "socially and materially constructed, textually represented, thought about and reflected upon" (Cohen 2000, ii). Wheeler's (2012) Brasilia, and Cohen's (e.g. 1991) Liverpool, for example, are interpreted as environments with characteristically unique heritages, challenges, and affordances that directly impact upon the nature of the musical practices occurring within them. Ruth Adams (2019) describes how "Grime" music took shape in response to the urban living conditions, sound system culture, extensive pirate radio network, and combination of Cockney English and Jamaican Patois, endorsing her interviewee's claim that "grime could not have happened anywhere *but* London" (ibid., 441).

One of the significant shortcomings of Stock's (2004) seminal (and otherwise rigorous) article on a folk session taking place at Sheffield's Red House pub is that it does not acknowledge the broader context of folk sessions in England, in the city, or even within the same venue, resultantly presenting what would read to many "folkies" as being a relatively static, routine, and conservative session, as typical or representative. My interviewee Nicola's description of the different folk music practices that she has observed and experienced across England highlights the extent of regional diversity, and speculates as to the possible causes of such:

> Manchester has a really big Irish scene, so it'll be slightly more like Newcastle, but not as fast. Newcastle just plays fast: whether it's just because it's got all the young people that do the degree, I don't know. But then, Northumberland music is quite fast anyway, so I think it's probably got something to do with being in that area. Like, the pipe music is generally quite fast; lots of different variations and stuff, so probably seeps in a little bit as well. Whereas [Sheffield's] more English, which will be slower anyway, and if you go further down south it gets more English, and stuff like that. (Nicola interview)

Discussions of situated musical activity framed in relation to "scenes" (e.g. Straw 1991; Shank 1994; Bennett and Peterson 2004) and "musical pathways" (Finnegan 2007) tend to blur the objective elements and subjective experiences of social environments, and over-emphasise the ready divisibility of different musical activities by stylistic genre. The conceptualisation of live music activity as an "ecology" is a preferable alternative, born of the significant body of ethnographic work conducted across England and Scotland by the scholars of "The Live Music Exchange" project: Adam

Behr, Matt Brennan, Martin Cloonan, Simon Frith, and Emma Webster. [25] With a focus on the live presentational performance of popular music, they sum up the concern of their research as follows:

> [T]o investigate how "intrinsic" factors such as the social interactions between the various actors interact with "extrinsic" factors such as physical, geographical, economic, and legislative (licensing, health and safety, noise, cultural policies, etc.) structures. Other key extrinsic factors include the social and economic conditions which impact on the audiences available for the artists, the artists available to the promoters, and the venues available to the promoters into which to book the artists. (Behr et al. 2016, 7)

This intrinsic/extrinsic distinction is reminiscent of the influential work of Michel de Certeau, who identified *place* as "the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence […] an instantaneous configuration of positions" implying "an indication of stability" (1984, 117), and *space* as what "exists when one takes into considerations vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables", being "actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it." He asserts that "*space is a practiced place*" (ibid., emphasis in original). The ecology model is appealing because it similarly recognises and maintains the distinction between objective elements and subjective experiences of the environment, but also because it recognises the interaction between different musical activities and their shared locale. Coordination between more obviously comparable events (e.g. folk sessions) in the same city is commonly recognised in academic work, but the implications of presentational and participatory music events frequently sharing the same infrastructure, personnel, and repertoire – as alluded to in the contrasting Gigsandbands.com articles cited at the top of the chapter – are often overlooked. Participatory events typically go undocumented in popular and promotional publications (in which presentational activity functions as the presentable face of the local live music scene) and in studies intended to measure the extent of local live music activity (e.g. Toulmin et al. 2015). Such studies have taken on heightened significance since reports from the lobbying group *UK Music* have concisely and consistently demonstrated that live music can yield significant financial returns for the venues and cities hosting it (e.g. UK Music 2019).[26]

The potential financial benefit to other sectors of high public demand for live music has been noted by UK government and city council officials, who have embraced it (with varying degrees of enthusiasm) as a mechanism to revitalise post-industrial areas. The desirability of the attainment of "music city" status has become an established trope in discussions of effective urban cultural policy. A report entitled *The Mastering of a Music City* (Terrill et al. 2015) was published to advise on the implementation of infrastructure and policies that have resulted in vibrant, flourishing, and profitable live music ecologies in cities such as Toronto and Melbourne. The report stipulates that

[25] Live Music Exchange. "About". Accessed September 23, 2020. http://livemusicexchange.org/about.

[26] Contrary to predictions that increased availability of media via the internet would cull demand, the value of the UK's live music sector began to increase dramatically after the turn of millennium: a trend apparent in ticket costs rising at a rate far above inflation; large scale sponsorship of major performance venues; and the establishment of many successful new festivals of various sizes (Frith 2007). This upward trend continued throughout the following decade (UK Music 2019), abated only by the abrupt onset of social distancing measures imposed in March 2020 to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

the essential elements of a "music city" include 1) artists and musicians; 2) a thriving music scene; 3) access to spaces and places; 4) a receptive and engaged audience; and 5) record labels and other music-related businesses. Key strategies recommended for achieving these ends include the establishment of "music friendly and musician friendly" policies, committed organisational and environmental infrastructure, and the cultivation of audiences and tourism (ibid., 13-15).[27]

The orientation of *The Mastering of a Music City* is essentially neoliberal, equating the financial maximisation of the local music market with the interests of all affected parties (including local musicians, residents, business owners, and investors). However true this might be with regard to commercial music activities, the impact of these strategies on musical activities that may not be primarily oriented towards financial profit – which are frequently invisible to, or overlooked in the methodologies employed in quantitative studies – is less clear:

> Any music city has other socio-economic geographies – and demographics – that emerge beyond this policy gaze: music in suburbs (such as illegal death metal concerts in warehouses; raves on urban outskirts; rock'n'roll dances on a week night in community halls; karaoke parties; and the everyday music of older generations); online music communities that draw on the images or sounds of place; and the material technologies and industrial infrastructures of grassroots music making. (Baird and Scott 2018, 5)

The Mastering of a Music City outlines the typical trajectory of the *gentrification* process as one that displaces enterprises, such as those listed above, that do not prioritise profit:

> 1. A low rent area, possibly a bit downtrodden, becomes attractive for music venues, recording studios or rehearsal spaces and artists in general because it is more affordable; 2. Artists and music businesses move in, and over time make it an attractive, cool area to visit; 3. Property values rise and more people and businesses want to move to the area; 4. Landowners see the opportunity to sell their properties to developers who build residential units or condominiums; 5. Rising costs (sometimes resulting from new requirements for noise reduction) and/or higher rents cannot be met by music venues, studios or artists, forcing them to go elsewhere. (Terrill et al. 2015, 37)

Harrison's account of community music projects in Vancouver describes how "gentrification erases the human rights and capabilities developed through music programs for urban poor that close, sometimes together with aid organizations hosting them", being replaced by opportunities for "performing arts that are presentational and prioritize professionalism" (Harrison 2020, 185). This is illustrative of the symbiotic and sometimes antagonistic relationship between participatory and presentational arts that coexist within the same musical ecology.

This chapter will explore both the intrinsic and extrinsic factors of the Sheffield music ecology, introducing significant characteristics of Sheffield as a city, and discussing the impact of local structures, policies, and institutions on the careers and livelihoods of local musicians. It will then

[27] It is interesting to note that an almost identical assemblage of elements was identified by Hesmondhalgh (2013, 126).

consider the relationship between aspects of local music venues and the character and sustainability (for both venues and participants) of the public participatory music events that they host.

Sheffield, South Yorkshire

Originally a network of small villages strewn across seven hills, Sheffield merged into what is now one of the most populous city areas in England, as is often emphasised in promotional materials:

> England's fourth largest city, with a population of over 569,000 and an economy worth over £11.3bn, Sheffield's economy is a driving force for a City Region of over 1.8m people. An international city, with two world-class universities and over 60,000 students, Sheffield competes on a global stage, attracting talented people, inward investors, major events and tourists.[28]

Extending west into the Peak District, south to the border of Derbyshire, and bordered to the northeast by the M1 motorway (with the housing across this road belonging to the smaller settlement of Rotherham), Sheffield's large population is unusually broadly dispersed. Even with the presence of two large universities and the recent construction of many modern high-rise living spaces and new commercial developments within the city's inner ring road, the city centre is notably smaller and quieter than that of the surrounding cities of Leeds, Manchester, and Nottingham. This is in part due to the Meadowhall shopping centre and Valley Centertainment developments to the east of the city, which have drawn business and regional tourism away from the centre; but also because institutions intended to attract tourists, such as the dry ski slope and the Centre for Popular Music (part of the Cultural Industries Quarter initiative, which remained open for a single year, and was subsequently converted into the University of Hallam Students' Union), failed to endure and have not been revived (Moss 2002).

The city's industrial heritage (which resulted in it being branded the "Steel City") is apparent in its architecture and museums, and the working-class character of Sheffield is depicted in many of its most successful cultural exports,[29] such as the hit 1997 comedy film *The Full Monty*, and the lyrical content of songs by Pulp (e.g. the hit single "Common People" from the 1995 *Different Class* album) and the Arctic Monkeys (e.g. "A Certain Romance", from their 2006 debut album *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not*). Sheffield presents an uncommonly divided demographic distribution, which Thomas et al (2009, 13) attributes to the absence of the wealthy satellite towns identifiable in relation to other major Northern cities. Rather than living elsewhere and commuting, the dwellings of many of the wealthier individuals who work in the centre are concentrated in the suburbs immediately to the west of the city centre, resulting in a stark disparity with the post-industrial deprivation of the east.[30] The majority of the universities' student accommodation is

[28] Corecities. "Sheffield". Accessed October 28, 2022. https://www.corecities.com/cities/cities/sheffield.

[29] "Sheffield's "Seven Hills" creates a natural amphitheater in which its sounds have reverberated in a continuum of sonic agitation. The everyday thunderous roar of industrialization created sonic symbols of power, authority, progress and signs of advancement and social structure all now reflected in the city's soundtracks and in its archive." (Schofield and Wright 2020, 208)

[30] Relative deprivation can be seen in the maps provided in the appendix. These are produced by Datashine, based on

located in the western suburbs, and the private rental rates (which are relatively affordable in relation to comparable areas in other English cities) in these areas allow students and graduates to continue living there and engaging with the same amenities and grassroots cultural activities that are comparatively absent in the less affluent areas of the city.

The demographic distribution of Sheffield has two key implications for the local music ecology. The first is the presence of many wealthy individuals who possess expendable income enabling their engagement with the local music ecology (be this as audience members, casual learners, or participants/performers), and to purchase and maintain expensive instruments (such as those most prominently associated with jazz and folk musics). These individuals are well placed to function as participants of amateur activities, including public participatory music events, and their engagement supports the local musical economy. This is most apparent in the form of music education, as many of my musician peers make a substantial portion of their living from peripatetic teaching in local schools, or from employment at one or more of the (often quite expensive) private music schools located across the city. The ready availability of music teaching work, and the relatively low cost of living, can make the city an appealing prospect for individuals seeking to make at least some of their income from professional music work, and for whom flexible working hours and minimal necessary commitment to non-musical income streams is preferable.

A recent overview of the cultural activity taking place in Sheffield is presented in a series of Arts Council funded reports, produced by researchers at the University of Sheffield in collaboration with *Sensoria* festival. Focusing on the extent of, and challenges faced by each of the music, real ale, visual arts, digital media, and classical music sectors respectively, the tone of the publications is consistently laudatory[31], evidently presented with the aim of promoting further interest and investment in the city. The publication dedicated to "music" (Toulmin et al. 2015) is apparently broad in its scope, and could be more clear as to how and from where some of the given figures were gathered, calling into question the accuracy and representative breadth of the report's findings. For example, it is not made clear what criteria are employed in determining the figure of the city's "465 active bands/artists", and what forms of music this does or does not include, though the "classical music" focus of the final publication of the series (Seligman 2018) suggests that at least some of the musical activity in the city does fall outside of the scope of the original "music" publication. Still, the 2015 report offers broad insights that neatly interact with my own findings, offering an effective foil for advancing discussion.

Based on survey results, the report concludes that the Sheffield music scene is one of "DIY do-ers", notably weighted towards musicians who consider their musical activity to be "part-time" (56% of respondents) or "spare-time/hobbyist" (24%) (Toulmin et al. 2015, 7). This is considered to be reflected in a quantitative analysis of regional membership of, and income from, the Performing

deprivation data procured in the 2011 census. A map of Manchester, a large city located across the Peak District from Sheffield, is provided as an illustrative contrast.

[31] E.g. "Sheffield has its strengths and weaknesses but anyone in regular contact with music in the city knows there is a wealth of musical talent in Sheffield and that fact remains as true today as ever." (Toulmin et al. 2015, 5)

Rights Society ("PRS for Music"), the remit of which is identified on the agency's website as the payment of royalties to members when "their work is performed, broadcast, streamed, downloaded, reproduced, played in public or used in film and TV."[32] The report states as follows:

> Total PRS income in 2014 was £664.3m. In effect the South Yorkshire Region represents 1% of the membership but accounts for 0.13% of the income. The general trend for income in the city region has been one of reasonably consistent growth since 2011 apart from in 2014 (2010 – 2011 saw a drop). Both membership and income for the region are relatively low (especially given that PRS membership for the region will include musicians who are no longer active but will still receive royalties). (Toulmin et al. 2015, 6)

In a survey response quoted on the same page, a local performer cites PRS for Music royalties as an example of "indirect revenue that many songwriters who perform live are sadly unaware of" (ibid.). It seems unlikely that this statement refers to musicians committed to the production of original works that are consumed on any substantial scale, who will almost certainly have identified (through individual research, or mentoring/advice from other professional bodies or creative musicians) opportunities to maximise their income and consider the expense of PRS for Music membership (a one-off fee of £100) to be worthwhile as a means of recouping royalty payments.[33] The observation made in the quote therefore appears to further attest to the presence and status of "many songwriters" performing in Sheffield who are not enjoying a notable degree of commercial or economic success with their work.

It is implicit in the citation of PRS metrics that the musicians to whom the report relates are those involved in the creation of original works, rather than those who may enjoy a substantial income from the performance of music that they did not compose. Most of the better paid performance work available to Sheffield-based musicians – including ceilidh and pop cover bands for function gigs, such as weddings; musical theatre pit work; and pop tribute acts[34] – consists of playing "standard" repertoire that they did not compose. In the case of such projects, recordings of "covers" (most often available to stream from the musicians' website and social media channels) function to promote live performance work, rather than representing a purchasable commodity. There may therefore be many active musicians in Sheffield who enjoy substantial income from a performance career without standing to gain from investing in membership of PRS for Music, and who are thus not represented in these figures.

What is clear from the report is that most musicians in Sheffield do not anticipate making a living solely from their performance activities:

> A minority of musicians (just under 5%) succeed in staying in the city and pursuing music in

[32] PRS for Music. "What We Do". Accessed March 8, 2024. https://www.prsformusic.com/what-we-do.

[33] According to figures from April 2020 (PRS for Music. "Royalty Rates and Sample Days". Accessed April 27, 2020. https://www.prsformusic.com/royalties/your-statement/royalty-rates-and-sample-days), one minute of play on BBC Radio 2 generates between £17.66-£32.41 of royalties, depending on the anticipated number of listeners at the time of broadcast.

[34] All of which I have personal experience of as a performer.

> the long term. […] When asked what proportion of gigs had been paid in the last 12 months over 10% had not played 'paid for' gigs for a year. 44% had been paid for half, or more than half, of the gigs they played. (Toulmin et al. 2015, 7)

Given that only 24% of respondents identified their musical engagement as "spare time/hobbyist", these figures suggest that some of the 56% of "part time" and 20% of "full time" respondents were also willing to play gigs without pay, and the report acknowledges that "very few make a living from music purely by playing" (Toulmin et al. 2015, 7).

Opportunities

The figures cited above indicate that there is limited capacity to make a living from musical performance within Sheffield, and this is supported by my own anecdotal experience and discussion with other musicians. One key issue that is identified in the Toulmin report, and in my own conversations with local musicians, is that few of the available performance venues in Sheffield are medium-sized and thus suitable for presentational acts who have the capacity to attract more substantial audience numbers (from both within and beyond the city). My interviewee Jack has performed in Sheffield extensively over the past decade as his solo act "Kid Conventional":

> I don't play in Sheffield a lot now […] They're such an asset to the music scene, but Café Totem is literally it – it's *the* venue. Like, touring bands of a certain size, that is the only place that they're going to go. They might get a support slot at the Leadmill maybe, but […] it's like there's a whole sort of steppingstone level of gig which is pretty much Café Totem now. […] We get side-lined, just, a lot, as a city, and it's because there isn't anywhere to go.[35] (Jack interview)

The lack of mid-sized performance spaces is fundamental to the national "side-lining" that Jack describes, as is attested to by the owner of Café Totem, Paul Tuffs, who concludes that "there is a 'triangle of doom' – Nottingham, Leeds, Manchester – with touring bands often bypassing Sheffield due to the absence of a good mid-sized venue" (cited in Toulmin et al. 2015, 10). Jack highlights the significance of support slots, but the relatively limited number of touring acts from elsewhere who perform in the city results in local acts struggling to secure the support opportunities that would enable them to gain experience of playing at larger venues without a substantial following of their own.

While opportunities to play to larger audiences are not forthcoming in Sheffield, the city does not present the absence of "place to play" that Wheeler (2012) describes to be the case for rock musicians in Brasilia.[36] The Toulmin report identifies sixty-nine music venues within Sheffield, sixteen of which are described as "dedicated music venues". Of the remainder, "32 are bars that regularly present music, 16 are miscellaneous venues that host music events and 5 are nightclubs

[35] Café Totem has since closed, with the nearby venue Sidney and Matilda representing a seemingly thriving replacement venture by the Café Totem management team.

[36] "The perpetual search for 'place to play' has led to creative spatial uses, such as the renting out of the auditorium of the Association of Orthodontistry of Brasilia, going camping to play, or Plebe Rude's legendary rigging up a generator and playing on top of a bus shelter. Use of existing non-music spaces temporarily increases 'place to play' by both creating opportunity to play and making space available." (Wheeler 2012, 94)

that also present live music" (Toulmin et al. 2015, 10). Some notable and well-attended venues have been opened and ventures begun since the publication of the report, including the monthly Peddler Market, at which local promoter "Pink Wafer" hosts eight acts over the first Friday and Saturday of each month. However, it is generally accepted among musicians in Sheffield that the number of celebrated, dedicated presentational performance venues remains relatively small in comparison to the nearby cities of Leeds and Manchester.

Folk music is particularly well-represented in Sheffield, with several venues (e.g. the Backroom at the Greystones; Café #9) dedicating much of their programming to presentational folk performances from local acts and touring ones. Jazz has not been so widely represented in recent years, but local promoters at *Sheffield Jazz* and *Jazz at the Lescar* have successfully built and maintained audiences for regular gigs. The large majority of these are of touring acts visiting from elsewhere, as there are few practising jazz musicians living in Sheffield. The recently established jazz promoter *Footprints* have been reliant on a mixture of local acts that might be more readily referred to as "neo-soul", and acts from relatively nearby cities that play host to more extensive jazz activity (e.g. Manchester, Leeds, and Birmingham).

In both cases, the scale of local participatory opportunities associated with folk and jazz musics is comparable to local presentational ones. The number and range of public participatory music events dedicated to various forms of folk and traditional music is outlined by Ollie:

> I think there are just so many people here that do it, such a big scene here, whereas in other parts of the country it's the one folk club that meets every Thursday night, and that's it. […] There isn't really a clique on the Sheffield folk scene, particularly. There are groups of people who like doing their own things: there's the Euro crowd, there's the Morris [dancing] scene – there's some bleed there; there's the CeilidhSoc scene, which is different to the Three Tuns session; which is different to Kelham Island singing session; which is very different from all the stuff that goes on in Fagan's; which is in turn very different from any of the stuff that goes on at the Hillsborough Hotel. So it's quite a large scene, and […] there's something for everyone. (Ollie interview)

Sheffield's folk music activity is in part sustained by the reputation of prominent local institutions, including CeilidhSoc, the annual Sheffield Sessions Festival, and the uncommon emphasis on traditional musics of the University of Sheffield Department of Music. Each of these brings folk enthusiasts into the city, often as students of the university, as was the case for Owain when choosing his undergraduate degree:

> I knew a few people who had come to Sheffield, and who had been involved in CeilidhSoc, so they were maybe in their third or fourth year. […] I certainly was aware of [CeilidhSoc] before I came to university, and it was sort of a deciding factor that there was a folk scene, and Manchester didn't seem to have much of a folk scene at the time. (Owain interview)

There are far fewer participatory opportunities to play jazz in Sheffield,[37] and the eight events of this kind that I have been aware of over the duration of this research project were mostly short-lived and of a similar character, both in terms of repertorial focus and the older demographic and amateur status of participants. Pete draws a comparison between jazz events in Sheffield and in Manchester, highlighting the impact that dedicated music performance degrees and a developed professional music ecology can have on the character of public participatory events:

> I think a lot of what you're talking about is very specific to the nature and character of a very small amateur jam session in a small provincial town, and that you could go to Manchester and find a jam session which would be so different in character because it'd be made up of professionals and semi-professionals, and none of the people who go to the White Lion jam session would be prepared to participate at all. (Pete interview)

Unlike in the case of jazz and folk related activity, the relationship between presentational and participatory events that are primarily dedicated to the performance of popular song appears to be much more polarised. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the character of the musical activity to be found in Sheffield has seemingly shifted away from presentational events and towards participatory ones. In his self-published chronicles of performing at open mic events across the UK in the late 2000s to early 2010s, Martin Christie described a plethora of performance events in the city, but a relative absence of public participatory music-making:

> I'd been trying to track down an open mic in Sheffield for some time. I'd found many a spoken word event as well as live bands and comedy evenings, but far less in the way of musical happenings of this kind. It seemed like there was plenty going on in this vibrant and creative city, but not a lot in the way of turn up and play music nights. (Christie 2011, 218).

In contrast, a response to a survey conducted for Toulmin's report in the mid-2010s describes Sheffield as being overrun with open mic events, many of which are identified as being poorly coordinated:

> The main ingress for musicians starting out and wanting to get any sort of currency in the city is naturally open mics, but to say the city is over-saturated with them would be an understatement, and whilst this might initially seem of benefit to the amateur starting out, it is in fact quite the opposite given that venues in the city feel bound to put on 'live music' events irrespective of whether the venue is even capable of doing so favourably […]. (Survey respondent, quoted in Toulmin et al. 2015, 10)

This shift might be best attributed to two extrinsic factors: legislation and economy. With regards to the former, Cloonan highlights the role of legal frameworks in shaping the operation of live music venues:

[37] Jazz jam sessions took place at the White Lion (Mondays and Tuesdays being separate); Red Lion in Grenoside; The Library in Attercliffe; Alder in Kelham Island ("Footprints Jazz Club"); Gardener's Rest ("SUJO" student-run session); The Bath Hotel (Gypsy Jazz); and Green Room. Carole's session in Chesterfield, discussed in this thesis, is excluded from this list on the basis of it occurring outside of Sheffield.

> Live music of necessity requires a venue – and such places will be covered by all sorts of regulation, especially if they sell alcohol, are in densely populated areas, allow children in, have unconventional opening hours or can be seen as health and safety risks. (Cloonan 2011, 407)

Legislation

While a large number of pubs and dedicated music venues across the UK have faced closure over the past twenty years (cf. Music Venue Trust 2023), changes in the law have resulted in an increase in the number of premises eligible to host live music.[38] From 1964 to 2005, premises licensed to sell alcohol to be consumed on site were legally required to apply for a separate Public Entertainment Licence (PEL) in order to host live music. As this bill was passed prior to the development of powerful modern amplification, the incorporated "two-in-a-bar" rule permitted individual performers and duos to perform without the venue requiring a PEL, on the assumption that the performance was unlikely to be loud enough to cause disturbance to local residents, or to entertain a large (and potentially disorderly) audience. The PEL was unpopular with both publicans, who were unhappy with the added expense, and musicians, whose activities were limited by the regulation. Particularly stringent observance of the two-in-a-bar rule meant that an audience singing along with a performer were in breach (House of Lords 2017, 128), as were events involving successive performers (Ward 2011, 2-3). It was therefore illegal for venues without a PEL to host participatory music activities that operated in this way, such as a folk session or open mic. The Licensing Act 2003[39] ("LA 2003"), implemented in November 2005, was introduced to simplify the licensing procedure. The act allowed venue proprietors to apply to their local council for a single, tailored license, accommodating non-standard hours of operation, and the hosting of different forms of live entertainment. Endorsed by Labour MP Kim Howells, parliament predicted that the act would result in a "live music boom" (Cloonan 2011, 408).

Although the impact of this policy change is rarely acknowledged, it seems likely that it is in part responsible for the subsequent growth in the live music sector (cf. Frith 2007), as it ostensibly made it cheaper and simpler for venues to host live music. In spite of this, the bill was negatively received by many with a vested interest in the availability and sustainability of live music performance opportunities. As renowned folk performer Eliza Carthy passionately protested in *The Guardian* newspaper in January 2003 (Cumming 2003), where previously the "two-in-a-bar" rule had, for all of its shortcomings, permitted music to be performed by soloists or duos in *any* venue, the LA 2003 limited all public performance exclusively to premises that were licensed for the performance of regulated musical entertainment. This posed a particular threat to itinerant and outdoor music activities, with only the various forms of Morris dancing – as the result of rigorous lobbying – receiving exemption from regulation in licensed venues (Ward 2011, 5-6).

The application process now carried additional risk, especially for small venues located near

[38] The content of this section appears in Knowles 2017.

[39] House of Commons. "Licensing Act 2003: Schedule 1". Accessed August 4, 2020. http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/17/schedule/1.

residential housing, as the licensing application was not just sent to the relevant local authorities but was also required to be advertised – with conditions listed – on the venue frontage and in a relevant local publication. As the bill disallowed interested parties from representing in favour of the venue at any resultant hearings (Cloonan 2011, 408), proprietors feared that their entire application could be halted by any local resident who anticipated that live music in the venue would result in undesirable noise. Although instances of such pre-emptive blocking were seemingly rare, this could have resulted in problematic compromises, such as proprietors having to commit to soundproofing the venue at their own expense (DCMS 2014, 4).

To add to proprietors' concerns, the initial draft of the Licensing Act was not clearly written, resulting in confusion among both venues and local authorities as to what it permitted. For example, under the new bill "incidental" music – a problematically ambiguous term – was exempted from regulation (Ward 2011, 5). A public participatory event that was not advertised in advance by the venue could effectively be argued to be incidental, but it was ultimately down to local authorities to interpret such terminology, which some apparently did more leniently than others. This is the perception of Sheffield promoter Mark Hobson:

> I think there's […] a policy in Sheffield that's not written down. That has been devised by the police, licensing, and Child Protection licensing, to interpret the […] licensing reform in a way that they feel is appropriate, which is control, as opposed to opening it up. They want to *restrict* rather than open up, and they're viewing it in that way. (2008, emphasis Hobson, quoted in Cloonan 2011, 408)

The potential cost of violations makes it seem unlikely that proprietors of unlicensed venues – especially those in the likes of Sheffield as it is portrayed by Hobson – would have been enthusiastic about hosting live music events of any kind. Temporary Event Notices ("TEN"), which allowed venues to apply to host up to twelve regulated events per year, at low cost, offered a flexible alternative for unlicensed venues to host live entertainment with reduced legal risk. However, the greater potential for profit associated with presentational events meant that public participatory music events were unlikely to be a first choice for a TEN application, and TENs therefore did little to mitigate the LA 2003 operating against the interests of spontaneous music-making.

Numerous representative bodies, such as the Musicians' Union and the Music Venue Trust, have consistently campaigned against the regulation of live music (House of Lords 2017, 132), with the passing of the Live Music Act 2012 ("LMA 2012") representing a significant development.[40] It entailed the deregulation of all live music in workplaces, including premises with alcohol licenses, between the hours of 8am and 11pm for an audience of up to 200 people. A reform to the act, implemented in 2015, extended this audience limit to 500, and deregulated recorded music played in the same conditions (Legislative Reform (Entertainment Licensing) Order 2014). Much as the Labour government had hoped with the LA 2003, the LMA 2012 was intended to stimulate a

[40] House of Commons. "Live Music Act 2012: Chapter 2". Accessed August 4, 2020. http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2012/2/enacted.

renewed enthusiasm for the provision of live music performance in England through the removal of barriers that might previously have prevented proprietors from considering hosting it. The primary advantage of the LMA 2012 is that venues no longer *need* to extend their licensing to host live music events, effectively meaning that *all* venues suddenly became legally eligible performance spaces upon the passing of the bill. Residual concerns over the potential for noise complaints from new residential developments built near existing venues were addressed by the addition of an "agent of change" clause to the National Planning Policy Framework in 2018, which states that "existing businesses and facilities should not have unreasonable restrictions placed on them as a result of development permitted after they were established" (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities 2023, para 193). With these changes in place, musical performance could now take place almost anywhere with a minimum of effort and commitment from venue proprietors.

Economy

Whilst legislation has massively increased the number and extent of potential music performance opportunities across the UK, venue proprietors are exhibiting greater concern about the economic sustainability of their venues. This is reflected in a more risk-averse and economically rigid approach to the hosting of live music, as Glenn, in his experience as a live performer, explains:

> When I used to play at venues […] in the early bands, twenty years ago and more, you'd get a few beers, and […] we used to call it "playing for beer money". You might get £20 to £30 each if there were four of you, or £150 for the night, or £200. Whereas now they won't pay it anymore. They ask you to hire the room now: you've got to pay £200 and sell tickets. If you're in a little band, as if you're going to do that! (Glenn interview)

The approach to organisation that Glenn identifies is commonly referred to as "DIY", in which artists organise and promote an event themselves. This typically entails hiring an available event space and selling tickets to cover any costs (e.g. a sound engineer), and thus involves a significant amount of work and the stress-inducing potential of making a financial loss. The main alternative for those seeking formal presentational performance opportunities is to engage with promoters, the ostensible role of whom is summarised succinctly by Webster:

> The role of the promoter in planning any live music event is […] to mediate between the artist and the venue (via an agent if necessary) in order to match the artist with the most appropriate venue for their status, musical style, and expected audience capacity for maximum gain (for example, financial profit or cultural status) or, at the least, minimum loss. […] The role of the promoter in publicising any live music event is to sell the event to the audience on behalf of the venue and the artist. Promoters mediate between the artist and the venue at one end and the audience at the other in order to gather together the optimum community of participants for that event. (Webster 2011, 78)

Webster identifies additional responsibilities borne by promoters, beyond the booking and promotion of gigs:

> [Promoters] must ensure that frontstage (audience), stage and backstage (artist) areas run smoothly, and that the appropriate technology is provided for at the event. There is also an evaluative element that renders the promoter's role cyclical; the success or failure of a previous event impacts on the planning, publicity and production stages of the next event. (ibid., 79)

The promoter-based model is not optimal for two key reasons. The first is that effective and scrupulous promoters of gigs at small venues often report a financially precarious existence that threatens the sustainability of their enterprise. In an article published in local Sheffield culture magazine *Now Then*, Laura Holmes, a popular local promoter who operates under the name "Buds & Spawn", identifies some of the opportunities and challenges faced by independent promoters in the city:

> The fact that there's less happening than in other big northern cities means there's less competition and more space for independents to thrive. But this can be a double-edged sword, as there isn't quite the same live music mindset as there is in cities with more going on. […] As I'm digging deeper into Sheffield's live music scene, I'm discovering lots of vibrant little bubbles, but also sadly often uncovering bubbles that have burst, or promoters that have decided to go on indefinite hiatus due to the pressures, financial and personal, of bringing live events together. These micro-scenes are often just too small to be sustainable for any length of time as promoters run themselves into the ground or their bank accounts into the red. (Holmes 2020)

My interviewee Teah describes the challenges she has encountered in association with the programming of events in Sheffield, notably with regards to the competition posed by open mics:

> It's all to play for in Sheffield. It's very accessible, on a very low level, for anyone to put on their own open mic or go to anything. It's not very exclusive, and I think it's a very friendly scene and everyone knows everyone. […] It's not big, but at the same time that does make people a little bit complacent with like, attending paid gigs and stuff. And because there are so many open mics, no one really comes. [...] I lost so much money on the first event I tried to do, because I wanted […] to pay good acts […]. That was really good, but again, people didn't really come. (Teah interview)

Holmes and Teah identify the financial difficulties encountered by promoters who fulfil their role in earnest, and my private interactions with local independent promoters further testify to their experiences. Hytonen-Ng's six-year research project, entitled "The Place of Jazz", presents a jazz club promoter (whose experiences she deems to be quite typical) as "barely [getting] enough income to keep the club going and to balance the few bad nights" (2015, 68), yet as "regularly [booking] musicians who may not do well financially in terms of the sales" on the basis of being "also concerned about the diversity of the music that he provides and not just the financial business" (ibid., 63). The precarity of this model often results in promoters having to either cease their operations, or to compromise with the acts that they book. These compromises may be oriented towards balancing fairness with economy, for example by booking only ensembles with a small

number of personnel or without substantial travel expenses.

Frith, Brennan, Cloonan, and Webster distinguish between enthusiast, commercial, and state-funded promoters (2016, 15). The second reason that the promoter-based model may not provide an optimal experience for performers is that *commercial* promoters – whose primary aim is to accrue profit (for their promotions company and/or the venue that has employed them) – are often alleged to be much less conscientious than the enthusiast promoters (who often have direct experience of being, or feel strong solidarity with, the musicians that they book for gigs) cited above. The most obvious and pervasive example of this behaviour is the offering of an inappropriately low fixed fee or return of a very limited cut of income from ticket sales to performers.[41] Promoters may offer no form of payment at all, inviting early-career performers to play for a "rider" (usually taking the form of some free alcoholic drinks) and "exposure", presented on the understanding that a successful performance might lead to more substantial future opportunities. Davey, who primarily performs solo as a singer-songwriter, identifies poorly remunerated gigs for exploitative promoters as representing an essential form of musical apprenticeship:

> It's difficult to play and for it to be kind of worthwhile. A lot of the gigs that you're offered are for nothing, and to nobody. […] I've played quite a few gigs around Sheffield where I could've just stayed at home and practised. Playing to 6 or 7 people, at least 4 of which don't give a monkey's about the music, they're just going out for a drink. […] What I always say is that I felt like I've done an apprenticeship of about a year, where you do need to play everything, and get to know everyone, and be used, and not get paid, because really it's helping you out a lot to become a bit more established. But then, when the same promoter asks you to play the same gig for the fifth time without getting paid, you're like, "something's got to give". You don't need it anymore. You feel like you need to return favours, and then it comes to a bit where you're like, "well, it's kind of taking the piss a bit." (Davey interview)

Dissatisfaction with the sub-par efforts of commercial promoters can result in musicians shouldering additional responsibility to ensure that their gigs run effectively. Chris recounts how this resulted in him securing a regular paid gig:

> [It was] one of these things where […] you'd have four acts playing in a night, and you get a couple of beers each. […] We turned up, and they'd got a PA there, but they'd got like one microphone, and no DI boxes, and we're like a five DI, five mics kind of band. So I ended up just pulling all my own gear in, plugging it into the end, running the whole night myself, and then we later found that the person running and booking it was getting paid something like £120, but all the bands playing were doing it for free. And we were like, "hang on, we've just run this night! We've provided all of the equipment, we've done the sound, we've done everything!" Things happened, and words were said, and eventually the pub just said to me "we'll give you £150, bring your own PA in, and you do it". So since then I've been doing it. I

[41] I have direct experience of one local promoter who left all ticket selling responsibilities to the performing acts, and placed them in direct competition for payment by basing their cut of ticket sale money on how quickly they sold their allocated tickets.

> always put [my band] on, but I always get two other bands, and I always split the money pro-rata person by person. […] It's not much money each, but I split it between however many people are there playing, as opposed to pocketing it all and expecting the musicians to play for free, which does seem to happen quite a lot. (Chris interview)

The expectation that musicians will be satisfied with performing for little to no payment, as exemplified in the above anecdotes, is further validated by the presence of semi-professional players who are contented to undercut other musicians to secure performance opportunities that they are not dependent upon to make a living. I have found this to be especially true with regards to jazz and jazz-adjacent gigs at local bars and restaurants, at which the performers provide background music for patrons. Musicians usually take a very dim view of those engaging in this practice, perceiving it to be damaging to their own earnings potential, and to the reputation of local music and musicians in general. My interviewee Jonathan spoke of one such example with consternation:

> [A local musician is] really after getting a gig at any cost. I don't know, it's a bit like […] he wants a title to say he's got the most gigs or something. […] He's got a bit of a reputation for undercutting people on price, and anything to get the gig. He always insists on being paid, but never very much. It's like, surely if you can get all these gigs, you'd prefer to earn a bit more on a gig and do a few less of them? (Jonathan interview)

Presentational performances are a financially high-risk endeavour for promoters and venues, resulting in a relatively small number of paid performance opportunities for gigging musicians. There can be substantial competition to secure gigs, and those who are willing to play for a substantially reduced rate are likely to be far more appealing and viable from the perspective of the venue than musicians who are dependent on gigging for a living, and who must demand and prioritise better paid opportunities. Chris details the payment his folk-rock band anticipates from different performance opportunities:

> If a pub gig's paying £200-£250 for a four- or five-piece band, as an individual you like to walk away with that kind of money, but the Musicians' Union don't want to hear that, because you're supposed to walk away with quite a lot more than that. […] No pub would ever put music on, would they? […] The only time I've ever been near Musicians' Union rate is weddings. […] Even the festivals - I don't know what's typical for other bands - but we'd find pub gigs between £150-250; festivals probably between £300-600; and weddings, yeah, £500-600 plus. (Chris interview)

Considering the challenges associated with gigging, public participatory events may be more appealing to musicians who are not able or willing to deal with the rehearsal, selling of tickets, travel, or engagement with promoters, involved with formal gigging. Carole explains that the jazz jam session that she established in Chesterfield was intended as a more relaxed alternative to pursuing formal presentational performance opportunities:

> It gets people together, people who want to play, but perhaps don't want the formality of

> having a band, and set rehearsals, and gigging around the country, which I certainly don't want to do at my age. I don't envy people doing that at all. I've no desire to be in a famous band and gig round the country anymore, but it's nice to get together with people and play, and I was really enjoying these jazz jams. (Carole interview)

However, public participatory events do not exist purely as an alternative to or a retreat from professional presentational performance. Musicians who aspire to play formal paid gigs recognise open mics as providing an opportunity to engage with venue proprietors and prospect for opportunities. Davey recounted how his committed approach to attending open mics has helped to establish his reputation, secure further career development opportunities, and find regular work as a compere of his own open mics:

> In the space of a summer, I was playing three, four, five festivals a weekend […]. I just totally pushed it, and within the space of a year […] I'm like relatively well-known as a solo musician, worked on a couple of open mics. Yeah, a year ago there were a couple of open mics that I went to, and it were that situation. I'd go, kind of stand around on my own, play my three songs, wait 'til the end of the night, go home. But this year I'm really getting involved in it. […] Without those jam nights and stuff I wouldn't [be] pretty much a full-time musician now. (Davey interview)

Stewis describes how playing at open mics has directly resulted in him being offered paid gigs:

> If you go to an open mic night, you go to a jam night, if somebody really, really likes it then they might say "do you fancy coming back here next week for £100?", or something. Now unfortunately I've probably had that situation about seven times in my life. (Stewis interview)

These examples demonstrate the potential benefit of public participatory music events to performers looking to expand their network and prospect for work, but the events are also convenient for venue booking agents. Bennett (2020) succinctly outlines the common obstacles encountered by venue proprietors attempting to book gigs,[42] highlighting the "need to find, book and organise bands/musicians within their budget that will attract audiences to the venue and spend money to cover the cost of the band" (606). Jane, an events manager for a local venue, describes her hope that an upcoming open mic event will function to expedite the recruitment of performers for formal, paid gigs:

> We're trying to do more in-house local band nights. […] Hopefully they'll tie in nicely with the open mic, and people that come and play at the open mic. It might be an opportunity for us to sort of find new acts to book for the local band nights, which people do get paid for, and they do get a bit of a rider, and they do get a dressing room, and a soundcheck, and it's that proper sort of professional gig experience. So yeah, we're trying to tie those two things in together. (Jane interview)

[42] Bennett's (2020) study was conducted in Australia, but his observations and conclusions align with the findings of my fieldwork in a British context.

There is also a significant financial advantage to venues hosting some public participatory music events. The presence of live music has a documented influence on the sale of drinks, with a 2011 study published by PRS for Music finding that live music increased the weekday wet sales of licensed venues by an average of 21%, and Friday and Saturday sales by an average of 48.2% (PRS for Music 2011). The hosting of unticketed presentational performances by established acts can involve a significant financial outlay for the venue, and, as Jane suggests above, the process of finding appropriate acts is time consuming, and their professionalism and capacity to draw an audience who are able and willing to purchase drinks is not guaranteed. This approach therefore comes with a high level of risk, so venues will tend to reserve such events for Friday and Saturday nights, on the premise that working people are typically more willing to go out drinking (and with greater abandon) at the end of the working week, and that live music will encourage them to attend the venue rather than other local alternatives.

Lower income from drinks sales is anticipated on weekdays, resulting in proprietors preferring to host either private ticketed events or open public participatory events as viable alternatives for generating income and custom. In the case of the former, venues can avoid the economic obligation of paying performers whilst claiming a hire fee and/or cut of ticket sales (and resulting wet sales), leaving the independent promoters and/or performers with the responsibility of covering the hire costs. Public participatory events can be hosted at no cost to the venue if run informally by participants, but if venue proprietors find or anticipate these events to translate into increased bar sales then they may pay a dedicated facilitator to manage proceedings, encourage attendance, and to prepare, operate, and often provide any necessary equipment. The recognition that live music is good for business can result in the venue, sometimes with endorsement from an associated brewery, offering a (usually predetermined) number of free drinks to performers as motivation.[43] The broad appeal and open remit of open mic events makes them a popular choice for proprietors seeking to lure new customers into their premises. Glenn expresses a common scepticism about events born of this motivation:

> I think some of the more rubbish ones are sort of just put on without forethought or care really, and it's like "oh I know, if we put an open mic night on, I'll get a load of musicians to come and play for free. Fantastic!". And, you know, generally I don't think they last very well. (Glenn interview)

Profitability for venues is one of the major variables affecting the night of the week on which regular public participatory events take place, but equally important is the fit with other local music activities intended for an overlapping clientele. Statistics on the website www.openmicfinder.com (accessed 17 December 2018) suggest that, of the 1942 regular UK open mic events registered on the site, the percentage taking place increases each day from Monday (9.3%) through to Thursday (25.6%). This figure drops substantially for Friday (10.1%), and further still for Saturday (4.5%), with a marked increase for Sunday (16.2%). This is in stark contrast to the typical distribution of local gigs

[43] This was the case at the Monday night folk session operating at the Red Deer (two free drinks per person) and was reported to be the case at the RS Bar's Wednesday night open mic (quantity unknown).

listed on the "Sheffield Gig Guide",[44] which reveals a sustained concentration of presentational music events on Fridays and Saturdays.

Jane describes how an awareness of prominent and enduring public participatory events in Sheffield factored into the decision-making process informing the organisation of the open mic at the venue she manages:

> We've stuck to Sunday afternoon. That was originally [the compere's] suggestion, and it seemed to work quite well. Obviously, Monday is the Green Room, and I think that there's a lot of other open mics on Thursdays as well […]. So we just thought that was quite a good time, when there wasn't too much of the same thing going on around the city. (Jane interview)

This is not just the case for open mic events. When the regular attendees of the CeilidhSoc session debated relocating it from the Shakespeare to the Doctor's Orders, they also discussed whether it ought to be moved from Tuesday to Wednesday, on the premise that a change of day might allow more of the student population to attend the event. The response from many was that the CeilidhSoc session had become an institution that participants associated with a Tuesday evening, and that it fitted comfortably around other weekly folk events in the city. The proposed change of venue and day took place, and the event enjoyed a renewed boom in attendance, notably - as intended - from university students. Though no longer under the aegis of CeilidhSoc, many of the previous regulars instead chose to continue attending the Tuesday session at Shakespeare's.

The small number and older amateur demographic of the practising jazz musicians in Sheffield results in organisers seeking to space out monthly events as evenly as possible, on the understanding that participants will not be motivated or available to attend such events with a high degree of frequency.[45] Kate describes the personal commitments that kept her from attending the original Tuesday evening jazz jam session at the White Lion, and that led to her establishing a second jazz jam session at the venue on the third Monday of each month:

> [The Grenoside jazz session is] the first Monday of the month, so it's the day before the Tuesday White Lion one, so not attractive for me […]. It's pushing it. You know, three kids, and we both work, so to have two consecutive ones… (Kate interview)

For professional musicians the timetabling of local public participatory music events around the most popular days of the week for presentational music activity means that hosting them represents a regular and relatively stable source of income that fits neatly with their other performance work:

> Typically running an open mic or session you'll get £50 for doing it, but you kind of think "that's alright for me on a Wednesday night". […] Someone I know runs about three open mics a week

[44] Sheffieldmusicscene.com. "Sheffield Gig Guide". Accessed March 9, 2024. https://www.sheffieldmusicscene.co.uk/w_city_by_date_Sheffield.html.

[45] This is in marked contrast to the nearby city of Leeds, which offers a comparatively large number of thriving jazz jam sessions that are consistently well attended by the young and aspiring jazz students of Leeds conservatoire.

> in Sheffield. […] If you're in a four-figure band at the weekend, and you can pull £50 on a night during the week, then that's starting to look like a professional musician of sorts. So, I guess that is the way […]; that's the model of someone who's willing to do that. (Chris interview)

Glenn describes how running open mics can also function as a paid social opportunity for professional musicians, compensating them for the leisure opportunities they have sacrificed to the performance of paid gigs on weekends:

> Well generally if you're a full-time musician, unlike other jobs I suppose, you're going to be out Friday, Saturday, Sunday night, and the rest of the week is yours. So do you want to do an open mic night? Do you do it for fun? Do you do it for some beer money? Or do you just do it because you can do? Yeah, to be honest I like it. It keeps me interested, to the point that I don't really go out much anymore because […] I count the Monday as going out. I mix with loads of new people, loads of new friends, [and] old friends get up and play songs I've not heard before. […] Yeah, it takes a certain type of player to run an open mic night, because you've got to have a lot of patience, and time. (Glenn interview)

Other forms of participatory music event that I have encountered (e.g. sessions relating to folk and jazz musics) are more likely to be initiated on a less formal basis by a collection of interested participants. However, enduring events do typically establish some affiliation with an external supporting agent. The most common example of this is the proprietors of the hosting venue, who offer financial support upon the discovery that the event generates custom, either directly, from the participants and immediate audience buying drinks, or indirectly, from the event complementing the aesthetic and notoriety of the venue.[46] Mike, who has been heavily involved in the Sheffield folk scene for many years highlighted how it is typical for folk session leaders to be paid:

> They always pay the lead musician. […] I was a paid musician on one night, at Fagan's, for a while. I think that was a Monday, years and years ago. […] The lead musician, the anchorman, often gets paid. […] A lot of sessions wouldn't happen without them, the anchorman. (Mike interview)

This came as a surprise to me, as the CeilidhSoc session – with which I was most familiar – has consistently operated without a clear leader or payment, likely representing an exception to the financial workings of enduring, regular folk sessions in the city more broadly. The session's affiliation with a broader student organisation renders the payment of a regular host redundant, as the session functions as a popular social event and a means of preparing participants to perform at associated ceilidh events. In the same interview, Mike spoke fondly of hosting the CeilidhSoc sessions at the Red House pub (of which his wife was the landlady), and offering free food to attendees:

> The Ceilidh Society were brilliant, because while a lot of music was going into a dive, there

[46] Kaul (2007) describes the successful commodification of traditional music sessions in rural Doolin, Republic of Ireland, which draw a large number of tourists. The predominantly local demographic of the patrons of the venues at which I undertook fieldwork did not inspire me to pursue such a framing.

> was the Ceilidh Society at the university. They were doing it [for] free, but we [as owners of the Red House] would give them chips, and sandwiches, and things like that. (Mike interview)

Another example of a broader affiliation is shared by Jack, who describes how he and some fellow employees of Sheffield Theatres established and compered the "Rotunda Sessions" open mic under their own initiative, and without receiving any extra payment (beyond the regular hourly wage they would have received regardless of whether the event was running), prior to the concept being embraced by management:

> [Management] weren't outright stopping us from doing stuff, it was just there was no support for it necessarily. That's why when I wasn't working there full-time, then I could do it as more of a hobby, and [a colleague] had got a load of enthusiasm for wanting to try it and stuff, we were like "right, let's just give it a go". So they started it […] The theatre have really come round to it. I think it was partly that they didn't have the resource or the inclination, whichever one it was, to put any great resource into it at the start, but they've been great with it. Because there's often not theatre on Monday's, they were sort of looking at not opening the restaurant to serve *nobody*. But the new artistic director actually came in with the cast one night, when it was on, and apparently really enjoyed it. We didn't really know him, he didn't come and announce himself to us, but apparently when this news was broached and we were a bit worried that we might have to move it to another venue, he was like "no, we'll open it for them on a Monday evening, if that's when it's going to be, because it's the sort of thing we should be doing". (Jack Interview)

Public participatory music events do not necessarily have a net positive impact on the venues that host them. A common complaint from proprietors and managers is that many event participants show limited consideration for those around them, including reciprocating for the provision of the space by purchasing drinks. Brett-Morgan, who worked behind the bar at Shakespeare's, spoke of what she and her colleagues called "lime and soda folkies":

> [They are] not buying drinks, which is like super inconsiderate if you're using the venue and everything like that. As much as they're welcome, you're essentially interrupting the flow of what would be a normal night […]. And then there's also having that social awareness and appreciation for the pub and stuff like that. […] They think that we should be very grateful that they're there. […] We don't dislike folk sessions, we just don't like inconsiderate people. (Brett-Morgan interview)

Mike recounts an instant of a landlord challenging a session participant on their failure to contribute financially, and hints at how many regular pub patrons may be *tolerating* folk sessions rather than enjoying them:

> Landlords are beginning to say "you know, there's not much money in these folkies", because some of them are asking for bottles of water. Or, you know, they're asking for free water, and one landlord – I was in a session – he said "we're not a fucking community club you know. Buy a pint or I'm going to charge you for water, because I've got to heat and light it, and pay the

> rates", you know what I mean? Folkies are quite blasé. They think they're bringing all this marvellous music to the pub. Sometimes the locals say, "oh Christ, it's that lot". We used to have this at the Red House. (Mike interview)

A negative impact is particularly problematic in the case of dedicated music venues, at which any event comes at the opportunity cost of a potentially more lucrative one:

> There are some people who would come to the open mic and would come and support other events at the venue, but I'd say 85% of the people who attended our open mic didn't support anything else that we were doing here. […] There is a lot of people who came to our open mic who would come every single week, and they would drink tap water. […] I think what people don't realise is that to run an event like that, with all those facilities, and an engineer, it's not cheap. And they come in and they complain that a glass of soda water's too expensive, and can we turn the heating on because it's a bit too chilly, and it's like, "well yeah, but can you buy a drink please?" But you can't say that to people, so I think it is quite difficult with free events. Even if we got a pound off everyone it would've made it so much easier to keep it going, and give it a bit more longevity, but unfortunately, like I said, we had to call it a day, because we just started to lose money really. (Jane interview)

These examples function to highlight how the hosting of public participatory music events is essentially economically motivated. However, the commercial success of these events can function to reduce the quality of the experience enjoyed by participants. Carole summarises the dilemma faced by many facilitators seeking to strike a balance between a financially sustainable event and an event that is welcoming:

> I'm getting quite disillusioned with the numbers, although I have to say, the one time I got twenty-two people turn up it was actually very difficult to handle, because you know, you've got so many wanting to play at once, and you have to be saying "your turn; your turn". […] But I've got this dichotomy. I feel I've got a duty to bring bums on seats, so I try to get more people to come and watch, but because the ambience isn't there in the club it's actually very difficult to achieve that; people don't want to come. (Carole interview)

Chris describes the practical implications of the number of attendees for his round the room session at the White Lion:

> When a session becomes too popular and too many people go you only get one song, or you might not get any songs at all. So you stop going. So the numbers drop. So you end up getting more songs. So people go "this is good". So more people go. So there's definitely that dynamic equilibrium going off all the time.[47] […] One person [at an open mic that I run] was upset that he only got one song because he was on after the break, so he says he's not going anymore. All that means is that then there's a higher probability of more people getting two songs if he

[47] This example is reminiscent of the quote attributed to baseball player Yogi Berra, "Nobody goes there anymore. It's too crowded."

doesn't go, so who is he hurting but himself? (Chris interview)

Venues

In a 2016 article, Behr, Brennan and Cloonan asserted that the *instrumental* (economic) value of live music, which had been strongly prioritised in governmental policy, had little relation to the experience of audiences beyond the purchasing of tickets, and that what was missing from the discussion was a more nuanced understanding of *intrinsic* value. They suggested the following:

> Rather than trying to quantify intrinsic value, it may be more fruitful to seek to understand how various actors perceive it; […] to move away from unpicking value as an end itself and towards an analysis of how people ascribe value – de-emphasising the noun 'value' and focusing on the act of valuing" (Behr, Brennan and Cloonan 2016, 408).

In light of this, their research team conducted a Live Music Census in 2017. In a summarising article, Behr, Webster, Brennan, Cloonan, and Ansell identified live music venues as being valued by audiences and musicians on the basis of seven different criteria (2020, 513): developmental; narrative; social; symbolic; aesthetic; and material (figure 1).

Table 2. The social and cultural value of live music venues.

Live music venues have …	… because they …
A role in musical development …	Allow for the discovery of new artists/genres
	Can be creatively inspiring
	Help musicians and others to develop new skills/confidence
Narrative value …	Have long-term relationships with their users
	Become part of people's life stories
	Are the sites of memorable experiences
	Are places where something significant happened for the first time
	Provide regular income/work
Social value …	Allow people to spend time with friends or family
	Can be places for making new friends or acquaintances
	Can be sites for developing networks
	Have supportive and friendly staff
	Can be safe spaces
	Have a consistently good atmosphere
Symbolic value …	Confer status on performers
	Have a reputation or history which enhances users' experiences
	Can signify moving up the career ladder
	Are perceived by users as the best in the UK/world
Aesthetic value …	Have character or beauty
	Have a diverse program
	Have a consistently high quality program
	Are genre specialists
	Program high status or international artists
Material value …	Allow for proximity to artists
	Have a good sound or acoustics
	Have good sightlines
	Have a good layout
	Are local/nearby/easy to get to
	May be the only local venue of its type
	Charge or pay a fair price
	Allow musicians to put on their own shows

Figure 1. The Social and Cultural Value of Live Music Venues. (Behr et al. 2020, 513)

Much of the writing on popular music venues has focused on romanticised historical and aesthetic aspects. Miller and Schofield's (2016) discussion of the "Toilet Circuit" refers to a collection of celebrated venues characterised by their "historicism, distinguishable seedy aesthetics, and a compelling sense of community", "where globally successful bands started out, touring these venues heavily […], cutting their teeth and establishing their initial fan base" (144). This is representative of the narrative, symbolic, and aesthetic values prominent in discourse relating to presentational performance venues. Teah, who has worked as a performer, gig promoter, and open mic compere, identified venue aesthetics, and particularly the capacity for spectacle, as being important for presentational performances, including those occurring at open mics:

> The Cellar, even though it's small, is really nice, because the lighting and the way it's seated just means that it elevates the performer. […] So I think a venue that has a space where you can do that. The room at the top of [the University Arms] didn't work, because there was no way of making the performer look like "right, they're performing now, so I've got to listen". […] DiNA is wonderful because they will adapt to what the artist, or whoever it is organising the event, want. And that's really nice, because it means that every event that you go to there feels special or different, like "ooh, this is a cool place". […] I think for open mics, or gigs where you want attention it's got to have that kind of feel of like "ooh, this is a really nice place". It just depends on the events I suppose. I think open mics in the corner of a pub don't do anything for the performer. (Teah interview)

The typically more commercial (compared to the other events explored in my research) orientation of open mics necessitates attracting and retaining an audience, and the organisers have a vested interest in the event being observable to as many people as possible. The Green Room demonstrates a sustained commitment to the hosting of different recorded music nights throughout the week and underwent a substantial conversion in 2017 that provided a dedicated performance space at the rear of the venue. However, the Monday Club open mic long remained the venue's only consistent regular live music event, and it takes place in the main room rather than in the more secluded rear performance space. This is in spite of the fact that many people I encountered during my fieldwork spoke highly of the acoustics of the rear space, and were quite vocal in their criticism of the acoustics and layout of the main room:

> I don't like places with rubbish acoustics, and places with rubbish PA systems; or places with good PA systems that don't know how to use them. […] I'd say Green Room's worst. There's probably nothing wrong with the PA, or the desk, or the operation of it, it's just a horrible sounding room. (Chris Interview)

> [The Green Room has] always been a great live music place. And I don't know why, because the layout's not ideal. […] The acoustics aren't fantastic either. There's not as much room to actually see the band, so if you're sat around this corner, you're struggling to see on stage. (Glenn interview)

The continued popularity of the Green Room seems to support Chris's assessment that sound quality does "largely pass folk by" in their evaluation of open mics. Jonathan concludes similarly

with regards to open mics:

> There are some basic expectations, like being able to hear people who are performing. If the sound is noticeably bad that's going to put people off, but I think it's more about the atmosphere. (Jonathan interview)

The decision to hold the Monday Club open mic in the main room was based on Glenn choosing to prioritise atmosphere and accessibility over acoustics:

> I have thought about putting it into this back room. The only problem with that is on a Monday the pub will then look empty from the street, you know? […] We set up right in the front window, and people walk past, and they nudge each other, "should we go in?" "yeah, let's go in". So you get a lot of footfall, you get a lot of passing trade by being seen, by being heard […] It's a great room this [back room], but I think we'd be too much out of the way, you know? It would lose something. (Glenn interview)

Glenn identified the layout of the Green Room as not being ideal, and its layout does not initially seem as conducive to focused engagement with the performer as, for example, The Red House, as described by Teah:

> Because the stage was at the front, and the bar was at the back, there was no need to leave the room, sort of thing, so it means that even when you're buying a drink and stuff you do have that focus on the performer. I think that's nice, to create at least the shape where the performer is the focal point. (Teah interview)

Whilst, as Glenn notes, the layout of the Green Room includes spaces from which the stage cannot be easily seen, the venue does facilitate audience engagement with the performer in other ways. As the performance is visible from the street, venue patrons are immediately aware of live music taking place. The stage is directly opposite the bar, meaning even those who have removed themselves to the more secluded spaces of the venue will reengage with the performance each time they go to buy a drink, and those entering and exiting the venue cannot avoid walking across the front of the stage area. Due to the relatively small size of the venue and use of a PA system, performances are easily audible in the more secluded spaces. In these ways, performers remain the focal point of the space despite the venue not being ideal for presentational performance.

"Footfall" was frequently identified as a desirable trait for venues hosting open mic events, as curious passers-by can significantly augment and vary the audience beyond dedicatees of the event. The Crucible Corner "Rotunda Sessions" open mic is held directly in front of the large window facing Tudor Square, a central, paved and pedestrianised space lined with a concentration of theatres (hence referred to as the "Theatre District"). Jack describes the limitation presented by the absence of footfall outside of the venue on Mondays, the night of the open mic:

> That is our one problem with where Crucible Corner is. […] There's not a lot of footfall because it's not on the street: it's on the square. You're on the square for the theatre or you're not on

> the square at all […], so unless you're on the square you don't know it's there […]. From our point of view as people who work there, an annoying thing is that half the people who come and play are like, "I didn't even know this was here". (Jack interview)

The location and layout of Crucible Corner, and resulting lack of footfall, has influenced the character and organisation of the open mic. Jack described how, for the first few Rotunda Sessions, acts had to be invited online and booked in advance to ensure some performers attended, a practice that has since continued there to a lesser extent but remains exceptional at open mics more broadly. The Rotunda Sessions have increasingly been attended by regular attendees, but the organisers continue to rely on word of mouth and online promotion to alert potential attendees to its existence:

> We do have some regular fans as well; people who just come down to watch […] They come not every time, but probably every two out of three there's a couple of groups, couples and stuff will come down and just hang out […] It's just a little off the beaten track, which is why we have to do a lot of social media, and a lot of inviting people to come, like "please come, and bring your pals, and tell your mates", and stuff, but it does work. (Jack interview)

Whilst comperes are compelled by the venue to at least be seen to be attempting to increase attendance, this is not necessarily a desirable outcome for the compere or open mic participants. Chris notes one of the advantages of hosting events in a venue beyond the centre of town to be the increased likelihood of those in attendance being personally invested in the event or venue, rather than passers-by to whom the venue appealed on the grounds of convenience or an apparently lively atmosphere:

> I really don't think we've had much by way of negativity from people. Again, maybe because it's quite a quiet event, and people only go there if they want to go there. I think with a city centre event you're more prone. I think it's more places like the Green Room, when it's […] very busy and very packed, people coming and going. (Chris interview)

Unlike at open mics, participants of simultaneous folk sessions and amateur jazz jam sessions are not typically seeking to perform to non-participant patrons, and may even prefer the space to be more secluded. This is for practical reasons, in so far as the capacity to hear oneself and other participants can be hindered by the extraneous sound of other patrons, but also with a view to mitigating the potential for unappreciated audience scrutiny. The questionnaire response below, offered in relation to folk sessions, starkly contrasts with Teah's comments on the ideal setting for an open mic:

> For normal sessions, a corner in a pub is great. If the pub is not very noisy, even better. For "learner/slow sessions", a pub on a quiet day or a function room somewhere [is ideal]. (Q35.19)

Another survey respondent expressed similar sentiments in relation to jam sessions:

> I think if the venues made it clear that it is a jam night, anywhere's ok. I've attended sessions that have been swamped with large groups on nights out, which have drowned out the music and heckled performers etc. (Q29.19)

The desire for seclusion is likely one of the reasons that public participatory events other than open mics tend to take place in areas with reduced footfall. For folk musicians in particular, the associated implications of playing in more commercially oriented venues, including the poorer selection and quality of beverages and bar staff who are perceived to be unsupportive or disinterested, have been noted as reasons to avoid running sessions in centrally located venues. Chris recounts an exchange with a well-known Sheffield pop musician that inspired such an unsuccessful foray:

> He used to hang out at Fagan's quite a lot, and he was saying that what Sheffield desperately needed was like a folk night, folk session, on West Street, right in the core of the city, rather than out in the real ale pubs. And I mean I did talk to West Street Live, and they did run something briefly there, a long time ago now. […] It didn't happen for very long, and it wasn't very successful. And basically everyone I spoke to, to try and get [them] involved in it, they were all like, "I'm not going there, the beer's shit". I couldn't find a single folk musician willing to go there, because of how bad the beer was. Also, anecdotally, I knew one of the guys who worked behind the bar there, and he'd served someone a pint of Carling, and the guy goes "this beer's terrible!", and the guy behind the bar goes, "course it is; it's Carling!" (Chris interview)

Sheffield is celebrated for the extent of its real ale culture, and public participatory events that are initiated by enthusiastic participants typically select venues with a good range of appropriately costed quality beverages. Almost all of the Sheffield venues that have proven to be enduring hosts to participatory music events appeared in the CAMRA Good Beer Guide 2019 (CAMRA 2018) - the Bath Hotel, Dog and Partridge, Red Deer, Fat Cat, Kelham Island Tavern, Shakespeare's, Forest, Gardener's Rest, Hillsborough Hotel, White Lion, and University Arms.[48] Chris identifies a correlation between presence of quality beverages and conscientious management, contrasting the failed West Street Live session with the enduring success of the open mic that he runs at The Forest pub:

> A good location is important, but [The Forest] hasn't got it and it's still succeeded. Good beer it does have. Very friendly, welcoming bar staff. Basically it's kind of family-run, so it's not like you're going to get people working behind the bar who really don't give a damn about what they're doing. (Chris interview)

Beyond location and the availability of quality refreshments, the size of a venue also has significant

[48] Of this list, only the Red Deer, Forest, White Lion, and University Arms have hosted regular open mic events (since the beginning of my field research in 2015), while there are numerous Sheffield venues that have hosted regular open mics that do not appear on the list (e.g. the Royal Standard, Greystones, Crucible Corner, Green Room, Yellow Arch, Cafe Ceres, Cremorne). This is consistent with my finding that open mic events are commonly initiated by venues to attract customers, whereas other participatory music events (e.g. jazz and folk sessions) are usually proposed and organised by the participants themselves at venues of their choosing (with the quality of available beverages being an important variable in this decision).

implications for the character of the events that take place within them, setting a limit on the capacity for both participants and non-performers, and inspiring a sense of intimacy or exposure, as Kate articulates:

> I think the White Lion is really good, because it's big enough without being too big. I mean, the Bath Hotel's a lovely, lovely place, but it's tiny. […] I haven't been [to the Victoria Club, Chesterfield], but it sounds like it's too big. The one in Grenoside is very small, but that probably isn't a bad thing, because it makes it ok if they don't have many people. […] If it was any bigger it might feel like they're struggling for numbers, but you have to squash in […]. Whoever it was that went to the Chesterfield one, they said you're up on stage, and it feels a bit exposed. So not only big, but you're sort of up there. (Kate interview)

Carole describes her struggles to accommodate less confident jazz participants at the Chesterfield venue mentioned by Kate, expressing a common preference for the more intimate, ambient snooker room over the main room that has been explicitly designed for presentational performances:

> Sometimes we're in the snooker room […], and that has more of an ambience about it. If the snooker tables weren't there that would be ideal. You need a more ambient, intimate space. [It] is ok if I can switch all the lights off and have the stage lights on, but every so often somebody wants to play dominos, or watch Sky TV, so the lights go up. So no, I'm not getting the ambience. […] That might be one of the things that's actually putting people off. In fact, one or two of them have said to me, […] "I'm scared. It's such a big space. Can you tell me if you're going to be in the snooker room?" They'll come along when we're in the snooker room, but won't come along in the big room because they don't want to be on the big stage. (Carole interview)

In contrast to the ideal performance space for an open mic, which provides maximum exposure for the performer, it is more important for events built around simultaneous performance to take place in environments where participants can hear one another clearly. Venues that offer a degree of separation between musical participants and disengaged patrons are more likely to be able to facilitate this whilst retaining financial viability by minimising the deterrence of pub regulars. Kate outlines how the White Lion is a good example of such a venue:

> [The rear room] might not be the preferred space of normal pub-goers, so they're not losing anything by having people [playing music there]. People can sit, because they've got some sort of booth-y closed off bits, so if people really don't want to listen to it, they can still have punters that can avoid it. And also there's the garden, so in the summer there's people out there […]. Even on the bar nearest the jam bit, you know, they'll often have people playing darts, or watching a bit of tele. There's not many seats there, and the rest might be in the bar by the road […] so yeah, I think they're not losing much, so that works quite well I think. (Kate interview)

The above-cited comment that "anywhere's ok" for a jam session so long as the other patrons do not drown out or interfere with the event is, in part, the case because jam sessions usually involve

louder instruments that can function to guide the proceedings (e.g. a drum kit), and use of amplification may be the norm. Jonathan describes how the internal focus of a jazz jam session he was running meant that it would make more sense for him to prioritise participants' capacity to hear themselves and one another rather than being heard clearly by an audience:

> The thing with the quality of the sound was, I thought, "surely that's going to sell it a bit on its own", but apart from a couple of people I know who were like "that's clear, that's clear", nobody else really cared I don't think. It goes to show, I dare say from my experience, that you'd probably have more worth spending money on an HK Audio monitor than on speakers, because the audience don't bother. The musicians are going to bother though. If you make them sound good to themselves, that's probably money better spent. (Jonathan interview)

Folk sessions are built around the use of portable acoustic instruments, making the shape of the performance space more significant to the success of the event. The following priorities were frequently listed by participants of folk sessions:

> A largish airy room with good acoustics – square for preference – long narrow rooms don't work so well because people at one end can't properly hear those at the other. Friendly music-loving landlord and good beer. (Q16.19)

My interviewees isolated Shakespeare's as a problematic space in this regard:

> At the CeilidhSoc [sessions], I don't think that room, the long room at the Shakespeare, which is where we are, lent itself particularly well to a session. […] I'd always sit in the middle, because I knew that there'd be, if somebody led from one side, there'd be sort of a delay across, from one side to the other. So there was a sort of time lag. The session, the tunes, always felt like there was this internal lag in it, and I always tried to work out what's the best place to actually play in, because it wasn't following that leader, on the left-hand side, or the other one, who's slightly out of time with each other. So those sort of sessions, you come out of them feeling more tired. […] You've been trying to basically smooth off something that can't be smoothed off. (Steve interview)

> If you start getting out of sync with everyone it just sounds awful, especially if you're playing with a lot of musicians in a long room, like Shakespeare's, and you end up with one room playing half a beat, or half a bar behind the other half of the room. (Ray Interview)

Owain suggests that while Shakespeare's is an ideal venue for folk sessions in some regards, its layout results in it not being practical or inviting for new participants:

> I think that the Shakespeare's has an awful lot of good things going for it, and obviously, you know, good beers and friendly bar staff, and all the rest of it, and they're very encouraging of the session, but I think the layout of the room is really, really poor for a session. […] It's very hard to dip in and out of. It's very hard to, say […] "I'll play a couple of tunes, and then I'll socialise, but be close, still, to the session", in such a way that you can encourage newer people

> to turn up and be a part of it. Because you're either in the session room or you're in a different part of the pub entirely, so I can imagine, if you're […] new to the CeilidhSoc, walking into that pub knowing there's a session on, but not really knowing anyone […] you've got to find the session first, which [involves walking] around the entire pub to begin with, and then you've got to either walk straight into a very long thin room [and] that room either is very packed or very empty. Either way you have to make an impression of, like, trying to fight your way in, or walk in and be like, "oh, hi. I don't know anyone." Whereas some of the pubs, like the Solly Street one - or University Arms used to be a similar case - you could be around the session without being in the session; have a drink, chat to people, and then choose if you want to be in the session or not, which I think would be a good thing to get back to, if possible. (Owain interview)

Owain's evaluation makes clear the value of an attached, delimited space, from which the session can be observed without commitment, and to which participants can proceed as and when suits them, thus facilitating a less committal engagement with the activity and greater ease of socialisation. These *liminal* spaces can therefore make attendance less intimidating to new or potential participants, both because they afford them the opportunity to evaluate the situation into which they would be entering before deciding whether or not to do so; and because they enable existing participants to momentarily leave the performance space to encourage newcomers to join in.

The discussion in this section indicates that the most popular and enduring venues for the hosting of public participatory music events are valued by participants primarily for social and material reasons (e.g. location; layout; atmosphere), with aesthetic and symbolic aspects (e.g. decoration; reputation) being of apparently lesser significance.

Conclusion: Affordances

Frith makes a case for the value of "affordance" as a means of guiding and interpreting the history of live music, defined as "the obstacles to and possibilities for action offered by particular objects (musical instruments, say) or situations (live performance, for example)" (Frith 2022, 23). His argument is that musicians are "opportunists" in the sense of having to work with whatever resources are available to them:

> I argue that musical careers are essentially accidental and fluid, the result of particular local conditions and opportunities. It is from this perspective that I describe musicians as ordinary. […] What makes musicians extraordinary is not who they are but what they do and how they use their opportunities. We should admire successful musicians not for their integrity but for their opportunism, a term that needs rescuing from its negative overtones. (Frith 2022, 9)

This chapter has considered how public participatory music events represent an adaptation to local opportunities. Many pubs and cafes are less than ideal environments for presentational performance, both in terms of their architecture (e.g. being without appropriate staging areas or desirable acoustic properties) and their capacity to offer meaningful financial returns for

performers. These same venues may instead be informally adopted[49] as enduring sites for participatory performance on the basis of them fulfilling different priorities, including convenience, the availability of liminal spaces, conviviality of staff/regulars, and availability and quality of beverages.

Krims identifies "the under-studied status of musical *space*" as being in part due to the "lack of a tradition of *political economy* in music studies" (Krims 2012, 145). This chapter has highlighted how participatory music events can be interpreted as a reaction to economic circumstances and changes in government policy. For example, my interviewee Chris describes his experience of playing venues across England throughout the 1980s as part of original progressive rock band, "Haze":

> We would play any club that would have us, and just try it. We made LPs back then. We did cassettes first, then LPs, selling them all at the shows. […] You'd get paid £50 for a gig back then if you were lucky, but we'd make at least as much from selling CDs. We'd go travelling around, sleeping in the back of the van in lay-bys, going from one gig to another. It was like every week was a tour. […] Sign on Monday morning, get your giro Wednesday morning, and then you'd play like, for example, Nottingham Wednesday night; Northampton Thursday night; I don't know, Bristol Friday night; Southampton Saturday night; London Sunday night; then drive home through the night and sign on Monday morning. I mean, we really did earn a lot less than we spent on doing it, so we really were surviving on the dole money, and all the money we earnt on gigs we used to fix the van up, fix the gear up, and again we managed to make a few records, and did that for most of the [19]80s. […] Then when the Thatcherite establishment finally caught up with us, and we got thrown off the dole, we went into enterprise allowance, did that for a year. Then me and our sound engineer carried on doing whatever we could – PA hire, van driving, lighting hire, roadying – just anything we could to stay in the music business, and we were earning less than we had on the dole. (Chris interview)

For Chris, the running of open mics represents a necessary adaptation from a now obsolete means of sustaining himself as a musician, which depended on the availability of regular pub gigs and the dependable support of unemployment benefits. My interviewee Mike concurs that state benefits functioned as an "unofficial state subsidy" of the arts that enabled young musicians to dedicate time and resources to their craft without operating in a thriving local music economy:

> Not working and signing on […] became a very important part for young musicians. […] That started in the [19]60s and went through until the clamp down on signing on in the [19]80s. […] If you could find a thousand pounds of gear, which you could borrow […], or borrow some money and sign on, they'd leave you alone to be a musician for years. (Mike interview)

Having addressed the impact of the broader economic, legal, and environmental context within which public participatory music events function, the following chapter will explore their internal dynamics.

[49] As opposed to being *adapted*, *dedicated*, or *mobile* (Kronenburg 2012).

Chapter Five – Internal Regulation

Yellow Arch Studios is located in a rapidly gentrifying industrial district a mile to the north of Sheffield city centre. Its rehearsal and recording facilities are renowned for their contribution to the careers of many pop artists who are famously associated with the city of Sheffield. It launched a successful open mic event in early 2015, serving to promote the establishment's nascent status as a full-time licensed venue. It was initially promoted via the venue's well-subscribed Facebook page, with the online promotion for the first event declaring as follows:

> We welcome all genres, ages, and levels of ability to participate. All equipment is supplied including all back-line amps, drums, and an amazing P.A. system. There will be an in-house sound engineer and stage hand to get the very best sound for you.

The open mic proved to be very successful in its opening months (142 on the Facebook event page declared themselves to be "going" to the event, and 52 were "interested"). It quickly ceased being promoted on social media with the same consistency, presumably because enduring enthusiasm for the event led to this being deemed unnecessary by the organisers. Like most open mics, the event was structured around a list to which those interested in performing could add themselves, and was facilitated by a dedicated compere who would perform self-accompanied songs across the event and provide accompaniment (on guitar, bass, and/or backing vocals) to participants when invited to do so. The sound system at the event was unusually sophisticated, allowing large groups of performers (frequently over ten simultaneously, including vocalists, guitarists, a bass guitarist, kit drummer, and one or more saxophonists) to deliver impromptu but well-balanced ensemble renditions of well-known rock songs. For its first year the event was consistently busy, and was quite atypical for its inclusion of young children (made possible by its Sunday afternoon timeslot), many of whom performed to sounds and gestures of encouragement from the audience (including friends and family).

Given the seemingly consistent level of attendance, I was surprised to hear news in early 2016 of the open mic ceasing operation. Jane worked as the Yellow Arch Events Manager throughout this period, and she described how the event had become the preserve of a group of regulars who were not spending enough money on drinks to justify the business's outgoings in sustaining it.

> We were making a real effort to make it, you know, to provide some great facilities for people who may not normally have the chance to get up on a stage and play, you know. Or who might just want some experience of playing on a stage where their Mum and Dad, or their friends can watch them and give them some support, before they put themselves out there trying to get proper gigs. […] It just felt like a lot of people that came are quite ungrateful for that. (Jane interview)

In addition, Jane had noted some discontentment among musicians across the city who had performed at the event but had felt excluded by the regulars, introducing the potential for reputational damage to the venue if no mitigating measures were introduced. She spoke

enthusiastically about the launch of a new open mic that was intended to overcome the noted problems by booking featured artists to perform as a centrepiece to the event, and by directing participants to focus on the performance of original material:

> The last open mic we were running was […] mainly people doing covers, some people singing to backing tracks, stuff like that, which is not really what we want to do. We want it to be more of a creative platform for artists than a karaoke. (Jane interview)

The agenda informing these changes was a transparent disruption of the status quo established at the previous open mic, and a shift from primarily accommodating amateur and very early-career performers to prioritising the qualities associated with professional performers. Disparaging comparison to karaoke is a recurrent trope in discussion of open mic performance, but rather than seeking to offer a rejoinder to this common assessment, Rob Drew's ethnography of karaoke in the United States invites us to reflect on the values that this illuminates:

> Karaoke, then, is the most scripted sort of song performance imaginable. Its communicative possibilities are both opened up and closed off by its layered context of lyrics, background music, and prior performance. And its reception in different cultural contexts reflects differing attitudes toward the potential and power of so scripted a vocal performance. (Drew 2001, 19)

In this instance I would suggest that Jane is highlighting the high premium placed on the perception of spontaneity, authenticity,[50] and technical proficiency in popular music performance, qualities that karaoke is generally assumed to lack. This outlook is further supported by Jane's assertion that "we're not necessarily one hundred percent against people doing covers, but just so long as it's done in a different style." (Jane interview)

The assumption on which this policy decision rested was evidently that original music is the product of dedicated individuals who are more likely to appreciate and support the venue. To this end, local presentational acts were emailed directly and invited to share their recorded material to be played between performances at the open mic, giving them additional motivation to take an interest in the event. Jane anticipated that this restructuring might pose challenges, but hoped that it would attract attendees who were more engaged with and supportive of a wider variety of performers:

> It's going to be quite difficult if people do want to get up and do a cover: Do we turn around and say "no, you're not allowed"? Because, again, the idea of open mic is that it's a platform for anyone, no matter what level they're at, to get up and showcase what they do. […] I don't know how we're going to do it, but I think maybe by finding people who do take it a bit more seriously, and do understand that everybody needs support, whether it's just "yeah that was great" and a pat on the back, or just sitting and listening quietly and just having respect for what people are doing. (Jane interview)

The launch event for this second incarnation of the Sunday open mic event occurred on October

[50] Numerous interpretations of "authenticity" appear across the Popular Music Studies literature, with Allan Moore's 2002 article "Authenticity as Authentication" being among the most commonly cited.

2nd, 2016, and the Facebook event page was met with a mixture of enthusiasm (41 declared themselves as “going”, and 165 as “interested”) and intrigue (in the form of questions pertaining to the nature of the event). The online promotional materials for the event were strongly oriented towards securing an audience, and emphasised the availability of food and drink for purchase, with passing reference to potential hosting of “the next Hendrix for all we know”. Only the closing few lines of the post were directly addressed to performers, and these were implicitly worded to dissuade performers of popular “covers” repertoire:

> If you’re reading this and thinking… “I’m a musician, I’d like a go at this”, please get on board. We will provide a full backline for you, so just bring your instruments and get playing. We will be running a 'first come, first serve' rule, so arrive early to secure your place! We’re hoping to see plenty of original content and unique sounds (it’s not a karaoke remember). Proper music, for proper music heads!

This incarnation initially drew a larger number of the young aspiring musicians that played in bands across the city, perhaps in part due to being compered by the young singer of an esteemed local pop/rock band. Some of the regular attendees of the previous incarnation continued to attend, in some cases breaking from their former routine repertoire of cover songs so as to be permitted to perform. The emphasis on original material seemingly introduced a further issue that was addressed in the promotional materials for the second event of the new open mic on October 9th:

> Please note that moving forward this event will be strictly 16+. This is due to the nature of the afternoon - where we are not in control of the acts which take the stage and therefore cannot predict whether the content/language/subject will be suitable for children. Apologies if this affects you.

Presumably this decision was made following concern over the performance of material not deemed to be appropriate for children, with the venue management deciding to prioritise freedom of expression by excluding possible complainants rather than imposing censorship to appease the sensibilities of attendant families.

Upon returning to the new event in late October 2016, I found the room to be almost empty except for a small number of singer-songwriters who were familiar to me from other open mic events in Sheffield, with the featured band having cancelled. Interest in the event rapidly waned, with the last open mic being hosted on December 4th, two months after it had launched (the Facebook event listed 4 people as “going” and 3 as “interested”).

This example highlights some of the challenges associated with sustaining public participatory music events, and demonstrates that unlike *place*, discussed in the previous chapter as relating to static elements of the environment, *space* relates to aspects of order that are in a perpetual state of contestation. In a work representative of the *spatial turn* in social theory, Soja asserted that:

> Concrete spatiality – actual human geography – is thus a competitive arena for struggles over

> social production and reproduction, for social practices aimed either at the maintenance of existing spatiality or at significant restructuring and/or radical transformation. (Soja 1989, 130)

My interviewee Steve's description of folk sessions presents them as sites of conflict:

> Part of being in a session [is] you have foibles all around you, so you work around what you get. If you dislike it enough, don't go to the session, basically. You know, I think that's how it works; sessions eventually become people, lots of people who like each other enough to tolerate their things, or they just musically work together. (Steve interview)

Wenger's (1998) concept of "communities of practice" (discussed in chapter three) emphasises the contested nature of a given practice highlighted by Steve and defines "non-participation" as entailing selective engagement with aspects of a given practice (164-172). However, Wenger overlooks the spatial aspects of activity, including the absence of potential participants that feel excluded, or the extent of tolerance and compromise involved in sustained co-participation. In the case of public participatory music events, this tolerance might be characterised as "cosmopolitan politesse", defined by the anthropologist Nigel Rapport as "a kind of politeness or set of manners by which Anyone might be everywhere recognized as themselves, an individual human being, and admitted into interaction on this basis" (Rapport 2012, 72).[51]

"Cosmopolitanism" can be used to signify a broad range of different phenomena,[52] and for clarity it is necessary to note that Rapport's usage is at odds with that commonly employed in ethnomusicological discourse. The latter, often with reference to the influential work of Arjun Appadurai (e.g. 1996), typically refers to a condition in which materials originating elsewhere in the world are available due to processes of globalisation, and seeks to distinguish social groups on the basis of access to these resources. For example, Turino (2000) and Feld (2012) provide ethnomusicological case studies exploring the impact of Western musical forms on consumers and musicians in Zimbabwe and Ghana respectively. Turino later suggested that "cosmopolitans" are – along with "diasporas" and "immigrant communities" – one of three transstate "cultural formations":

> Like diasporas, *cosmopolitan cultural formations* involve prominent constellations of habits that are shared among widely dispersed groups in countries around the world; but unlike diasporas, cosmopolitan formations are not traced to any particular homeland. (2008, 118)

Rapport's interpretation of "cosmopolitanism" is more akin to its usage in philosophical and social theoretical discourses, referring to an ideology that acknowledges and respects individual uniqueness. Social theorists have been keen to identify examples of spaces that appear to be

[51] Rapport (2012) uses "Anyone" to refer to the "cosmopolitan subject", whomever they may be.

[52] "We argue that cosmopolitanism can be viewed or invoked as: (a) a socio-cultural condition; (b) a kind of philosophy or world-view; (c) a political project towards building transnational institutions; (d) a political project for recognizing multiple identities; (e) an attitudinal or dispositional orientation; and/or (f) a mode of practice or competence." (Vertovec and Cohen 2002, 9)

particularly conducive to the harmonious co-existence of diverse people, referred to by Anderson (2011) as "cosmopolitan canopies", and to understand how they function to this end. Some, such as Lofland, see this as a natural outcome of urban living due to it entailing presence in the "public realm", in which the "dominating relational form […] is stranger or categorical" (Lofland 1998, 14).[53] This exists in opposition to the *private realm* (dominated by personal relationships), or the *parochial realm*, dominated by communal familiarity and the capacity of the majority to recognise unfamiliar people. For Lofland, it is immersion in the public realm and the associated interactions with diverse others that produces and sustains the cosmopolitan outlook, and Anderson (2011) refers to such interactions as constituting instances of "folk ethnography".

Public participatory music events at which there is a high number and turnover of attendees (e.g. the Green Room open mic), and/or at which participants remain relative strangers (e.g. the Tuesday evening White Lion jazz jam session), may be considered as ephemeral instances of the public realm, and perhaps even as temporary cosmopolitan canopies. However, it is not a given that these spaces will retain this character. For example, the failure of the first iteration of the Yellow Arch open mic could be attributed to the event space gradually shifting from the public realm into an unwelcoming parochial one.

Rapport's contribution to this discourse is the recognition that cosmopolitanism represents an idealised mode of conduct, but one that must be actively maintained through the management of space:

> Politesse is a matter of proportion. It is a surface beneath which individual lives are led in personally meaningful ways; it is a surface upon which the balancing act of social life is carried out. Too little politesse, too dense a social environment or too regimented, and Anyone is threatened by the designs of others, and may not have the space to lead an individually determined life. Too much politesse, too rarefied a social environment or too anomic, and Anyone is not given the support or nurture necessary to lead an individual life and can succumb to the schemes of others by default. Formal and constitutional procedures and informal norms of mannerly exchange must balance each other in cosmopolis. (Rapport 2012, 75)

The second iteration of the Yellow Arch open mic, introduced above, represented an attempt to regulate the space in a manner that would curtail the formation of parochial cliques to protect the reputation of the venue and secure the scale and turnover of patrons required to sustain the financial viability of the event. Maintaining broader inclusivity entailed making some strategic changes, including placing greater emphasis on presentational performance through the inclusion of featured acts; using overtly audience-oriented promotional materials; employing a younger compere perceived to be more representative of the local scene for original popular music; barring entry to a particular demographic (i.e. children); and restricting the character of the repertoire performed at the event. Each decision represented a compromise, and in some cases, paradoxically,

[53] "Categorical" relations involve knowing and identifying others primarily by their physical characteristics, as is typical in cases where further information on the observed individual is not yet available.

an exclusion in the name of inclusivity. I would suggest that the failure of each version of the Yellow Arch open mic can be attributed to an imbalance of politesse: from a lack of formal regulation in the first version, and from an excess of it in the second.

This chapter demonstrates how strategies of internal regulation are utilised at public participatory music events to ensure that proceedings remain inclusive, with actions or elements that are observed or anticipated as running contrary to this agenda being curtailed or, paradoxically, excluded. The first section considers how the cosmopolitan space is established and preserved by the behaviours and choices of organisers and participants. The second section examines the significance of personal variables, with a focus on gender and events from which men are excluded. The third section looks at the role of instruments and repertoire in enabling and shaping participation, and how the regulation of these can function as an indirect means of guiding proceedings and determining who participates in the activity.

Structure

The second chapter of this thesis addressed some of the ways in which public participatory music events may be structured. This essentially relates to the question of who plays and when, but also who is in control of the proceedings at a given moment. For events based around simultaneous performance, multiple, and sometimes all participants are anticipated and encouraged to perform at the same time. At the CeilidhSoc session, what is performed may originate from an individual participant volunteering a tune (or set of tunes) by beginning to play and hoping others will play along with them. If successful, etiquette typically determines that they assume temporary leadership over the performance, for example by directing a transition to the next tune of the set, at which point others are again expected to listen to them play this alone and join in if they feel able to do so. In some instances, the leading individual may be nominated by other session participants, or the tunes may be decided through discussion, in which case the timing of the transition may be negotiated through gestures in the course of performance.

Jam sessions, which are typically structured around the performance of a sequence of improvised solos, may be managed with a more nuanced structure. Kisliuk describes the dynamic nature of leadership at a bluegrass jam session:

> Many aspects of bluegrass have been borrowed from jazz, and bluegrass jamming overlaps in form and meaning with the classic jazz jam session. […] Especially when strangers are just starting to play together, someone must be the leader to give cues about who is to take a break (instrumental lead), when the tune will end, and other eventualities. The leader's role can be traded around within a song, depending on who is in the musical focus at a given time. For example, if I am playing and I finish my break, I can glance at the guitar player who, when she is done, might nod to the mandolinist. But sometimes this cueing system is superfluous, or it breaks down completely. If at one moment there is no leader, or if the jam session is very large, two people may be cued at once or may just start playing of their own accord. Then, if both stop playing, there will be a moment of hesitation before one of them makes a decided

> move. Also, if someone is taking a longer break than is appropriate, or has already had a turn when someone else has not, somebody may just butt in by beginning his or her own break. (Kisliuk 1988, 145)

One structural strategy for mitigating against the potential for unfairness and imbalance is to attribute leadership "around the room", with participants taking turns to lead a performance in the order in which they are seated in the space. Common to events hosting the performance of folk or acoustic music which do not make use of a separate staging area, it is similar to the enlistment system of open mics in inviting individuals to take the lead on a performance of their choosing. However, it also differs in several notable ways. Firstly, the absence of a staging area at around-the-room events normalises impromptu playing along by other participants. Secondly, it offers participants multiple opportunities per event to present the performance of a piece of their choosing, where open mic events usually offer participants a single opportunity per event to perform multiple pieces. Thirdly, where open mics work on an opt-in basis (i.e. participants must write their names on a list to volunteer themselves for a performance slot), around-the-room events represent the only structure that works on an opt-out basis. This approach can function to maximise fairness of opportunity, as seating order is evident to everyone in the room, where simultaneous sessions can be dominated by aggressive or insensitive individuals, and open mic hosts may shuffle the order of voluntary lists to protect opportunities for performers that they favour. On the other hand, the around-the-room structure can be a cause for some anxiety, as Owain explains:

> I find [events with an around-the-room structure] awkward. They put a lot of pressure on people to be, like, "ah, in three tunes' time it's going to be your tune, and you'd better have a good one". Whereas, I like the idea you can listen or play another tune and be like, "oh, that reminds me of a really nice one, and either sort of continue it yourself, or go, "play that in a minute", and if no one else starts one you can say "alright, I'll play this one". I'm much more comfortable with the idea that a session is a sort of free-for-all, with an unwritten rule of "don't dominate the session", I suppose, which is implicit to me, but not everyone gets that so there are times when it doesn't work. (Owain interview)

It cannot be taken for granted that new participants will be familiar with the broader workings of public participatory music events, let alone the subtle variations in conventions and etiquette particular to each event. Kisliuk attributes understanding of this (or lack of it) to the formative experiences of participants, who may be otherwise quite technically adept in their performance of the musical style in question:

> Many people who have learned to play through mediated sources such as tablature books, records, and formal instruction come to the festival jam session scene with only a partial understanding of what jamming is about. Some have developed virtuosic technique, while others have minimal technique but much aggressive, competitive spirit. Most, like Hal, have only a partial grasp of the underlying sociomusical aesthetic of jam sessions – or are totally oblivious to it. They therefore fill in randomly with whatever interactional style they are used to – in Hal's case the inept smoothness of a college fraternity-type entertainer. Tension arises when these relative newcomers meet with the minority of jammers who have grown up with

> jamming or who have learned to balance their technical knowledge with social skills. Learning the tacit rules of jam session etiquette is not necessarily easy if you have not grown up in an environment infused with similar social values. (Kisliuk 1988, 152)

Gazit describes the different approaches taken by newcomers of a jazz jam session to introducing themselves:

> Several first-time attendees decided to explicitly showcase their virtuosity, calling particularly difficult tunes at cutthroat tempo in an effort to impress other musicians, both on stage and off. Other musicians who attended the session for the first time during my research preferred a different approach. Some kept to themselves at first, listening to other musicians preforming and assessing their abilities. In most cases, this was not a sign of lesser musical abilities or hesitation, but rather of experience; evaluating the social and musical norms of the session before participating. (Gazit 2015, 42)

Gazit identifies that the more experienced participants demonstrated awareness that conventions and etiquette would vary between different events of this nature, and that these must be learned through close attention to the behaviour of others. However, during my fieldwork I observed many instances of musicians who had attended the same event over an extended period, sometimes becoming integral participants, but whose approach to participation was viewed as insensitive by others. Owain describes such instances at simultaneous folk sessions, suggesting that this clash may be attributed to a difference in motives for attending:

> There are definitely people who will happily just keep playing and playing. And part of that is a perception problem I think, or maybe some awkwardness on their behalf, in the sense that they don't like there to be a gap, or if there is a gap they perceive that as an invitation to start playing. […] Whereas others would think of that gap as a time to sort of say “hi” to the person next to you, or to have a beer. […] So I think there are people who come to sessions and will play a tune, great, they'll stop, and because there isn't another tune within thirty seconds they'll just start again. […] That can easily overwhelm a session. It doesn't happen that frequently I think, and when it does generally at the sessions I've seen it in someone will subtly point out that other people haven't started anything yet, or haven't played; will try to finesse that into a situation where other people get to play. I don't think it's a very common occurrence; or all those people just don't come back to the sessions when there isn't much structure because they're generally not interested in that lack of structure.[54] (Owain interview)

Owain perceives transgressions of this nature to be uncommon due to participants gravitating

[54] All of the folk session participants that I interviewed appeared to share this relaxed, socially oriented outlook, citing Irish sessions as representing a formal antithesis to this. A questionnaire response from a participant of Irish sessions offers insight from the opposing perspective: “[I] don’t like it when others are arsing about and not committed to the music aspect. Examples would be when others demand to sing when they haven’t learned the song or spend time noodling away on their instruments between tune sets” (Q40.18).

towards events that match their motivation for attendance more closely, but identifies how evaluations of and expectations for participant behaviour are revealed through intervention from other participants. Such interventions may take the form of discreetly and sensitively delivered advice. For example, I have had experiences of folk sessions at which members quietly asked me about my level of experience, before providing me with advice on, for example, the basic structure of a tune and its performance, and appropriate chordal choices in the accompaniment of a tune. This would sometimes take the form of demonstration, where the player of a different instrument would request to borrow my guitar and perform in the manner they were advising.

Doffman describes observing an advisory exchange between a more experienced bassist and a less experienced pianist at the Tomorrow's Warriors jazz jam session – an event which is intended to be inclusive of new, young players – regarding the pianist losing their place in the form of the piece:

> On one level, it is a pragmatic exchange in that the bassist offered the pianist some concrete ways of resolving being lost, but this could also be taken as a dialectical moment between the simple welcoming of someone onto the stage and the exertion of control in the process of maintaining the rules of jazz—a particular way of doing things was laid out before the novice player. In the transmission of cultural regulation, any simple, unconditional welcoming is replaced by "Welcome to the rules of the game!" (Doffman 2013, 84)

In exchanges of this type, the implicit assumption being made by those in the role of "teacher" is that those in the role of "student" would participate in a more appropriate manner (i.e. more conventional and less disruptive) if they acquired the necessary level of proficiency and understanding; that *they*, as teacher, already possess this, and the less experienced participant will be glad of any guidance that they can provide. The "student" may instead interpret the provision of guidance, however politely presented, as condescending or antagonistic, with the potential for personal embarrassment if others become aware of the exchange. Perhaps for this reason, instances of friendly advice between fellow participants that I observed during fieldwork almost always entailed a clear degree of solicitation, being offered to nervous beginners, or to individuals (such as myself) who made it very clear that they were seeking ongoing guidance and were open to constructive criticism.

A different strategy for alerting participants to their transgressions is "vibing", described by Gazit as a form of chastisement commonly employed at jazz jam sessions to draw attention to inappropriate loudness or the performance of excessively long solos:

> Vibing is an active scolding of a musician during a performance and on stage, by musical, gestural, and verbal means. It is a way to indicate to a musician that they are messing up or are otherwise out of line. It is also among the first idioms newcomers learn upon arriving on the scene. […] Initial vibing is usually expressed through stern, piercing looks. A vibing musician may express their discontent musically through loud and rigid playing accompanied by facial expression and hand gestures. Finally, yelling over the music can express an even harsher level of disapproval. (Gazit 2015, 44)

Conversations with participants of public participatory events more broadly revealed "stern, piercing looks" of disapproval to occur at other events, beyond jazz jam sessions. However, Gazit's description of vibing as occurring between even "the most experienced musicians and in the most welcoming of jam sessions", and even between "friends and frequent collaborators […] when they engage in musical dispute" (ibid., 45), suggests that it is much more embedded within the culture of jazz than it is elsewhere. The history of vibing can be traced to mid-twentieth century jazz practice, and particularly the competitive playing associated with the rapid and technically demanding "bebop" style that emerged in the jam sessions of 1940s New York. Walker (2010, 196) argues that historical accounts of this period can be interpreted as demonstrating how "competition functioned as a single, purposeful element within a complex cultural environment that emphasized fraternity, unity, respect, and education. In short, competition was in itself paradoxically collaborative." Participants who are familiar with this history, and who are aspiring professional musicians who see value in a competitive approach, may be more inclined to perceive vibing as a legitimate form of encouragement. Perhaps due to the predominantly amateur nature of the jazz jam sessions that I attended in Sheffield, I do not recall encountering any overt instances of vibing.

In contrast to the blunt aggression of vibing, humour may be used as a mechanism for issuing subtle guidance to ensure that behaviour remains conducive to general participation. In simulating transgression, it can function to highlight the general atmosphere of tolerance (i.e. the poking of fun at individuals who are being rude highlights that doing so in earnest would not be well-received). Writing of humour at Irish traditional music sessions, Ferraiuolo identifies that:

> Slagging is constituted of double-edged jokes, based on weakness, imperfections, eccentricities, and idiosyncrasies between persons who know each other well. If the slagging is well performed, the respondent will laugh at the joke and will get back with another one. Not showing hurt feeling and skill at giving back are valued abilities, but of course, it is fundamental to understand when and where slaggers should stop, before becoming insulting. In the case of "proper" performance, slagging is a demonstration of intimacy and serves as social bonding. Of course, not always and not everywhere is slagging performed without insult. Thus, not everybody agrees it is good craic. (Ferraiuolo 2019, 153)[55]

The effectiveness of all the three of the strategies for maintaining structure that have been discussed so far – polite advice; vibing; and humour – relies on recipients and observers accepting the authority of the speaker and the legitimacy of their contribution. The most straightforward way of ensuring that this is the case is for there to be an official facilitator of the event whose authority is beyond question. Pete describes his experience of functioning in such a role at the White Lion jazz jam session, alongside another established local musician and educator:

> We were being paid, so we had the official status of being paid, and we were known as people who were involved with running things at the jazz workshop, so everybody had experience of recognising us as being legitimate in positions of some authority, all of which was very helpful,

[55] Hield and Mansfield (2020, 18) similarly note how "tactics such as humour, ridicule or ostracism are commonly used to discourage people from operating outside the normative boundaries of group behaviour" at folk clubs.

> which meant that we didn't need to be any way authoritative about it, because that was accepted that we would enable it to happen. (Pete interview)

The undisputed authority of an official host extends their capacity to structure an event. Tan describes the control strategies employed by the house band at a jam session in Ankara that is dedicated to improvised performance, but "without limitations in the genre, style, and instruments" (Tan 2021, 24). In this environment, "physical gestures and verbal statements that are against the instantaneous nature of the jam sessions so much as to hinder active listening are deemed inappropriate in the etiquette" (ibid., 27). Control strategies include "implicit complete censorship", in which the organising ensemble take over the stage, thus blocking the offending participant from remaining there; "explicit partial censorship", in which a verbal warning is given, in the form of an explanation as to what behaviour is not acceptable; and "explicit complete censorship", in which the offending participant is directly instructed to leave the performance space. Of these strategies, explicit partial censorship – in the form of advice or vibing – is the only regulatory recourse to which participants can reasonably resort at events without authorised authority figures.

While a facilitator's position may allow them to exhibit greater control over proceedings than would be possible without their status, the success of the event pivots on them functioning as what Lofland refers to as "open persons" (1998, 39): individuals in a public realm space with whom others present are more immediately able and inclined to interact, by virtue of, in this case, their "occupational status". The absence of open persons can make events seem inhospitable, as Chris describes his friends as characterising the Red House CeilidhSoc sessions in the early 2000s:

> Friends of mine had felt excluded from the circle. And I think [my friend] said quite a smart thing; "nobody thinks it's their job. They're all waiting for their Mum to do it". You know what I mean? "You're in charge now", "no no, mum will introduce the strangers for us". It's almost like everyone was too shy, so they all looked inwards, and no one was either old enough, or worldly wise, or just, you know, unphaseable and worried enough to go up to a few people and say "hey! How are you doing? Come and join us for this tune!" (Chris interview)

The comparison of a facilitator to a parent is an interesting one, because the ideal facilitator's immediate responsibilities – to be welcoming and ensure fairness – also enhance their capacity to nurture others, thus contributing to the inclusiveness and sustainability of the event. Ferraiuolo (2019) describes how performers at Irish sessions are encouraged with cries of "good man!":

> From the leader of the session […] the effect is stronger than if they come from a peer, but in any case, it will be very welcome, reinforcing at least a group identity. A function of leadership is to promote the personal growth of the musician and this kind of encouragement functions so. At the same time, such talk reinforces the role of the leader, seen as a strong supporter. (Ferraiuolo 2019, 137)

If encouragement from the facilitator is too coercive it can cause participants to feel uncomfortable and unsupported, as Alé describes of his experience of the facilitator at a local folk session:

> He commands everyone to play, like, “now you play”, “now you play a tune”, “now you sing”, “now you...”, and I don't particularly mind that he does that, because it's his session, and I understand that, and he's a really nice guy. But it's not the same kind of feeling. You don't feel so free to play anything you want any time you want. You have to follow his instructions. If he says you play a solo, you play a solo, and you've got to do it, even if it's the worst solo you're gonna play in your life. That's happened to me. He was like, “bodhran solo!”, “what?! This is not my solo stick! I can't play a solo with this.” (Alé interview)

Whilst it may be easier to maintain order with a more closely guided approach to facilitation, striking an effective balance that secures fairness of participation whilst ensuring participants feel heard and supported may require a more dynamic approach, as Higgins outlines in his description of Community Music facilitation:

> Within any group setting, there is a fine line between leading and controlling. […] Anything can happen when musical events are proposed and facilitated but not directed in the manner of the top-down conductors/directors tradition. At times, the group will look to its facilitator for reassurance, clarity, direction, encouragement, guidance, or shaping. Facilitators are able to find a comfortable balance between (1) being prepared and able to lead and (2) being prepared and able to hold back, thus enabling the group or individuals to discover the journey of musical invention for themselves. Facilitators are never static in one approach or another but move in and out of roles as the group dictates. Facilitation necessitates trust in the ability of others as well as submission to the inventiveness of others. (Higgins 2012, 148)

The perception of trust from the facilitator, and opportunities for inventiveness, are clearly valued by participants of public participatory music events. Speaking of open mic events, Stewis describes the importance of feeling “free” to “experiment with other musicians”, and believing that the host is listening to you and seeking to promote or encourage your career:

> I think what makes a good host is probably somebody that is going to listen to you, and is probably going to give you the opportunity to be up there. Probably somebody that’s going to give you quite a good introduction, because there’s some that don’t. There’s some that might just disappear and go outside for a smoke, but there’s some that will actually get people’s attention and go “look, this guy’s here from America”, or something like that. “Please give him a round of applause”, that kind of thing. But then it’s probably somebody that’ll keep in touch with you, or maybe invite you out again, to keep it going, maybe give you tips on what to do and what not to do. It could also be a little bit of a coach. (Stewis interview)

Glenn was consistently identified by local open mic performers as a popular host, taking a supportive and enthusiastic approach to mentoring regular participants at the Green Room:

> I can think of at least half a dozen, maybe more, that came here and said to me “I’ve never done this before, can you tell me what to do?” And I’ll just try to make them feel comfortable and say, “No problem. You just put your name on, I’ll give you a shout, you tell me what you need. I can play along with you if you want, or you just do your thing”. And I can think of a

> good half dozen who've gone on to be pro-musos, like doing it live, you know. (Glenn interview)

Unlike the Community musician, who is purely committed to the promotion of participation through the "obliteration of the distinction between performer and the audience" (Higgins 2012, 35), facilitators of public participatory music events are often paid on the basis of them fulfilling an obligation to attract and retain as many patrons as possible (including participants and non-participants) to a venue. This may entail prioritising presentational aspects of the event, as Flood describes of the host of a bluegrass session:

> Danny would pass me solos, intentionally blocking out other musicians who he thought had bad rhythm or who "couldn't follow." My sense of musical egalitarianism made me cringe when I was pressured to steal soloing opportunities from the handful of regulars who were thus blocked from taking a turn. […] While I was focused on the individuals onstage, Danny was focused on the event: his delegation of solos was ultimately driven by his concern for the show. There was a limit to how low the quality of performance could be before audience members would leave or be disinclined to return the following week. Danny also wasn't likely to make the audience listen to four guitar solos just because there were four loyal guitar players on the stage. (Flood 2017, 495-6)

Chris identifies how the presence of an audience at open mics, which is typically a desirable outcome for organisers, depends on the hosting of high-quality performers:

> Your ideal is that the people who turn up to the open mic are great performers doing something that you want to hear, and that plenty of them turn up. And if that's the case, and if people know that's the case, then you often will get an audience for your open mic because they know that they're going to get quality performers. But if people are just showing up to the open mic because they know that they can't get a gig anywhere else, or they're just starting out, then you're less likely to get an audience, because you know that the quality's going to be a bit more variable. (Chris interview)

The presence of capable participants can function to alienate those who are less confident and experienced, resulting in them refusing to return to the event, or not attending in the first place:

> Virtuosity can breed exclusivity. [For example], people playing tunes too quickly, or complicated tunes that they all know, that they all are able to play, in weird keys or whatever. And if somebody's just started playing fiddle and comes to the CeilidhSoc session they can't join in. I'm not saying that people should always feel that they need to make sure that they're always pandering to the lowest common denominator, because I think that's not good, but at the same time, I don't think people are always […] aware of how good they are, […] or sometimes they are – which is also a problem – but they're not aware of how exclusive they're being. (Ollie interview)

Carole describes the impact of the presence of an intimidatingly capable saxophonist at a rock jam

session, making her feel reluctant to participate:

> I've been to a rock jam, and I took my saxophone, and they'd got somebody else there who was a lot younger than me, and as soon as he played, I thought "crikey, he was so good, and now he's going to want to hear *me*!" So yes, it does affect me. (Carole interview)

Pete similarly describes how the level of the other players at a jazz jam session functioned to dissuade him from participating:

> I went to a jam session in London and I didn't actually play because I was too intimidated by the level of accomplishment. […] These were top of the tree young people on the London jazz scene, played a set that kicked the thing off, and then were available to be the rhythm section if there weren't any other rhythm players. And the people who got up and played were people far better than me, who were, presumably, a lot of them were on the college courses, on the jazz courses at the Royal Academy and the Guildhall school of music and those sorts of things. So I felt completely out of my depth, and I didn't play at all. […] It was advertised as a jam session, and open to everybody. (Pete interview)

The failure to accommodate less confident players can have significant implications for the sustainability of regular events in contexts where most of the potential participants can be so characterised, as Nicola notes with regards to folk sessions:

> I suppose if it is one of those, like, cliquey sessions where it's just people that are really really good, amazing things could happen, which wouldn't happen at the CeilidhSoc session I guess, because there's less people that are at that level yet […]. I think I'm always of the opinion that if you don't encourage other people to join in then […] we'll lose it. So we need to encourage. So I think that's always at the back of my mind, is "we want these people to do this, otherwise...". […] Not in a "you must do it right"; more in a "we just want people to keep coming and keep it going", kind of thing. (Nicola interview)

However, in the case of the London jazz jam session described by Pete, the broader context a significant number of available, capable jazz musicians may result in the success of the event pivoting on it representing an inviting opportunity and rewarding experience for high-level performers. Gazit describes how the participation of less capable performers can have a negative impact on this:

> Even an experienced newcomer who is matched to perform with less proficient musicians will find it difficult to communicate ideas freely and perform their best. In case of a mistake or confusion, an experienced player who was teamed up with an unstable ensemble will be engaged primarily in bluntly articulating their position in the song's harmony. (Gazit 2015, 44)

Mismatching of ability in this context is likely to be frustrating for the more experienced player(s) and may prove demoralising for the less experienced. Greater or lesser experienced participants are forced to keep pace with the general level of those attending the event. A participant who is less capable than others at a simultaneous performance event may get left behind, missing

opportunities to make contributions, or being denied opportunities on the basis of their perceived level. Of all of the public participatory events that I have attended, this was most overt at jazz jam sessions, where it was common for participants who were perceived to be struggling to be overlooked for the opportunity to perform a solo, or for another player to be invited to take their place in the performance area between pieces.

However, accommodating the needs of musicians of differing levels of competence may be possible through effective structural regulation strategies. In the case of simultaneous participatory events, it may be that the event is structured to accommodate less experienced players at the outset, before more experienced players arrive later in the event and introduce more technically demanding material, such as was the case at CeilidhSoc. A shortcoming of this approach is that it can function to segregate more and less experienced players from one another, dividing the event into two eliding sections. Another approach is for facilitators or established players to take responsibility for the needs and interests of different participants, and guide the event with this in mind, as Ray describes with regards to folk sessions:

> Having someone to poke and just keep sessions going along, that should be the extent of the formality and the structure. If you have new members that you know only like playing slower tunes, then you be that person to start slow tunes off and force the rest of the session to do it. Don't make it a structured thing that's going to happen. (Ray interview)

This can provide less experienced participants with more of an opportunity to perform alongside more accomplished peers, but may not in itself function to encourage the former so long as they believe that their technically insecure efforts might be subjected to ridicule, either by the latter or a scrutinising audience. Owain attributes his willingness to make mistakes to his experience of "sitting in the back of a session" and the participatory emphasis of these events:

> Coming from a background of learning by sitting in the back of a session, I'm quite happy with hitting wrong notes, because, you know, I do that a lot anyway, so it's fine. […] Be prepared to try something on the hope that it's going to fit with what other people are doing. […] I think making mistakes is fine, because it's not a show; it's not a performance. You're not doing it for anyone else's benefit. Well, that's not quite true, but you're not doing it for the benefit of people outside of the session. (Owain interview)

The presentational character of sequential participatory events, such as around-the-room sessions or open mics, can make them even more intimidating in this regard. Glenn suggests that observing errors in the performances of others can be encouraging to participants who lack confidence:

> I've always run it on that idea that if you're worried about getting up, or you're not sure about putting your name on, and you see somebody else that's not particularly brilliant, but they're brave enough to do it, then that's probably going to edge you towards thinking "well if he can do it, or she can do it, then maybe I can." (Glenn interview)

Such was the case for Marie, who describes the impact of observing performers of a range of

different levels of competence on her own confidence to perform at the Green Room open mic:

> I forced myself to go to the Green Room, and, yeah, I played the first song there, and it was terrible, terrifying. I must have felt awful about it. And then like, bit by bit, as I progressively went, it became easier and easier. And then I started to meet loads of different people, and the main thing that struck me was how some people were really amazing, but a lot of people were quite average, like, they weren't necessarily that good. […] That's when I realised, I was like "sure, judge away all you want, but are you doing your own songs? And are you putting yourself out there in this way? I don't think so, so how about you shut up and take a point from [a regular participant] who is, though not that great, definitely doing his own thing, writing his own material, putting himself out there." (Marie interview)

These examples illustrate that participants quickly realise that flaws in their performance are likely to be noticed by others, but that their willingness to participate is encouraged by an anticipation that errors will not be openly subjected to negative judgement. Securing the trust of potential participants that this will be the case when they perform is pivotal to the successful inclusion of the less experienced and less confident, and the loss of this trust can be very damaging to the integrity and reputation of a public participatory event. For example, Behr describes an instance in which an open mic host introduced a voting system in the audience. An inebriated woman protested the vote for her to cease her solo vocal performance, resulting in "acrimony and social discord" (Behr 2012, 570-571):

> At the heart of this failure wasn't that the performance was dreadful (it was) but that the specific rules of that evening ran against the grain of the unspoken rules of the night as it usually ran, and as open mics are perceived to operate. The host had unwittingly changed the emphasis of his role from that of mediator to that of enforcer, and the night failed because the primacy of ''acceptance'' was supplanted by ''judgement''. (Behr 2012, 571)

Being seen to be inclusive and supportive of performers who are likely to be perceived by others as being not "necessarily that good" is therefore important to the success of facilitators in encouraging participation. Savvy facilitators can enhance the inclusivity of public participatory events through balanced programming: alternating contributions from, or that meet the needs of, participants of differing levels of ability. In the absence of utilisable options, facilitators may defy the organisational structure of the event to interject themselves into proceedings. This entails either presenting (or taking the lead on) a performance that is exciting or advanced enough to retain the interest of high-level players or a lingering and uncertain audience; or, alternatively, initiating a relaxed and accessible performance that can involve or inspire less accomplished performers to participate. Chris describes how he employs the latter approach to set the tone at the open mic events at which he facilitates:

> At an open mic I'll always go on first, just to say "look, nobody wants the first spot, so I'll take it", and I'll often play stuff that I don't really know very well, because I don't want to set the bar too high; I don't want to show off. I just want to say "look, I'm going to strum a few songs. I think I can remember this, let's give it a go", to kind of make people feel that they're welcome

> to do that; that they don't have to feel that they're note-perfect before they step on the stage, because yeah, they're not getting paid for it, so they don't need to be note-perfect. (Chris interview)

This effect can also be achieved by facilitators through role modelling a respectful but relaxed approach to performing alongside participants:

> I think, especially for me, if people asked me to accompany them, I sort of have to say "yes", even if I don't know [the repertoire] or I don't know what they're going to do. […] I have to listen a lot harder, I have to look a lot more intently, and be quick, not to spoil it for them or whatever, and not to overplay. […] Whether I get it right or wrong it doesn't matter, which I think that's what open mic nights are about. I think if you mess up then it doesn't matter, and it shouldn't matter either. It's supposed to be for fun, and it's supposed to be enjoyable, and if you need to have a laugh at yourself for messing it up then that's fine, so you know, don't take it too serious. (Glenn interview)

The above cited examples demonstrate some of the ways in which events can be structured to limit transgressions and maximise inclusivity whilst maintaining an atmosphere of cosmopolitan politesse. Such strategies include utilising an "around the room" approach to ordering performance; humorous exchanges to highlight the limits of acceptable behaviour; and the presence of a nominated authority figure who can curate proceedings and role model acceptable behaviour. Vibing – informing fellow participants of displeasure at the character of their contributions to proceedings – seemingly represents a breach of politesse, but only appears to be commonplace in contexts in which participants are primed to interpret it as representing a form of encouragement (e.g. among professional musicians and those who aspire to professional status; in relation to musical traditions which have an established tradition of interactions of this kind). By accommodating performers of varying levels of familiarity, confidence and ability such that they will be willing to participate together, strategies defined by and encouraging politesse enable public participatory music events to function as cosmopolitan canopies.

Gender

Wenger's (1998) "communities of practice" model (discussed in chapter three) presents competence as though it were the only significant distinguishing variable informing interactions between fellow participants. Personal variables – such as gender, race, and ethnicity – can also impact upon the capacity of individuals to participate and shape the character of their participation. Alé highlights the case of international students who may not be aware of the conventions of folk sessions, and therefore not realise that the CeilidhSoc sessions are events in which they are able to participate:

> I was [CeilidhSoc] Inclusions Officer and I was doing most of the job about getting people in, about getting foreign people, as myself, foreign people to come and enjoy the session, and play, and explain to them that it was something open, that wasn't a gig. […] They don't get the whole concept of sessions, […] because they haven't had that in their country. (Alé interview)

This issue initially appears to be quite easily overcome, but Alé identifies that his sensitivity to it, and his efforts to include foreign participants, are the product of his own background as an international student, noting that this would most likely otherwise be overlooked:

> In CeilidhSoc they're losing that I think, because they don't have foreign people in the committee. […] They're fighting for inclusiveness of LGBTI, and other kind of people, but not of foreign people, and I think that's a big loss, because there are many people who actually enjoy this music quite a lot. (Alé interview)

Lack of knowledge regarding the existence and nature of public participatory events is easily rectified, but some common aspects of participatory music events can prove to be enduring barriers to the participation of certain demographic groups. For example, while Alé recognises pubs as being a logical choice of venue for folk sessions, and perceives pub culture as an integral aspect of social life in England, he expresses concern that this choice of location may function to exclude some categories of people:

> People want you to drink, and I'm not going to do it because someone tells me to, but I understand that many people will. That can be another part of the non-inclusiveness of folk sessions. […] If you're talking about Muslim people, for example, then you totally ban them from sessions. They can't go to a pub and get so pressured to drink, because they don't drink. (Alé interview)

This example represents an exclusion that would likely be invisible to the majority of participants and organisers, for many of whom the availability of alcohol may be considered to be a very important element of the event as a social and recreational experience.

Reservations about the nature of the spaces in which public participatory music events take place need not only be based on cultural differences. Female participants were typically attendant at all of the public participatory music events at which I conducted fieldwork, but only rarely did they not represent a marked minority relative to men. A lack of diversity more generally, but particularly the relative absence of female participants,[56] is something that the open mic comperes I interviewed demonstrated themselves to be acutely aware of. Speaking of the Rotunda Sessions open mic, run by himself and two other young, white men, Jack noted:

> I know it's a more general problem, that female involvement in live music is not proportionate. […] We're constantly keeping an eye to make sure it's not becoming sad white dudes shouting their feelings; because – as a sad white dude shouting his feelings – I have no problem with that, but also that is what you see, pretty much everywhere, in the main. It's still sort of a white, male, middle-class thing really. I don't really understand why. (Jack interview)

[56] The gender focus of this section is due to the most readily apparent and discussed examples of exclusion that I encountered during my fieldwork being related to gender. A dedicated study of the experiences of, for example, people of colour, international students, or LGBTQ+ participants of public participatory events would make a valuable and timely contribution to the academic discourse (cf. Kenny and Young (2022); Lambe (2023)).

One perspective that commonly appears on social media forums dedicated to local music activity is that the notable gender imbalance in musical activities can be straightforwardly attributed to a lack of enthusiasm for musical participation among women. This assertion, almost exclusively posited by men, is a persistent trope, as identified by Bayton:

> The social obstacles facing women would-be instrumentalists are often denied and individualistic explanations offered: "there is nothing stopping women playing in bands these days so why don't they just get on with it?" That is, it is a personal failing of the individual women concerned, who have only themselves to blame. (Bayton 1998, x)

This is defied by the existence of thriving female-only ensembles. For example, *Neighbourhood Voices* are a large amateur pop choir based in Sheffield. Founded and directed by Gina Walters, a charismatic and celebrated performer and vocal teacher, the ensemble's online blurb reads:

> Neighbourhood Voices became a reality after realising there wasn't a space for women to learn and perform pop, alternative and indie songs in the city. A choir that could challenge people to develop their voices and musicianship, but also to create a safe social space for friendships to form and grow.[57]

In ostensive contradiction to this statement, it has already been identified in this thesis that Sheffield contains numerous spaces in which individuals are able to perform music of the styles listed with varying degrees of formality (from informal open mics to official gigs). The implicit message of the Neighbourhood Voices blurb – one that is likely to be appreciated by potential members – is therefore that participation in the ensemble represents a "safe social space", in contrast to other performance spaces in the city, on the basis that men are excluded from attending.

Concerns over physical safety in mixed-gender music spaces are substantiated by dedicated empirical research. Hill, Hesmondhalgh and Megson's study of small music venues in the nearby city of Leeds coherently and concisely outlines how a broader culture of unmitigated sexual violence (including assault and harassment) impacts upon women's capacity to enjoy sustained participation in live music events:

> Sexual violence is happening in the small music venues in Leeds. It is mostly being perpetrated by men against women. It impacts upon musical participation in a number of ways: it pulls the victim/survivor out of themselves so they are no longer immersed in the music; it disrupts feelings of community in the gig audience so that victim/survivors no longer feel comfortable; it polices the demographics of the gig space, promoting male dominance; and it causes victim/survivors to circumscribe their gig-going activities. Venues and promoters are typically unprepared to deal with incidents of sexual violence, nor are they immune to "rape myths" which inform common discourses of sexual violence. Poor responses from venues result in low trust from victim/survivors and from women who are aware of the reputation of poorly responding venues. (Hill, Hesmondhalgh, and Megson 2020, 381).

[57] Neighbourhood Voices. "About". Accessed October 7, 2019. www.neighbourhoodvoices.co.uk/about.

Public participatory music events ostensibly provide fewer opportunities for predatory behaviour on the basis of the lighting typically remaining at ambient levels, and participants directly observing each other over the course of the event (in contrast to the darkness and front-facing orientation typical of gigs). In spite of this, I did observe a case of public sexual violence during my fieldwork, in which a young woman was inappropriately touched by an older male stranger at a busy folk singing session at a pub on the eastern edge of the Peak District. The victim exclaimed to the room, identifying the perpetrator and his actions, but – much to her obvious distress – her appeal was seemingly ignored by all present, including her male companion.

Predatory behaviour at public participatory music events typically takes a much more subtle form. Gazit identifies the associated challenges that women must navigate when participate in jazz jam sessions in New York:

> A generally welcoming environment can sometimes turn into an arena for unwanted sexual advances, particularly with increased alcohol consumption in late hours of the night. Women attending the session to increase their involvement in the scene and establish themselves as professional musicians are crossing into a male dominated space, requiring them to discern between wanted collegial and professional attention and unwanted sexual intentions under a professional guise, including invitations for mutual practice sessions, gigs, and professional collaborations. Unfortunately, such behavior is rampant in New York City jam sessions. (Gazit 2015, 37)

Gazit identifies one venue, the Vodou Bar, as a "relatively safe environment" on the basis of "its stable core of attendees, among them a growing number of female musicians" (ibid.), with these aspects, respectively, seeming to limit the potential for misinterpreted advances, and suggesting greater potential for solidarity in the case of an incident.

The relative safety of a venue or event cannot mitigate the threat associated with traveling to and from venues alone. My interviewee Anya expressed reservations about walking to and from venues on her own:

> You always want to be like "yeah, it's fine. Society's changed. […] I can be an independent woman. I can go to this pub on my own". But at the same time there is like a niggling in the back of your mind like "yeah, but there's still people who would still do, like, see a young woman on her own and go for her." (Anya interview)

The only alternative in many cases may be sharing transport, which can also be a source of anxiety, with the acceptance of an offer to car share potentially being misconstrued as romantic interest, or later presented as grounds for an expectation of romantic reciprocity:

> I needed someone to give me a lift from that gig, and I knew that there was a possibility from the person that I trust that he won't be able to give me a lift. I was feeling absolutely terrified that maybe somebody else would offer me a lift, and that I would have to be in the same car with them, which is not good. I was thinking about it, like "well, I don't feel safe, so I don't

> know." […] I guess that there is no way that you can know one hundred percent that somebody is not going to hurt you. There is always that uncertainty. (Sophia interview)

The discussion so far has focused on how women may prefer to avoid mixed-gender events on the grounds of concerns regarding personal safety and unwanted sexual advances. Female participants may also be directly blocked from involvement in musical activity, as Cohen found to be the case for rock bands in 1980s Liverpool:

> Women were not simply absent from the music scene but were actively excluded. Some girlfriends did help with the organization of a band and attended performances, but many were discouraged or barred from membership of bands or from the band's rehearsals, recordings, performances, and other social activities. (Cohen 1991, 208)

Presumably the idea informing this behaviour was that the presence of women was having an inhibitive or distracting effect on men, as is the case in an anecdote relayed to Bayton about the employment practices of a Sheffield recording studio:

> There is also straightforward prejudice against women, as Moira Sutton (the manager of Red Tape Studios, Sheffield) told me: "One of the studios actually specifically said they wouldn't have women engineers or studio managers, because artists would feel that they couldn't behave naturally in front of them." (Bayton 1998, 6).

Unfortunately, Cohen and Bayton's qualitative findings of thirty years ago remain consistent with the findings of large contemporary research projects, such as the recent "Misogyny in Music" report of the British government's Women and Equalities Committee:

> Women have significant additional barriers to pass to get a foothold in the music industry and must navigate acts of passive aggression, ridicule, and misogyny to have a sustainable career. Female artists are routinely undervalued and undermined, endure a focus on their physical appearance in a way that men are not subjected to, and have to work far harder to get the recognition their ability merits. Despite increases in representation, discrimination and misogyny remain endemic. (House of Commons 2024, 59)

Awareness of these issues has been met with conscientious attempts to highlight and celebrate local female performers. Teah Lewis, who previously ran the "Sheffield Songwriters Club" – an open mic event dedicated to the performance of original material – noted the tendency for it to be attended primarily by older men. In response, she organised an event under the title of "*She*-field Songwriters Club", with her hope for longer-term impact outlined in the blurb for the event's promotional page on Facebook:

> Widely, Sheffield provides an inclusive and accessible platform for artists of all kinds, but it is common that male performers dominate line-ups at music events. "But I know loads of female musicians?" I hear you cry!! - So do I! But the fact is that programming at events widely doesn't represent and certainly doesn't prioritise them - so this week we'll be asking why EVER not, because look at all these CRACKIN' songwriters. [...] This month, we're giving female musicians

> a platform to develop their work with a view to helping re-calibrate the Sheffield music scene to be as representative, diverse and eclectic as it can be.[58]

Teah's direct appeal to female participants did impact the gender balance of the event, and this might be attributed to a combination of solidarity with Teah and/or the political premise of the event; or to the perceived commitment she was making to ensuring female attendees were guaranteed the company of female peers, whom they either knew or anticipated to be more sympathetic and supportive. However, this did not result in sustained attendance of female participants at future events:

> So many of them came. I was like "well why aren't you coming every week? Like, why does it have to be a special [one]?" And I hoped that would bring more of them back, but it just didn't really. (Teah interview)

Teah described some uncomfortable stereotypes on display at a separate open mic she had curated following the one mentioned above:

> I said "it's prioritising females but we can have a couple of male slots". So we did, and [...] it was sort of like a sketch of exactly all the things that I don't like about normal open mic nights. I was like "no! I've let it happen at my own one". The fact that [the male performers] were just being like really gratuitous with a ten-minute slot, going over time. I've got this guy who's really talented, and really nice, but just doing his loop pedal for so long. And it's like "this is not an opportunity for you to do, like, your normal set. This is for other people." (Teah interview)

Teah here notes her frustration with male performers in overrunning the limits of their allocated slot, both in the cited instance, and at "normal open mic nights", where she has seemingly encountered this situation many times. Her description of the exemplary individual as "really talented, and really nice" might be read as indicating that she does not perceive the offending behaviour to be due to a lack of competence or to an intentional disregard for the interests of the other performers. Teah identifies female performers as generally possessing lower confidence:

> Then you've got the female performers who go "oh I think I'll just do two songs", so much more self-deprecating [...]: nervous about doing their own songs [and] messing up and going "oh, I'll just leave it there". [...] That's why I think, with open mics, they just don't turn up. (Teah interview)

My interviewee Sarah, a jazz drummer, cites the predominance of male participants, who she perceives as being generally more assertive and less self-conscious, as the reason she prefers not to attend public jam sessions:

> I think the reason for me, why I wouldn't go, and why people wouldn't go, certain people, is

[58] Sheffield Songwriters Club. "She-Field Songwriters Club: Ladies WE WANT YOU!". *Facebook*. Accessed August 8, 2019. https://www.facebook.com/events/779415605579136.

> […] because it is a male-dominated environment. But also, […] there's no infrastructure in place to ensure that anyone who's there who is interested in having a go has that opportunity. So yeah, this is the point where we can move away from gender, but I do think gender comes into it. […] We're looking at things like assertiveness and confidence. At your typical jam night you have to literally put yourself out there and go "hey, can you get off the drum kit now please? You've been jamming for 20 fucking minutes. I would actually like to have a little go, if you don't mind?", in a room full of men who are all looking at you, who've never seen you before, and because you're a woman you already feel like they're probably judging your ability. (Sarah interview)

Sarah's experiences are reminiscent of the findings of Wehr's 2016 article on the experiences of women in jazz:

> Tokenism […] describes an environment that some females may experience in jazz study and performance where the female is the only female, or one of only a very few. Token roles contribute to an environment that fosters stereotype threat, a fear of confirming a negative stereotype […]. Stereotype threat in a jazz environment can contribute to anxiety and low self-efficacy […] for learning or performing jazz. Low self-efficacy contributes to a susceptibility to effects of stereotype threat, and affects motivation for participation. Female students cycle through this model until they either achieve enough positive self-efficacy to move out of the model and function in jazz environments […], or they choose to avoid participation in jazz environments where this model exists. (Wehr 2016, 475-6)

Van Vleet's 2021 study of female jazz musicians describes how "discrimination, which stems from over a century of sexism, can be obvious, subtle, or even accidental" (224), such that even well-meaning male organisers and participants may inadvertently exclude women. One regulatory strategy to avoid tokenism and stereotype threat, and to prioritise the self-efficacy of female musicians, is to prohibit the attendance of men entirely. The value of this approach has been highlighted in academic literature that addresses female participation in music (e.g. Bayton 1998; Green 1997), mostly in relation to educational contexts:

> A women-only context in which to learn musical and technological skills has been of central importance for many, all of my evidence pointing to the importance of providing some male-free, protected spaces (in schools, community centres, youth clubs, and so forth) in which young women can be supported in learning to play. Women's music projects are still rare. The norm tends to be a gender-blindness which serves to maintain patriarchy. For instance, Jude Sacker first set up an all-women class in Sheffield when she discovered two girls hanging about after a mixed workshop. They told her, '"we came to play but nobody's asked us to play". They hadn't even picked up an instrument and they'd been sitting there all afternoon and these two male tutors had completely ignored them. It hadn't even occurred to them that they might want to play and a load of lads had been playing all afternoon. (Bayton 1998, 191)

Inspired by her dissatisfaction with public participatory jam sessions, Sarah started "Key of She", a popular Arts Council funded free improvisation night that takes place once a month in a central

Sheffield venue:

> Key of She is open to people with all kinds of musical experience, but the main thing is that it's specifically open to people who are female, non-binary, and trans. So the sub-text is "not CIS-gender men". […] There definitely need to be times where it is appropriate to not include a certain demographic. Maybe because it's solidarity, or you're trying to build the confidence of that group, and it's not really going to be possible if anyone in that group feels like there's a watchful eye of an oppressor. (Sarah interview)

The event has proven to be consistently well-attended, and enthusiastically reviewed by participants, with its female-identifying and non-binary remit being made clear in promotional materials, on signage at the venue, and – in a few reported instances – being quietly explained to unaware male attendees who have subsequently vacated the space without protest. Whilst expressing support for Key of She and speaking positively of its success, Sophia – who has experience of attending the event – expressed some reservations about the discriminatory implications of gender exclusion in broader musical practice:

> I see it as if I want to exclude somebody else then I am a part of the problem, which was created at the first place by not letting women have the same rights, women being excluded. I don't want to be a part of that. I don't want to try and improve an issue by creating another one. I just want to extinguish that issue altogether, so I'm not going to exclude a group of people just to prove my point. I'm going to try and include them, and at the same time try and encourage a more positive behaviour that is not going to affect any other groups. (Sophia interview)

Sarah's response to this is a pragmatic one, highlighting the need for proactive change and to secure the broader support of men in the enterprise of increasing the participation of women and marginalised people:

> Key of She existing hasn't stopped men from accessing the same opportunities that there already are otherwise. Yeah, you could say it's exclusive, but it's like "well, we're not stopping you from doing any of these other things. It's just this one thing. We just really need you to support it from afar." […] Anyone can play at a jam night, and yet we never see women at them, so clearly there's a flaw in the methodology of trying to achieve equality in that situation. […] It's not going to be as easy for a certain group of people to put themselves out there. […] So that's why it's so important to work with men, and to teach men and ourselves how to garner that empathy and that support for women and marginalised people who need it. (Sarah interview)

It is difficult to determine the extent to which the success of Key of She can be directly attributed to the regulated absence of men. She-field Songwriters Club seemingly addressed the issues identified by Wehr (2016), populating the space with a higher number of women than men, though without banning male attendees entirely, but this did not result in the sustained engagement of female participants enjoyed by Key of She. Male open mic comperes I interviewed spoke enthusiastically

about the extent of attendance of female participants, perceiving this as a sign that their events are effectively inclusive:

> A lot of [women] can come here and they come here on their own. You know, they can actually walk in on their own and say "do you mind if I get up?" Do you know, I don't really know [why]. Maybe because it's so established, and like you said before, it's not just put on for profit or whatever, because a lot of the time it can be quite quiet down here sometimes. But yeah, I think it does have that safe feeling about it, and not only that, people do listen. That's important I think. (Glenn interview)

> I think we've done really well at the Forest in encouraging female performers as well. Now we have as many girls singing as we do blokes, and I mean, perhaps even ten years ago that would just not have happened. […] I like it when it's not just one man and his guitar. There's a girl who comes along and plays recorders and stuff like that, and there's a lass who comes along and plays a bit of squeezebox. [...] I always try and big them up massively, because it makes the night so much more interesting and varied. (Chris interview)

In many cases, sensitively run mixed-gender public participatory music events do seem to have successfully encouraged and supported female participation, serving as examples of Anderson's (2011) cosmopolitan canopies in their facilitation of mutually positive interactions between diverse categories of people that might not have been possible in other contexts. This is perhaps most notably the case between young female participants and older men, especially when the latter are conscientious facilitators who are proactive in encouraging the former. Marie describes her positive, platonic relationship with the compere of an event she frequented, which elicited concern from her mother:

> To me he's like the most loving, accepting, nurturing person, and I love that man to pieces. I remember when I told my Mum about him, she didn't understand how I could genuinely be friends with a man who was twenty odd years my senior. She was like, "who is this pervy old man?" I was like, "Mum, it's not like that". And it took her meeting him for her to understand that we are genuinely friends. […] It's a strange thing to try to explain to a quite over-protective mother that you can be friends with somebody like that. […] Her assumption is perfectly natural and realistic, but the thing is that [the compere] is an exception, and our relationship is a complete exception, and I feel that he genuinely, genuinely cares about me. (Marie interview)

Anya noted a similar experience with an older male participant who encouraged her to write her own songs and perform them:

> My first friend at open mic was [a much older regular participant]. […] He's so lovely. He's so sweet. He was like my first friend. I remember he bought me […] kind of like a glass cube, with a fairy in it. […] I'd barely been going a few weeks, maybe a month, month and a half, something like that. Anyway, and he came up to me and he was like, "I've got you this, and I

> want you to look at it every time you want to write a song to feel inspired", and "I want to be hearing your new songs." My heart just melts. (Anya interview)

These are examples of men who seem to have earnestly taken on the role of friend or mentor younger women, encouraging them to persevere in the fulfilment of their musical aspirations. Carole describes how her more aggressive approach to ensuring that jazz jam sessions are not dominated by male participants to the exclusion of female ones:

> Some of the men, they'll be playing solos, and they won't include you. You'll be stood there waiting, and they just bypass you. So yeah, that happens, but when I'm there it doesn't because I'm much more domineering than most, so I don't let it happen. I involve the underdogs, if I see people sitting on the outside not being given a chance, because perhaps they're there for the first time, and they don't know everybody, or don't know what the protocol is, or are a bit worried about being too pushy. (Carole interview)

At Key of She this issue is overcome by the structure of the event, which is designed to minimise differences in confidence and assertiveness between participants:

> Everyone puts their name in a hat, and the instrument that they play. And that way the only confident thing you have to do is write your name down, and if you change your mind it [is] ok, you could go "actually no, I'm not feeling it." As a bare minimum you have to be able to do that, but that's asking for a lot less than actively getting up on stage and saying, "please can I have a go now?" (Sarah interview)

Unlike the majority of public participatory events, all performances at Key of She are collective improvisations. Sarah and Sophia discussed this as being liberating in comparison to performing set repertoire, and as removing the capacity for negative comparison of the self with others:

> Sarah: Anything goes [at Key of She], really […]. I think there's pros and cons. Some people are like "oh God, improv. This is terrifying, I've never done this before." They might feel excluded by that at first.
>
> Sophia: At first, because then they see that there are not rules.
>
> Sarah: Exactly, when they start to get on to that.
>
> Sophia: Because why do you feel excluded? Because you feel that you're not as experienced in that field as [other participants].
>
> Sarah: It's a confidence thing really, isn't it? We always say to people "you can come and watch, and then if you change your mind you can put your name in, or come and watch the first few times." That has happened quite a lot […]. We've had quite a few people where they've been a spectator, and they've realised how fun it is. […] And then they're like "I'll give it a go, then." […] I think that's why it's great that it's improv: because it's not about a value judgement of the music, as well.

The exclusion of male participants from Key of She is likely to have impacted upon the sense of safety and solidarity that female participants feel in the performance space, and thus contributed to its enduring success as a female-only event. The exchange between Sarah and Sophia highlights how the establishment of a structuring logic that minimises the need for participant assertiveness, and the rejection of familiar repertoire – that has the potential to be "tainted by unwelcome associations or constrained by convention" (Bithell 2014, 200) – have also played a role in making the event more broadly inclusive. The following sections of this chapter will explore how instruments and repertoire, and the regulation of these elements, shape the character of participation at public participatory music events.

Instruments

Werner, Gadir and De Boise identify how existing work on music and gender predominantly focuses on "humans and discourse while tending to sidestep material processes and objects that are also central to power's interplay with music practice" (2020, 648). Perhaps the most explored aspect of the object-oriented approach to the relationship between music and gender relates to musical instruments, with the general conclusions of this research being succinctly summarised by Doubleday (2008):

> The realm of musical instruments is characterised by gender inequalities, with men dominating instrumental musicianship and technology. There has been a common cultural tendency to deny women access to instruments, or to coerce female instrumentalists into "suitable" and "acceptable" musical roles. In so-called divisions of musical labour, men have often maintained the right to play instruments, expecting women to be vocalists. (Doubleday 2008, 29)

Even though material processes and objects have been less represented in discussions of music practice and power, a focus on objects represents one of the earliest and most enduring elements of ethnomusicological study. Examination of imported musical instruments – be this with a view to categorising instruments, as in the work of Victor-Charles Mahillon, and later, Hornbostel and Sachs (1961); or in order to surmise the pitch systems of the music that might be played upon them (e.g. Ellis 1885) – was an early methodology of the discipline's forebear, "comparative musicology". Updated encyclopaedias of world musical instruments, and new treatises recommending different approaches to their categorisation, have continued to be produced (e.g. Kartomi 1990), and a chapter or subsection dedicated to description of the musical instruments encountered during fieldwork remains standard in ethnomusicological monographs.

With the integration of anthropological theoretical models and fieldwork techniques endorsed by, most influentially, Alan Merriam (1964) and John Blacking (1973), the ethnomusicological discourse surrounding musical instruments developed beyond the purely organological (relating to construction and means of sound production) to discussion of the function of the instruments in the context of performance. There is a notable focus in more recent work on the social significance of musical instruments, both in terms of how they are viewed and understood, but also in terms of how they structure, facilitate, or mediate social interaction (e.g. Racy 1994; Rancier 2014; Newton

2021).

The revaluation of the role of objects in social interaction, and the researching of it, has not been limited to ethnomusicology. Marres defines the "object turn" evident in recent academic discourse as rejecting the "critique of objects that has been dominant in twentieth-century social science: the idea that things, technology and materiality render engagement impossible" (2012, 6). This is exemplified by the development of two different theoretical approaches, both of which have become prominent in social science over the past thirty years. Firstly, Material Culture Studies has developed around Arjun Appadurai's influential notion, set forth in his edited collection *The Social Life of Things*, that "even though from a *theoretical* point of view human actors encode things with significance, from a *methodological* point of view it is the things in-motion that illuminate their human and social context" (Appadurai 1986, 5).

Secondly, within roughly the same time frame the ethnographic study of knowledge production (more particularly, of the activities of research scientists) has resulted in the development of Actor-Network Theory, which is effectively outlined by one of its major innovators and devotees, Bruno Latour (2005). *ANT* is an effective, though controversial approach for analysing the social function of objects in an environment. According to Latour, all of the human subjects and material objects that influence an environment are actors. Objects that affect the social environment are recognised as active *mediators*, rather than being passive *intermediaries*, and are a vital part of the observable *assemblage*.

Where a Material Culture Studies approach has essentially been at the core of ethnomusicological research since the days of comparative musicology, a 2012 article by Eliot Bates is oft cited (e.g. by Dawe 2013) as the first significant attempt to incorporate the ideas of ANT into the ethnomusicological study of musical instruments (in Bates' case specifically, in relation to the Turkish saz). Bates recommends "taking objects, and particularly musical instruments, seriously—but not simply as things that humans use or make or exchange, or as passive artifacts from which sound emanates" (Bates 2012, 364). Newton provides some examples of the role that instruments have in inspiring and shaping social and musical interactions:

> It is the shared study of instruments used by musicians that are important to the genre, and the procurement of similar instruments, which helps to create a bond to those past players. The buying, selling, and trading of instruments that regularly happens allows people to meet. The sound that the instruments make and the musical decision they participate in help in shaping the repertoire and performances. (Newton 2021, 489)

For my interviewees, the instruments that they play often had a profound effect on their lives, and on their understanding of and approach to music. Kate describes her experience of shifting her attention from learning the violin to learning the double bass, and how this transformed her engagement with musical performance and other musicians:

> On bass it was just really different from the violin, because on violin I was just stuck into

> reproducing what was written, whereas on bass it's all about the chords and the root notes, and the rhythm. I think I had an inkling I would like that, and that's why I decided so consciously to do the bass. I think I always had an inkling that violin wasn't really my ideal. I like the deeper notes. But it was that role - being responsible for the rhythm, and people relying on you, and it being dance-y and fun. (Kate interview)

As has been established, public participatory music events are structured around conventions, with the naming of events (e.g. the White Lion jazz jam session) establishing expectations and attracting attendees with an interest in the identified form of music. Among these expectations are the conventional roles to be fulfilled by participants depending on the instrument that they are playing, and this has a direct impact on the nature and extent of their participation. Chris outlines the limitations and affordances of playing different instruments at folk sessions:

> I mean, if you're talking about tune sessions then there's kind of a great advantage to turning up with a bass, because you can play along with pretty much anything whether you know it or not. […] On a lead melodic instrument […] there's both more opportunity [to] start things and lead the session where you want, but also more pressure. Bazouki's great, because you can play tunes on it, and if you don't know the tune just follow the guitarist, […] so that's my comfort instrument at sessions like that, because […] I don't play many songs on it, but if I had to I could. Guitar I mainly do songs. (Chris interview)

At the White Lion jazz jam, rhythm section responsibilities (drums, bass, piano, or occasionally guitar if a pianist is not available) are usually fulfilled by a relatively small number of available players, who are typically recruited in advance of the event to ensure the provision of a solid accompaniment. This responsibility can result in unpredictable outcomes, depending on how many other musicians that play the same instrument attend the event. For example, a jazz guitarist described his frustrations about committing to providing and sharing his amplifier in instances where there are other guitarists at jam sessions:

> Due to its requirement of amplification it often means committing to the whole evening due to having to bring a lot of equipment or it means more intermittent participation due to sharing the equipment of others between several participants. (Q5.14)

In contrast, Kate speaks positively of the opportunities associated with being one of the only bass players to attend local jam sessions:

> I think as a bass player you're just in demand. […] Bass players are fundamentally needed, and there's not that many knocking about, so I always get the chance to play, which is just brilliant. (Kate interview)

These examples illustrate how an individual's chosen instrument is tied to conventionalised roles within the performance context, both musical and extra-musical. Instrumental preference may therefore entail a gravitation towards associated behaviours, rather than being purely the result of a seemingly straightforward aesthetic preference.

There is a substantial history of social scientists attempting to explain musical preferences with reference to demographic categories. Pierre Bourdieu's seminal work Distinction ([1984] 2010) is based on data gathered in 1960s France, and argues social class is dependent on different distributions of economic (money and assets), social (personal and business connections), and cultural (level and form of education) capital. According to Bourdieu, individuals of the same class category possess a common "habitus" – an aptitude and related enthusiasm for some "fields" of activity to the exclusion of others. This is explained in relation to broad genre categories, with "art" musics being found to be largely the preserve of those possessing sufficient capital to be deemed middle-class or above, and working-class people preferring to engage with popular music. Bourdieu's argument was not just that individual taste can be correlated with social class, but also that this correlation was essentially premised on individuals having greater access and exposure to the spaces and materials associated with the particular cultural forms that they came to prefer.

Writing of Milton Keynes in the 1980s, Finnegan concluded that there were not "any clear class-dominated patterns for involvement in music generally", and that "active music-making of any kind was a minority interest, but within that minority were people of many backgrounds in terms of education, wealth and […] occupation" (2007, 312). However, her discussion ultimately echoes Bourdieu:

> Entry on to particular musical pathways [was] dependent […] on family membership [and] partly related to that family's social and economic resources. Certain activities needed money, transport, or access to specific kinds of venues or networks, or were perhaps related to particular kinds of educational achievements, material possessions, cultural interests, or social aspirations. All these were thus likely to play some part in the selection of particular pathways – though differently in different contexts and for different individuals" (Finnegan 2007, 311-12)

Nicola's biography provides an example of the impact of family membership on musical engagement, and how this can defy the expectations imposed by external forces:

> When I was a kid I wanted to play the violin, nah, I wanted to play the *fiddle*. My Dad had a bunch of Steeleye Span [a popular English folk rock band who came to prominence in the 1970s] records and used to play them all the time. […] I always thought the fiddle was cool, so seven-year-old me wanted to play the fiddle. And I was the only one in the school that, because where I live is very brass orientated – it's brass band country – I was the only one that wanted to play the violin. (Nicola Interview)

Certain instruments, particularly some of those associated with folk music (e.g. squeeze boxes) and jazz (e.g. saxophones), are prohibitively expensive for those without economic capital to spare. Likewise, the musical literacy required to approach the performance of non-mainstream musics such as jazz and Western art music is typically facilitated by lessons with private music tutors, which can rapidly constitute a notable expense (as of 2023-24, the Musicians' Union recommends private

tutors charge a basic rate of at least £40.50 an hour for individual and small-group lessons).[59] Development of the necessary skills also requires hours of private practice to which those with work or family commitments, or without a suitable space in which to practice, may struggle to commit:

> I came from a Sheffield council estate, the poorest of the poor. […] And that's how I was brought up, so we never had anything. I was one of the very few that went to the grammar school from the wrong side of the tracks. […] I couldn't ever have afforded a saxophone. […] I bought my first saxophone when I was 40, but I'd got a very busy career, and three young children to deal with as well. (Carole interview)

There is a significant correlation between instrument ownership and living circumstances, as Harrison identifies to be the case for the impoverished participants of an open mic event in Vancouver:

> If someone owns an instrument, this marks him or her as not the poorest of the poor or indigent. It may be that one is borrowing an instrument from a local community center, but still that means that one's living situation is stable enough to keep an instrument. (Harrison 2020, 37)

Ray describes the impact of his housing situation on his capacity to practise playing his melodeon:

> I think it's an environmental thing. You've got different contexts. I don't really like playing at home, so I don't. I haven't done for the last four years. So session playing is my main thing. […] It's a noisy instrument. […] This is the first place I've lived in four years that I can't hear my neighbours. Whereas before I've been distinctly able to hear everything that they do, so I've lost that ability to not care about what I'm doing. I came from a detached house down south before university, so it didn't really matter. (Ray interview)

As previously noted, the structure of public participatory music events is often rigid and convention based, and this also extends to the use of instruments. Novel instruments may be celebrated in solo performance contexts, as when a young bagpiper performing at the Yellow Arch open mic was met with the most enthusiastic and rapturous applause and celebration that I observed from an audience over the course of my fieldwork. For simultaneous performance events, unusual instruments can introduce logistical confusion that can make them less desirable choices for participants. Gazit asserts that, in the case of jazz jam sessions, "musicians who sing or play instruments outside of the several core instruments of jazz (trumpet, saxophone, trombone, piano, bass and drums, and to some extent guitar) are accepted into the session with some reservation" (Gazit 2015, 41). An awareness of conventions at jam sessions guided Jonathan, a guitarist and vocalist, in his choice of instrument:

> I had a little go on cello, and it's not a very easy instrument to take to a jam night or anything. Not easy to play to other music. Where do you put a cello in a band or anything? What do you

[59] Musicians' Union. "Music Teaching Rates of Pay". Accessed October 7, 2023. https://musiciansunion.org.uk/education-and-teaching/teaching-pay-and-employment/music-teaching-rates-of-pay.

> expect it to do? (Jonathan interview)

Musicians may be limited from participating in some events by their lack of access to an appropriate instrument, or to the resources (including space, time, and money) that are necessary to reaching a level of competence at which they would feel comfortable enough to participate. Enforcement of these conventions (which might take one or more of the forms identified in the "structure" section of this chapter) can also result in the inadvertent exclusion of participants whose repertorial choices, or approach to music performance, cannot be better accommodated elsewhere, leaving them without alternative outlets and opportunities. Chris describes how open mic performances that do not include live instruments may be viewed negatively by venue proprietors and other open mic participants, and expresses concern about the racial connotations of this outlook:

> What [the venue proprietors] don't want is for it to turn into a karaoke night with people just turning up with music on their phone and singing over it. I know there's been a bit of a phase with people doing more I guess rap-py, RnB type stuff, where obviously you don't usually do that with acoustic […] but they just turn up with music on their phone and just sing or rap over it. I don't like discouraging people from doing that, and partially that's because I think I don't want there to be a racial element in the reason people are discouraging it, and sometimes I worry that there is. […] Some of this is stuff with people that have actually created the music themselves in recording studios, put it on their phone, and sing and rap over it. To me that's as creative, in a different way, as playing it on the guitar, so I don't want to exclude it, and I certainly don't want to exclude it if there's any suspicion that it's, you know, white boys club. That would be the worst thing, and I would not want that to happen. (Chris interview)

Repertoire

The significance of the almost total absence of people of colour from the public participatory music events that I attended during my fieldwork only occurred to me late in the fieldwork process, when the "Rhythm Theory" jam sessions began to take place at Yellow Arch, run by a well-respected Black rapper K.O.G. Whilst ostensibly proclaiming a broad stylistic remit in promotional materials, the Rhythm Theory sessions were attended primarily by rappers, to whom groups of instrumentalists provide an accompaniment. There was a much greater breadth of racial diversity apparent among the participants of this event than I had encountered at any other event during my fieldwork, and I did not recognise most of the participants from other open mic events that I had attended in Sheffield that could (in terms of available technology and ostensible remit) have accommodated the music that they performed. While the background of the organiser, and their social and professional network, is likely to have had an impact on the attendees of Rhythm Theory, its naming and branding were significant in shaping the character of the event and setting expectations for participants.

It is common for the naming of folk sessions in particular to identify a specific form of repertoire, typically by world region, that is to be played at the event. Such labelling can be inclusive (e.g. the Sheffield "Eurosession") or exclusive (e.g. the "Anything but Irish" session in Newcastle upon Tyne), but the intended purpose in either case is to specify the intended limits of the repertoire to be performed at the event, and to effectively exclude the performance of material that falls outside of

the specified remit. There are two notable motivations informing labelling of this kind, the first being to ensure that the event remains focused on the repertoire that the organisers deem to be most enjoyable. My interviewees expressed a stylistic preference on the basis of the participatory affordances provided by the typical musical characteristics of different sets of musical repertoire. For example, Nicola describes her preference for English repertoire over Irish:

> I don't really like Irish music, as such, to play. […] I don't dislike it, it's just if you'd asked me what I prefer to play it'd be English or Scottish. I don't hate [Irish music], but […] it doesn't have the rhythm or the space that English music has. I like the fact that there's not so many notes in English music, [and] It's not straight quavers all the way through, and I like that because then there's more room. I always liked doing what I wanted to do, basically, and I felt like I could do that with English music, but with Irish music you couldn't quite do it the same, and Scottish I felt was somewhere in the middle. It had a lot of the notes like the Irish, but then it also had kind of like the drive, and the guts behind it that English music has, whereas Irish music, to me [is] very smooth and flowing. (Nicola interview)

Steve expressed a greater interest in playing high-tempo repertoire, identifying Scandinavian folk tunes as being generally slower and less enjoyable for him to play along to:

> Last time I went, [one session participant] played some weird Scandinavian thing; [another] played slow. I prefer fast stuff. I don't want to hear people going “ooh, I'm playing pretty tunes with my violin”. That doesn't interest me. I want to go [fast], because I'm a bass player; I want punk-folk. If I'm here to listen, yeah, some pretty tune or something like that, but I want driving either 6/8 or 4/4, no bars dropping off, where I feel I can contribute, and it kicks ass. I like kicking ass. Kick ass. Kick-ass folk. I don't want it to be dainty. (Steve interview)

The second reason for specifying a clear repertorial remit for public participatory music events in general is that it clarifies what is expected of participants, and what they are required to know in order to participate comfortably. This is less important for events that are premised on sequential participation, such as open mics, where the ostensible limitations are those imposed by the available technology and length of the performance “slot”. Simultaneous participatory events are premised on the notion that participants will present conventional repertoire of which others will already have, or can quickly acquire, functional familiarity. In instrumental folk sessions, only a single individual need be familiar with a tune for it to serve as a point of departure for performance, as others are expected to listen to their rendition and “busk along” as and when they feel able to do so. Participants therefore function as sources of new and unfamiliar tunes which they can contribute to different session contexts, and these may subsequently be absorbed into the personal repertoire of their co-participants. Steve describes how the repertoire associated with the CeilidhSoc session changed with the personnel:

> I haven't been enough to work it out. […] Every year you get the new tunes and stuff like that, so it becomes quite an investment. Because I learnt a load of what we would call “CeilidhSoc standards”, but then in the last few years a lot of things have just been dropped, so I think that's detrimental to the society. It goes down to whether […] you get retention of tune

> players, and I think we've had a bad run of losing tune players. (Steve interview)

One strategy for initiating new participants into participatory performance more quickly and limiting the disruption caused by the churn of personnel is to draw from an agreed "standard" repertoire. In the case of the CeilidhSoc session, this took the form of a tune book produced by members of the committee, including a mix of both traditional (i.e. of seemingly historic origin and often without a clearly identifiable author) and contemporary tunes deemed to be appropriately interesting and accessible. There have been at least three different iterations of this text produced since CeilidhSoc originated around thirty-five years ago, and the introduction of an updated version that better reflects the repertorial interests of the current attendees has been a persistently identified aspiration. Chris and Owain describe the impact of this resource on their capacity to participate in the CeilidhSoc session:

> There was this one guy who, as soon as people started a tune, he'd just whisper over to me what it was called; or they'd even have a tune book, and he'd be like "it's on page so-and-so", so I'd look it up and start. I felt involved, and included, and welcomed from the very start. […] Maybe it's because – false modesty, bullshit aside – I did know what I was doing. I was a beginner, but I was learning fast. (Chris interview)

> If I was brave enough to start something I would just start one that I had already practised out of the tune book, so I sort of knew that somebody was going to join in. (Owain interview)

For jazz musicians, the standard repertoire has come to be embodied by the "Real Book" (Hal Leonard 2005), a legally published text containing leadsheets for popular jazz repertoire, that originated in the 1970s as a "fake book" (i.e. so called on the basis of it allowing musicians to *fake* their way through the performance of unfamiliar repertoire) illegally compiled and distributed by two Jazz students at Berklee College of Music in Boston. Kernfeld asserts that "the appearance of The Real Book democratized the music, making the process of jazz performance available to many more people than before, but it also threatened to fossilize the music" (2006, 136). He lists some of the ways in which this fossilisation may be manifested:

> The book came to be taken too literally, utilized independently of the recordings from which it drew; to the extent that the book encouraged rigid rather than flexible interpretations of jazz themes; to the extent that the book's mistakes have been unknowingly reproduced and effectively regarded as "right"; and to the extent that the book focused excessive attention on its repertory of 400 tunes. (ibid.)

"iReal Pro", available as a smartphone app, represents an update on the Real Book that addresses some, but not all, of the issues identified by Kernfeld. Coming to prominence in the early 2010s, the app presents users with a large and editable database of chord charts that can be viewed and transposed on demand.

In spite of their obvious capacity to facilitate participation, visual and learning aids are generally met with disapproval when employed at public participatory events. At a jam session in Newcastle upon

Tyne in the early 2010s I watched a professional musician performatively kicking a music stand and the copy of the Real Book that it was bearing – and upon which many of the less experienced participants were depending – off the stage. Being familiar with this performer, it was clear to me that the reasoning behind this action was similar to that of a story shared with Keegan-Phipps of a "staunchly conservative fiddler" at a folk session who calmly destroyed the cassette onto which a neophyte was recording, who onlookers perceived to be making a statement that "the young man should apply all of his time and effort to training his ear (and coordination) to ensure that the cassette player was unnecessary" (Keegan-Phipps 2013, 49). This illustrates that for all that learning aids might assist with initial participation, they might be judged as functioning to undermine the development and presentation of more desirable skills and behaviours, such as careful listening to fellow participants and attending the event with the frequency and commitment required for in situ absorption of the repertoire.

An apparently large personal repertoire is celebrated as a signifier of distinction, ostensibly indicating an impressive investment of time and effort into practice and listening. Ollie describes an exclusive practice that he associates with young folk musicians seeking to prove themselves:

> "Ultimate jigs", that was a thing for a while: basically turning up at a session and playing jigs for as long as you can. So, someone will start a jig, and then someone will go, "oh, I've got one", and you play that. "Oh I've got one". Pretty sure at IVFDF [Inter Varsity Folk Dance Festival] 2011 there was a ninety-minute ultimate jig. And that's the cliquey-ness; that's the weird kind of like, "oh God, they're still playing". (Ollie interview)

Such practices might be straightforwardly interpreted as opportunities for friendly competition and "showing off", with those able to contribute or play along with the greatest number of tunes asserting their credentials and associated status, and thus establishing or confirming a hierarchy. While this certainly might be the case, a more nuanced reading might interpret the practice as providing broader opportunity for peer *validation*, in so far as continuing to join in with the activity, especially in the face of external disapproval, suggests mutual appreciation among participants – both for the learning and playing of the repertoire, and for each other – and thus promotes the perception of kinship. Repertoire can be employed to similar effect in contexts without competitive connotations, as when Chris describes how he selects the songs that he plays and his approach to participation at sequential sessions based on the choices of his co-participants:

> If the session takes a certain […] mood, like if everyone starts doing Scottish songs, or everyone starts doing some quite sad songs, or seafaring songs or whatever, the next person will often try and do something that fits. And you'll see everyone's listening to what everyone's doing. […] It might only last for three or four people and the mood will change again. I think perhaps people do it almost subconsciously, but I definitely consciously watch what people are doing and try and read the mood of the night, and try and read what I can do; "do they want a sad, slow song now?" "Do I do some lively, fun song?" "Do I whip a tune out and change the dynamic completely?" (Chris interview)

This is an example of individual participants working together to deliver a coherent programme of

performance. In sustaining the "mood" established by the repertorial choices of those who played immediately before them, participants respectfully reciprocate in a manner that overtly suggests them to perceive the contribution of their peers to be valuable and a form of "gift" (Mauss 1990). In being complementary to proceedings, their contribution is complimentary of the choices of their peers.

These examples illustrate how the literal repertoire performed at public participatory can also function as the "symbolic repertoire", referred to in chapter three, that Cohen described as providing a means for the "expression, interpretation and containment" of individual differences whilst giving "the appearance of similarity" (Cohen 1985, 21). The sharing of repertoire facilitates performance and socialisation, but its symbolic properties also allow it to mask difference, and thus to inspire a sense of community that may be inaccessible to those without command of these resources:

> People were saying that it was an unfriendly atmosphere, and I was saying "well, I never really felt like that when I first came here". And [a prominent session participant] just turned around to me and said, "well that's because you can already play". (Nicola interview)

The regulation of repertorial remit, and strong endorsement of a desired minimum standard of fluency, can therefore facilitate greater musical *and* social cohesion at public participatory music events.

Conclusion: Paradox of Inclusivity

The findings of this chapter point to a paradox: that the maintenance of inclusivity is likely to depend on the (implicit or explicit) control and exclusion of disruptive elements, be they behaviours, people, or objects (including instruments and repertoire). The open character of public participatory music events makes them potentially prone to hosting individuals of diverse backgrounds and experiences, who may have very different ideas as to the nature of the activity and the reasons for engaging with it. Rapport's (2012) work reminds us that all individuals are unique, and thus different from each other. His concept of "cosmopolitan politesse" highlights the fact that smooth social interaction will, therefore, almost inevitably entail the toleration of differences in others rather than the embrace of them. Common musical interests and co-participation are not, on their own, tantamount to broader solidarity and understanding, as is illustrated by Ollie's description of dismissive attitudes to his own sense of exclusion that he has observed among his folk-participant peers:

> The folk scene is very accepting in a completely passive way. […] People get quite angsty and quite angry when you go "I feel a little bit excluded here", and they sort of go, "well what have I done wrong? We're perfectly fine with you being how you are. It's absolutely fine. Just, carry on, it doesn't make any difference to me." […] There's a very fine line between acceptance and erasure. (Ollie interview)

Effective regulation of the different elements of public participatory music events can function to minimise perceptions of difference and tension between participants, framing interactions between

unique individuals in such a way that they can be more easily interpreted as validating and reciprocal. This highlights the strong relationship between social and musical cohesiveness, that can be experienced as a symbiotic one to the point that it is sometimes not possible to decipher whether evaluative statements relate to the musical or social aspects of an event:

> A good session is where everyone is in tune with each other. A good session develops where people of a similar and complementary manner come together. There are some sessions where you feel […] musical antagonism. (Steve interview)

Whether or not participants are truly of a "similar and complementary manner", successfully inclusive and enduring public participatory music events depend on the utilisation of strategies that minimise and conceal differences between participants and exclude potential sources of antagonism.

Chapter Six – Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to develop a more nuanced understanding of musical "participation" through the investigation of events that are ostensibly dedicated to facilitating an inclusive approach to it. Chapter three of the thesis demonstrated that taking "community" as a point of departure without critique can function to obscure the varied, nuanced, and often superficial relationships that can be observed between those engaging with public participatory music events. Chapter four highlighted the impact of external factors, and some of the tensions and motivations involved in the organisation of these events. Chapter five explored the ways in which different elements can shape public participatory music events, and how these can be regulated to maximise inclusivity.

The variety of opinions, motivations, and interpretations to be found among co-participants of musical activity has not been effectively captured by existing models of participation, in large part because acknowledgement and interrogation of interpersonal disagreement and conflict are noticeably absent from many ethnographic accounts. This may to some extent be due to ethnomusicologists being determined to represent musical activity in a manner that is recognisable and agreeable to those it represents; and also because the consulted participants are usually those who are central to proceedings and fundamentally positive about the event, and thus do not recognise, or wish to highlight exclusion. This approach is therefore prone to producing one-sided accounts that suggest musical participation to occur in environments of harmonious inclusivity.

Ethnographic fieldworkers with backgrounds outside of ethnomusicology have been more willing to embrace conflict as a means of developing deeper understanding. For example, the work of Pitts, Robinson and Goh (2015) on lapsed participants highlights the potential for exclusion that is inherent in any musical activity; Cohen (1991) presented the rehearsals of rock bands as sites of tension and dispute; and Negus and Velazquez invited us to consider how "music intersects with, can become an integral part of, or can produce, and be used – consciously or unintentionally – to produce a clear lack of belonging" (Negus and Velazquez 2002, 141). Rahaim (2019) identifies acknowledgement of conflict, erasure and exclusion as being important to the development of more nuanced interpretations of participation:

> No one doubts that participation can be pleasurable and powerful. But if we are willing to admit that these practices may feel good without being good (or, for that matter, without necessarily being evil), then theories of participation offer a way of understanding these powerful entanglements of performance, metaphysics, ethics, and politics. (Rahaim 2019, 228)

This is not to deny that there is something "special" and perhaps profoundly significant about musical activity. My interviewees and survey respondents often referred to the power of music as an inclusive force that transcended potential social boundaries:

> The folk scene is one of the most welcoming […]. I've seen people coming from all over the world, like different faiths, different religion, you know, different anything, and people have

> kind of come in. And I've seen it happen where they'll go “so where are you from?”, someone will say it, you know, wherever it was, and then they'll go “do you want to play a tune?” They just play a tune and that's as complicated, more or less, as it gets. And I've seen that happen loads of times. (Nicola interview)

> I’d just sit there and play. Almost that would be my way of saying “hello”, was to start a tune. I feel comfortable communicating with people through music, less so socially, in any other way, so maybe it suited me. (Chris interview)

> Music does facilitate bonding with people I wouldn't otherwise meet, and makes me feel more connected to people of different ages, professions, personality types. (Q20.24)

Such examples highlight how music can enable “triangulation”, “the process by which some external stimulus provides a linkage between people and prompts strangers to each other as though they were not” (Whyte 1980, 94). In his observation of street performers, Whyte noted the aesthetic quality of a musical act or performance to be insignificant, concluding that “it is the fact that it is there that bonds people” (Whyte 1980, 95). However, contrary to the outlook of some models of community, the interactions that are enabled by triangulation may be of a practical rather than a personal nature, and do not necessarily result in social bonding or consensus of opinion. Rapport’s anthropological fieldwork in the English village of “Wanet” led him to argue that:

> Joint social events need not be singularly interpreted in order to be maintained, and need not eventuate in singularity either. Individuals need not be in agreement when they begin to interact, and constant interaction need bring them no closer to a joint or standardized world-view, or an overcoming of their idiosyncrasies: a great deal of their interaction can even go on in a situation of misperception or misinterpretation of one another's meanings and motivations. (Rapport 2012, 179)

Public participatory events represent an interesting case, as along with the prohibiting variables of aural saturation and polite convention that may be encountered in presentational performance contexts, many, most, or even all of the interacting attendees might be doing so in the capacity of musical participant. This can result in such events being characterised by an “odd quality that even passionate activities like gardening or dog-raising lack: the simultaneous projecting and dissolving of self in performance” (Slobin 1993, 41).

It is the conclusion of this thesis that individual participants are likely to possess differing approaches to the activity at hand and interpretations of objects in the space, but that this need not pose significant difficulties, or may even remain unnoticed, so long as the atmosphere of cosmopolitan politesse (Rapport 2012) is effectively maintained and differences between participants are minimised. In an environment characterised by musical interaction, differences are most likely to be revealed through mutually incompatible interactions with objects of significance.

This thesis concludes by introducing two models for interpreting potential points of conflict in musical participation. The first is a practical model, built on the work of Finnegan (2007), relating to

the practical organisation of musical activity, and identifying some observable patterns of interaction that have been normalised to the point of convention. The second model takes as its point of departure the work of popular music studies scholars, such as Simon Frith, Jennifer Lena, and Allan Moore, to identify possible subjective motivational or evaluative orientations, perception of which can lead to conflict between attendees of public participatory music events.

A Practical Model

In a chapter on "composition, creativity and performance", Finnegan identifies three approaches to musical performance: "prior written composition by an individual", primarily associated with classical music and "assumed to be *the* natural form of 'composition' in most serious writing about music" (2007, 160); "composition-in-performance" (ibid., 165), primarily associated with jazz; and "collective prior composition" (ibid., 167), primarily associated with rock music. She noted that these approaches were not "always mutually exclusive", and that "one and the same musician or group could use more than one" both within and across different styles (ibid., 178). This distinction is astutely observed, but as a model it could do more to address the social dynamics implied by these three points of departure. I would like to propose an extension to this model that takes these dynamics into account and presents individual participation as occurring within one of three modes, that I am electing to refer to as "monological", "dialectical", and "dialogical".

Monological participation involves a hierarchical pattern of authority, in which an individual, or small group of agents, directs a larger group in the *re*production of a musical work.[60] In contexts where this has been sanctioned, any who appear to be attempting to subvert this power structure (e.g. as an ensemble member who refuses to take direction, or as a musical director who does not issue effective direction) may resultantly be excluded from proceedings. *Dialectical* participation involves the democratic co-creation of materials that outlive the duration of the encounter, including original repertoire, fixed arrangements of existing repertoire, or a collectively honed approach to playing music. Dissatisfaction with the contributions of co-participants or an unwillingness to compromise creates an impasse that may only be comfortably resolved with the departure of one or more of the participants. *Dialogical* participation is egalitarian and involves taking musical materials (i.e. varying forms of repertoire, or, as in the case of contemporary improvised music, the gamut of sounds and actions available to the performer) as a point of departure for ephemeral interaction. This process may be guided by a facilitator, but also by a shared understanding (be this explicitly stated, or implicit) that participants ought to politely avoid attempts to direct or criticise one another's activity. This section will proceed to explore each mode of this tripartite model in further detail.

Monological participation is most common to larger ensembles, and is an effective way of coordinating multiple performers, especially when they are reproducing a polyphonic work or there is more than one performer assigned to each composed instrumental or vocal part. The Western

[60] The "work concept" has a complex history and has been the subject of extensive discourse across music studies (cf. Killick 2017), engagement with which is beyond the scope of this thesis. For clarity, a "work" is here interpreted as a piece of repertoire that can be recognisably (if not exactly) reproduced.

orchestral tradition presents an example of institutionalised monological participation. The conductor directs the ensemble to play from a notated score, and there is an expectation that the larger group will do as directed, and typically with a minimum of individual creativity, though some specially selected performers may be allowed opportunities for moments of greater self-direction within the given framework (e.g. solos or cadenzas). It is interesting to note that the audience of an orchestral concert are expected to participate in the performance with a similar degree of discipline, persevering to stifle any sounds that might obscure the audibility of the performer(s); showing their appreciation by clapping, following a respectful pause, at the end of each piece as specified by the programme, rather than during or between movements.

Whilst monological participation might easily be justified on practical grounds, it has become increasingly standardised on ideological ones over the past two hundred years. Written scores previously functioned as skeletons to be elaborated upon by performers and were rarely considered to possess any authority in themselves (Benson 2003). Throughout the course of the nineteenth century, it became increasingly common to revisit the notated scores of composers of previous generations, with a growing reverence for their genius resulting in "works" being considered to possess a sacred quality. By the early twentieth century, the highly respected modernist composers Stravinsky and Schoenberg were insisting that musical works should be reproduced exactly as intended by the composer. They produced highly detailed scores of their own works, leaving as little to the interpretation of the performer(s) as possible. This approach has become standardised through its endorsement by the Western art music establishment, and particularly educational institutions (cf. Kingsbury 1988; Nettl 1995), but larger conductor-led ensembles performing other styles of music (e.g. big band jazz) also tend to operate in the same mode. Heavily oriented towards the accurate (re)production of musical works for presentational performance, amateur groups of a monological nature in Britain tend to rehearse regularly; have a relatively stable membership (sometimes of a predetermined number of performers of each instrument, as determined by convention); and either audition new participants or require them to possess a minimum level of proficiency on their instrument, as can be explicitly exemplified by their having passed an appropriate grading exam (cf. Pitts, Robinson and Goh 2015).

Dialectical participation involves participants contributing to the development and presentation of a musical product and compromising when their contributions are considered incompatible with the contributions or ideas of co-participants. Unlike in instances of monological participation, participants are usually expected to make a creative contribution, at least in the development and execution of their own "part", and retain some creative control over how this is reproduced. The essentially democratic nature of dialectical participation makes it suitable for smaller ensembles who are looking to combine their individual competences and affordances.[61] A rock band might be taken as an example: an individual who has developed a degree of proficiency as a vocalist or instrumentalist, and wants to produce and perform original rock music, might collaborate with other individuals who possess apparently similar aspirations, and who can produce and perform material on another instrument appropriate to the style of the ensemble. In some cases, this division of

[61] Brinner (1995) provides excellent examples of this in Javanese Gamelan ensembles.

labour might extend further, with each participant being allocated (with varying degrees of officiality) a further function as, for example, an administrator or promoter.[62] Whilst any of the individuals involved might prefer personal authority over how the music is played by the other participants, it is generally understood that, if unpaid, it is usually the opportunity for personal expression that maintains interest in the project for those involved. Denial of this may result in a departure or disbanding, as might an inability to negotiate a mutually satisfactory resolution to "creative differences" between participants (cf. Cohen 1991).

The sociologist Richard Sennett (2012) juxtaposes *dialectical* discussion, the objective of which is the concession of one interlocutor to the argument of another, with *dialogical*, in which information is exchanged without the need for conclusion of any kind. Unlike the other modes in my model, *dialogical* participation is not oriented towards the formation of a product to be repeated on a later occasion, and often has an impromptu, exploratory character, with reflective discussion – if it occurs at all – primarily taking place *afterwards*. Dialogical participation may be overseen by a facilitator, but participants are not generally obligated to fulfil a particular role, attend weekly rehearsals, or practice outside of the context of the music-making. This mode of participation is common to participatory performance contexts in which individuals change roles (from performing, to listening, to conversing) as they please. Music-making oriented to monological or dialectical participation is regulated through participants accepting enduring responsibilities and roles, while music-making oriented to dialogical participation ostensibly leaves the majority of participants free to choose how they conduct themselves, on the condition that their behaviour does not knowingly prevent others from enjoying the same opportunity. The music events examined in this thesis are often participated in dialogically, as is commonly the case with community music activities (cf. DeNora 2013; Harrison 2020).

Much like "participation", "dialogue" is generally presented as possessing positive and progressive connotations. In his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, educationist Paolo Freire (1970) challenged hierarchical models of education in favour of a "dialogical" approach that allowed learners to take charge of their own development. The physicist Bohm (2004) believed that "dialogue" – interpreted as the sharing of different perspectives without the need for a mutually accepted conclusion – provided individuals with an opportunity to express and empathise with one another's needs, mitigating the development of disputes. His ideas have been adopted in the creation of management science texts (e.g. Isaacs, 1999). The recently developed practices of "participatory art" (Kester 2010) and "community music" (Higgins 2012) draw heavily on this approach, promoting this form of participation in the belief that it will enhance the quality of life of participants through a deepening of interpersonal understandings.

Attitudes to monological participation, as I define it, have been more mixed. Amateur participation in large classical ensembles has been championed as a means to social reform for particular demographic groups. Reactions to *El Sistema* – an originally Venezuelan, and since worldwide educational movement employing a disciplinary approach to conjure impressive performances of

[62] This summary is based on my own dialectical participation in numerous small groups over the past fifteen years.

classical music from disadvantaged youth – are indicative of the sentiments surrounding this form of musical participation more broadly, with one camp celebrating the results it can produce, both musical and socially transformative (e.g. Tunstall and Booth 2016), and the other criticising the model as disenfranchising for participants (e.g. Baker 2014). Christopher Small (1998) has attained notoriety for his disdain for the hierarchy surrounding the production and performance of classical music, and I would suggest that it is the political implications of what I define as monological participation that he is decrying in particular.

Unlike Small (as I have interpreted him), I do not believe that one mode of participation is superior (morally or effectively) to another in all cases, but would instead argue that each has become standardised in relation to particular ensemble sizes and the playing of particular forms of music, and is selected and championed in accordance with the objectives of the authority figures in a given scenario. Most musicians who engage in monological participation are clearly complicit in proceedings, accepting this as the most effective means of realising, for example, a large-scale work of Western art music. Amateurs may especially appreciate the extent of direction this dynamic offers them in comparison to events structured towards other forms of participation. If the members of a rock band are seeking self-expression through live performance of original material, dialectical participation may offer the most effective means of realising their individual and shared aspirations, allowing them to combine the abilities and labour of others with their own in the fashioning of a presentable musical product. Dialogical participation is ephemeral, without the intention for the exact same performers to present the same material on a future occasion, and thus does not require commitment from participants to either attend on a regular basis or play if they are in attendance. This makes it an effective educational form of musical participation for neophytes who may only want to play along tentatively at first, but also an effective non-committal social form for those who do not want their behaviour at the event to be governed by future performance obligations.

Owain provides contrasting examples of dialectical and dialogical approaches to the coordination of a folk session:

> [A particular folk session is] a bit of a closed shop in terms of musicians who already know each other, […] and they'll put up with other people if they have to, but they'd prefer to just do what they're doing. […] And they have kind of arranged numbers […]. I always […] personally try […] to avoid that massively, especially if anyone's trying to arrange, “oh, we should do this, and this, and a break”. “No, just play the tune in such a way that everyone can join in with the tune”, is the way that I look at it. I think it still happens at the CeilidhSoc session that, if someone hasn't played for a while and whatever, it's just the general consensus that people ask “do you want to play something?”, but without any pressure necessarily. Whereas at [the session mentioned above] it feels like, “now you play”. […] It's anti the kind of session I'm interested in. (Owain interview)

Whilst events are typically structured towards a particular form of participation, as might be endorsed through both tacit and explicit means, the mode of participation in which individuals

participate is not fixed. The structure of an event may encourage different modes of participation to be adopted at different moments. Similarly, different participants of the same event may be expected to participate differently: A ceilidh band (dialectical) are obligated to fulfil their brief of providing a steady accompaniment to guide the dancers (dialogical), who have no such responsibility. Individuals may commandeer an event such that its typical mode of participation is (at least momentarily) swapped for another. For example, a rehearsal may turn into a jam session, or a relaxed folk session may be overtaken by participants determined to impose order on the proceedings. Nicola shared an anecdote to this effect, that illustrates a clash between dialogical and monological participation:

> We were playing a tune, a more contemporary tune written by a guy that's still alive, and the B part doesn't end with the same phrase as the A part the second time round […], but no one plays it like that. […] In sessions, […] that's how tunes work, so people have subconsciously changed it so it's like that. [Another session participant] was actively saying "no no, that's the wrong ending. I know the guy. This is how it should be played. We should all play it like this." And she was like "he's still alive. This is how we should do it!" I didn't say anything whatsoever, because she can play it how she wants, but I just thought it was really interesting because people had changed it. And the [original composer] probably doesn't care, because people are playing his tunes at a session, and you know, for most people that write tunes that would be brilliant […] I've never heard anyone being that adamant that "it should be played like this".[63] (Nicola interview)

As may well have been the outcome in this example, co-participants can simultaneously participate in different modes without realising this to be the case, but upon noticing a clash participants may employ strategies (such as those identified in chapter five) to attempt to unify proceedings, or depart out of frustration. Sustained disruption to, or ambiguity of, the originally intended mode of participation can result in the decline of the event, at least under the same banner as it operated previously.

An Authenticating Orientation Model

Simon Frith conceptualises musical performance as being of "not music, the effect of what musicians do, but musical motivation", concluding that "all music makers, it seems to me, signify their decision-making by reference to the same repertoire of motives; where they differ is in the relative weight they give to the different components of this repertoire" (Frith 2022, 13).[64] Elsewhere, in relation to musical consumption rather than production, Frith argues that "musical judgments are also ethical judgments, concern the perceived purposes as well as sounds of music, and that judgment is, by its nature, an attempt to persuade other listeners of the rightness of one's own

[63] Nicola's assessment is aligned with McCann's (2001) observations of traditional music sessions in Ireland, at which repertoire functioned as a "gift", and "authorship" took "a back seat as a designation of respect and cultural capital rather than ownership" (92).

[64] Frith suggests some of the possible motivations informing musical performance, including entertainment, self-expression, musical discipline, listening, and feeling (Frith 2022, 13-14), but further streamlining is appropriate in this instance.

responses" (2004, 24). I would posit that listener evaluations and performer motivations are both shaped by judgements connected to lived experience and personal identity, such that the perception of differing priorities or motivations in others may be experienced as being at least confusing, if not an affront to personal values. My second model, inspired by popular music studies discourse, seeks to characterise possible evaluative and motivational orientations that may result in a clash between participants of public participatory events.

Musical materials and activity have been frequently subjected to categorisation, typically with reference to the malleable concept of "genre", with the three broad categories of "art", "popular", and "folk" music being consistently evoked in both popular and academic discourse. Frith (1996) conceptualises these as distinct discourses, which he correlates with the distinctions to be found in Becker's (1982) "art worlds" model – which outlines how creative works are bound to and shaped by related institutions (e.g. the concert hall; journalistic publications) that host or represent them – and Bourdieu's (2010) class-based taste groups (Frith 1996, 36). He identifies "art discourse" with a constant tension "between its firm sense of musical tradition (which has to be preserved, documented, refined, and elaborated) and its equally firm belief in the value of creativity and the importance of the new and the original" (ibid., 37). The folk world is presented as placing emphasis "less on history and the accumulation of knowledge than on 'purity' and the correct (traditional) way of doing things", and as representing an (at least ideological) resistance to commercial motives (Frith 1996, 40). Pop music discourse emphasises "the means and possibilities of turning sounds into commodities" with works being valued primarily for their commercial success, and associated events being oriented around "fun" (ibid., 41).

Having characterised these three different musical worlds, Frith notes that they are more complex and overlapping than might be initially assumed:

> What is involved here is not the creation and maintenance of three distinct, autonomous music worlds but, rather, the play of three historically evolving discourses across a single field. […] For musicians and listeners in the bourgeois, folk, and commercial music worlds alike, value judgments reflect a path being traced with some difficulty through the confusing noise of competing discourses. (Frith 1996, 42)

This confusion is reflected in varied interpretations of the essence of these three categories. For example, in his article on documented definitions of popular music from the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, Cole concluded that "the popular, in short, is a floating signifier with the potential to reference mutually opposing ideas" (Cole 2018, 410). This is also the case for more recent academic discourse, with a virtual symposium of The International Advisory Editors of the journal *Popular Music* (Frith et al. 2005) identifying some common themes for defining popular music (e.g. as mediated; commercially successful; or demonstrating particular stylistic features) without reaching consensus as to a definition. My interviewees expressed an awareness of the breadth of possible interpretations of these broad categories, seeking to distinguish the music in which they are interested from other music that might be referred to with the same or similar

terminology:

> I'm a folk singer. I'm used to playing to 40 people in the dark […]. I use "folk singer" partly because I don't know what else it would be. […] I'm not a pop singer. […] It's folk music because I am a guy on my own and I play acoustic guitar, and they're songs that I've written about feelings. […] There's a definite differentiation in my mind between a folk singer and a beards and jumpers folk singer. […] So like there's traditional folk music, […] and then I think to be a "folk singer" you can be anything really. […] It's like music written by you, played to an audience of your peers in any space that you can get. […] I would identify [Ed Sheeran] as a pop singer, even though he's essentially doing the same thing that I'm doing, […] partly because he's very popular, I suppose. (Jack interview)

> I think there's a different definition of "folk" in the gigging scene than there is in the festival scene […]. So, if you were to compare concerts, gigs and sessions at somewhere like Sidmouth, or Shrewsbury, or Towersey, or Whitby [folk festivals], you'd have an entirely different line-up of types of bands or types of individuals to if you look at the, you know, if you just look at "folk gigs in Sheffield", or "folk gigs in Manchester", or whatever. You'd find a lot more singer-songwriters, guitars, with a bit of banjo maybe, and the sort of Mumford and Sons-esque vibe. I've heard it described as kind of "nu folk", or "folk revival". (Owain interview)

The work of Jennifer Lena (2012) represents an important contribution to the discourse-oriented approach of Frith. Lena read through a large number of music genre histories, noting that historically documented styles of music have frequently (but not always) travelled through four phases. Firstly, a small and frustrated "avant-garde" develops innovative work that somehow defies existing conventions. The development of a localised audience and support from grassroots institutions signifies the genre becoming "scene-based", often being given a distinct sub-genre label by journalists (e.g. "nu folk"). Interest from the music industries, who identify the genre as a strong economic prospect, results in the genre becoming "industry-based" and more broadly disseminated. Finally, the genre enters a "traditionalist" phase, in which the works of the early avant-garde are celebrated, and further developments are disowned on the grounds of being imitative or detached from the original ideals of the genre. Lena's methodology is the analysis of popular music discourse rather than grounded ethnographic research, allowing her to present the trajectory of distinct genres as being essentially linear and coherent. Regev challenges this aspect of Lena's work:

> Genres do tend to exist, concurrently, in more than one mode. As socio-cultural entities […], genres should be seen as sub-fields that can be simultaneously avant-gardist or scenic and industrial – that is, commercial. (Regev 2013, 129)

I agree with Regev's assessment and suggest that it is more productive to identify these as distinct orientations, either towards innovation and originality ("avant-garde"), human connection ("scene-based"), commerce ("industry-based"), or preservation ("traditionalist"). This does not preclude the possibility of a single orientation being generally representative of the motivations and values of participants of a particular field of musical activity at a particular historical moment, constituting a

stage of the trajectory as identified by Lena. Rather, it introduces the possibility of individuals having different subjective orientations in their mutual engagement with the same field of activity. Frith suggests "collective music making" to have a relatively unified orientation when compared to formal presentational performance, constituting an example of "musical pleasures that are social pleasures (and therefore not subject to the same sort of aesthetic judgment)" (Frith 2004, 25). While this may be true to an extent, and especially so in particular contexts,[65] I agree with Camlin's (2014) assessment that the contributions and responses of attendees of participatory music-making events can be informed by a range of orientations, including aesthetic ones.

"Scene-based" and "industrial" orientations are closely aligned enough in the context of public participatory music-making, such that their motivations to be combined into a single orientation, which I have labelled as "popular". The tri-partite nature of this model (avant-garde, popular, and traditionalist) should invite constructive comparison with Frith's "genre worlds" (1996), whilst also intentionally evoking Moore's (2002) influential authenticity model, which posits that listeners "authenticate" performers based on their perceived authenticity of "expression", "experience", or "execution". I propose that attendees of public participatory music events draw conclusions regarding the contributions of others, "authenticating" them based on their perceived adherence to the observer's own subjective orientation. It is worth noting that orientations may be context-specific, and that individuals may appreciate and relate to multiple orientations simultaneously. The purpose of this model is to consider the potential impacts of *perceptions* of shared or mismatched motives and values between individuals in their mutual engagement with music.

There are good reasons to assume that public participatory events are attended by individuals with differing orientations. Firstly, Lena's (2012) model alludes to how sub-genres and their associated orientations can develop from being avant-garde into standardised aspects of the broader genre. This was suggested by one of my (anonymised) interviewees in their description of a fellow participant of a local jazz jam session who they perceived to be of a "popular" orientation:

> Twenty-five years ago, he thought anything that involved the word "jazz" was pretentious people looking up their own arses, and ought to be vilified for that. […] I think the context has changed such as to enable the participation of people like [him] doing what they've always done, but now the breadth of the use of the word "jazz" has changed to accommodate him. So he's stayed in the same place and the concept "jazz" has expanded to include the things that he does. (Anonymised interviewee)

Established institutions with a traditionalist orientation may actively seek to counter this absorption process, but those with a profit motive (which may constitute a necessity rather than an ideological ideal) are likely to support the inclusion of commercially oriented artists and materials alongside

[65] For example, Harrison's findings at an open mic event in Vancouver suggested it to be strongly oriented towards socialisation, with little regard for aesthetics: "I asked the musicians why they chose and valued the particular songs and genres they did. They typically answered that popular songs that everybody knew allowed the greatest number of participants easy access to performing the music, at the least by singing along, because they already knew the songs. Thus, the participants focused on their own and peers' inclusion in the music groups and music-making." (Harrison 2020, 43)

traditionalist or avant-garde ones:[66]

> Some festivals are very resolutely “folk”, and nothing but, and you’ve got to really fit “the tradition”, or else you’re out on your arse. […] A lot of small festivals […] are broader and more flexible, and kind of, well, some people say “that’s not folk!”, but they have a much broader remit, and to me a more interesting diversity of stuff. (Chris interview)

A second reason for interpreting public participatory music activity as accommodating a range of different subjective orientations is, simply, that this neatly explains the findings of my fieldwork. The above quotations demonstrate awareness of individuals whose orientation appears to differ from the observer’s. Steve provides a further example, based on his experience of attending folk sessions, that demonstrates a perceived contrast between his own, popular orientation (i.e. viewing the music as entertainment and facilitator of social interaction) and the traditionalist orientation of some of his peers:

> There was this sort of sweet spot around the very late nineties, early noughties, where you had all these sort of people who […] were very experienced folkies. Whereas people like myself […] just got straight into it and wanted to have a good time. People have different orientations about going to sessions, folk music, and things like that. I just wanted to have a good time, and meet people, and things like that. Other people wanted to preserve the music, and got upset over things like that. […] They seemed to be a bit more dogmatic about how folk music *should* be. (Steve interview)

Ollie, who often attended the CeilidhSoc session at the same time as Steve, identifies with the traditionalist orientation that Steve has observed of other participants:

> You do need to be respectful to the music. […] I can tell when a band is doing a traditional song for the sake of it being traditional. I don't do that, because I don't feel it serves the song or serves the tradition in any way. I sing a traditional song if I feel I have a connection to it. I think it's that awareness of the connection that people respect […]. People like obscurity as well. If you've sought out a different version of a song, or a different version of a tune, and not just the one that everyone does, that gets you a bit of folk points as well [for] doing your research and being aware of the history of the music that you're playing. […] I think some people don't realise that. [...] This is the traditional music of the country that I am from, and there aren't that many people playing it, and therefore I have a certain […] duty to play it well. (Ollie interview)

Frith (1996, 26) reminds us that “musical disputes are not about music "in itself" but about how to place it, what it is about the music that is to be assessed”, as “we can only hear music as valuable when we know what to listen to and how to listen for it.” The above examples demonstrate that individuals can express strong opinions regarding what music and its related activity *ought* to be for or about, and those whose behaviour fails to correspond to this orientation can be readily

[66] In jazz discourse, “Jazz at Lincoln Centre” is a prominent example of the former (e.g. Chinen 2018), and large jazz festivals (e.g. North Sea Jazz Festival, as described by McGee 2017) exemplify the latter.

interpreted as being misguided, ignorant, or rude. A common example of this that I encountered during my fieldwork was the perception that performers should make an effort to acknowledge their audience:

> Artists should rely on audience participation in some shape or form, because you do need the audience to be engaged and interested, and I think there are some musicians that you see that you warm to immediately, and there are ones that are technically good and doing all the right stuff and you just don't. It's on whether or not you get the impression that they feel that you as an audience member are essential to the performance. Lots of people are technically alright, but they're just doing their own thing, and it's irrelevant whether you're there or not, and as an audience member you're probably unlikely to really appreciate that because you don't feel valued. (Marie interview)

When a performer does not share the "popular" orientation of an audience members the latter is likely to perceive them as being aloof or pretentious. Another example of this is provided by Chris, who describes the apparent response to an unconventional performer at his open mic night:

> There's one of the guys that gets up there, and he does original compositions, but he just sort of sing talks them, and he has music that sounds like it was created on a computer on his phone. […] His stuff is really quite remarkable. It's very off the wall, and very original, and self-written, and the backing is kind of almost avant-garde. […] To some extent some of the other performers are a little bit like "why's he got a spot? He can't play guitar. He's just sing-y-talking over a phone". (Chris interview).

The described performer would presumably have offered a similar justification for their approach to that provided by Martin Christie:

> I wanted to try something other than guitar at open mics, something that would make people sit up and take note. I started to use electronic instruments to combine beats and spoken word. I set up various loops and blasts of synthesiser on a hand held device, and then read or sang written messages and hidden meanings over rhythms. […] I've always loved experimenting with music and saw no reason to stop trying different things. […] I knew there would be many, many critics and detractors along the way. (Christie 2011, 130).

Distaste for this approach may also be the result of a "traditionalist" orientation, with the use of non-standard instrumentation being potentially perceived as an irreverent break with existing convention and a missed opportunity to communicate "archived" meanings:

> Not only can a musical instrument figure prominently as a participant or referential symbol within larger social histories; it can also serve as an interactive archive of those histories. In its physical form, sound qualities, performance practice, repertoire, and in discourses between performers and non-performers, a musical instrument communicates the experiences and cultural meanings that have shaped previous generations, leaving them to resonate in the ears and hearts of present generations. (Rancier 2014, 380)

This example illustrates how the different orientations may be connected to different temporal referents. For example, performers of the avant-garde orientation seek to present possible future developments in music, typically in a manner reflecting their individual vision of a form that this might (or perhaps they feel *should*) take. Those of the popular orientation aim to encapsulate and connect with the present (both the immediate performance setting, and the popular zeitgeist) in order to be relatable to and accessible for a broad audience. Performers of the traditionalist orientation prioritise the celebration of historical figures and the revival and transmission of historical works.

Orientation	Motivation/Ideal	Possible pejoratives	Temporal referent
Avant-garde	Individuality, innovation	Pretentious, irreverent	Future
Popular	Accessibility, relatability	"Sell out", unskilled	Present
Traditionalist	Homage, revival, transmission	Boring, derivative	Past

Figure 2. Authenticating Orientation Model.

Further Research

The two models presented in this conclusion represent my efforts at developing a "more refined vocabulary for distinguishing between competing models of participation", as sought by Jenkins, Ito and boyd (2016, 181). I hope that they might be productively adopted, adapted, or combined to provide fresh insights into documented instances of musical participation, be this occurring in participatory or presentational contexts.

As for future research into public participatory music events, there would be clear value in the documentation and analysis of more contemporary events of this type, and in a range of different cultural contexts, especially beyond Western Europe and North America (sites of the majority of ethnographic studies so far). Chapter four of this thesis identified the significant impact of cultural conditions (including governmental policy, and economy, both national and local) on the existence and character of events of this type, so a study of these events in relation to different political or economic systems (e.g. state socialism) could be particularly enlightening.

It may be anticipated that public participatory music events will become increasingly normalised forms of entertainment, especially in urban contexts in which they might be interpreted as representing a necessary adaptation. For proprietors of small venues such events are typically more cost effective than the hosting of presentational alternatives, as a single facilitator can oversee the delivery of an entire evening of musical performance, encouraging participants to contribute and, in the absence of volunteers, making spontaneous contributions to the programme of entertainment themselves. Public participatory events can be highly versatile and flexible, as they possess both participatory *and* presentational dimensions, providing a form of entertainment to patrons whether they are wanting to participate as performers or to attend purely as audience members. They can also be broadly accessible, providing potential participants with a highly

conventionalised, low commitment, and low stakes opportunity to play music with and/or for others, inclusive of contributions that may be idiosyncratic, impromptu, or imperfect.

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Appendices

Events Attended

Jazz Jam Sessions –

White Lion (Tuesdays)

White Lion (Mondays)

Chesterfield (various venues)

SUJO (Gardener's Rest)

Hyde Park Book Club (Leeds)

Green Room Jazz Jam

Bath Hotel Gypsy Jazz

Folk Sessions –

CeilidhSoc (originally Shakespeare's, then The Doctor's Orders)

Shakespeare's Tuesday Session

Sheffield Sessions Festival (various venues, one weekend per year)

Fagan's (Wednesday and Friday sessions)

Eurosession (Shakespeare's)

Hillsborough Hotel

White Lion Americana Session

Open Mics/Jam sessions –

Green Room open mic

Yellow Arch open mic (original, then revamped)

Greystones open mic

Rhythm Theory (rap-oriented jam, Yellow Arch)

White Lion rock jam

Interviews

Marie (8/12/2015)

Pete (9/12/2015)

Ollie (13/7/2016)

Alé (2/8/2016)

Owain (25/8/2016)

Jane (15/9/2016)

Mike (21/10/2016)

Davey (11/11/2016)

Anya (11/11/2016)

Nicola (17/11/2016)

Jonathan (14/12/2016)

Steve (4/9/2017)

Kate (21/9/2017)

Ray (25/10/2017)

Brett-Morgan (25/10/2017)

Jack (10/6/2018)

Carole (2/1/2019)

Chris (2/1/2019)

Glenn (24/1/2019)

Stewis (6/7/2019)

Teah (7/8/2019)

Sarah (27/3/2023)

Sophia (27/3/2023)

Survey Questions

1. Timestamp
2. Respondent email address
3. I have read and understood the above information, and consent to my responses being quoted in future publications and presentations by the researcher. (Yes)
4. Name of Participant
5. Are you happy to be identified by name in any writings or presentations resulting from this research? (Yes/No, I wish to remain anonymous)
6. Where are you based (or where are the majority of participatory music events you have attended)?
7. What is your age? (21 or under/22 to 35/36 to 59/60 or over)
8. What is your occupation?
9. Where did you find the link to this questionnaire?
10. How regularly do you attend public participatory music events (e.g. open mics, jam sessions, folk sessions)? (Multiple times a week/Regularly/Occasionally/Rarely/Seasonally (i.e. only at Christmas, or festivals)/Other…)
11. Please identify as many of the specific public participatory music events as you can that you have attended in the past two years (including details of type and location)
12. Do you have preferred days of the week for attending participatory events? (I have no preference/Monday/Tuesday/Wednesday/Thursday/Friday/Saturday/Sunday/Other…)
13. What is your role at these events? (Onlooker/Participant/Facilitator/Organiser/Venue Staff/Other…)
14. What instrument(s) (including voice) do you play at these events?
15. Does the instrument you play alter your experience of these events? If so, how?
16. What repertoire do you perform at these events, and on what basis is this selected?
17. Do you prefer to play material exactly as written/learned; to arrange and hone your own rendition; or to make improvised alterations during each performance?
18. What motivates you to attend these events?
19. Is there anything you dislike about any of the public participatory events you have attended?
20. What criteria do you feel make for a good venue for these events?

21. Are sheet music or additional technologies (phones or tablets etc) used to aid the music-making at any of the events that you have attended? If so, please describe these and how they are used.
22. How is the order of performance organised at these events (determined by a facilitator; using a roster; taking it in turns around the room; as volunteered)?
23. To what extent do you consider yourself to be in control of what and how you play at these events? (scale from 1 (“not at all”) to 5 (“completely”))
24. What are the factors determining what and how you play?
25. How would you describe your relationship with the other attendees of these events?
26. To what extent has completing this questionnaire altered your perspective on what you do at participatory music events? (scale from 1 (“not at all”) to 5 (“very much”))
27. If so, in what way?
28. Are you willing to be contacted on the email address provided with any follow-up questions or enquiries pertaining to this research project? (Yes/No)

Demographic Maps

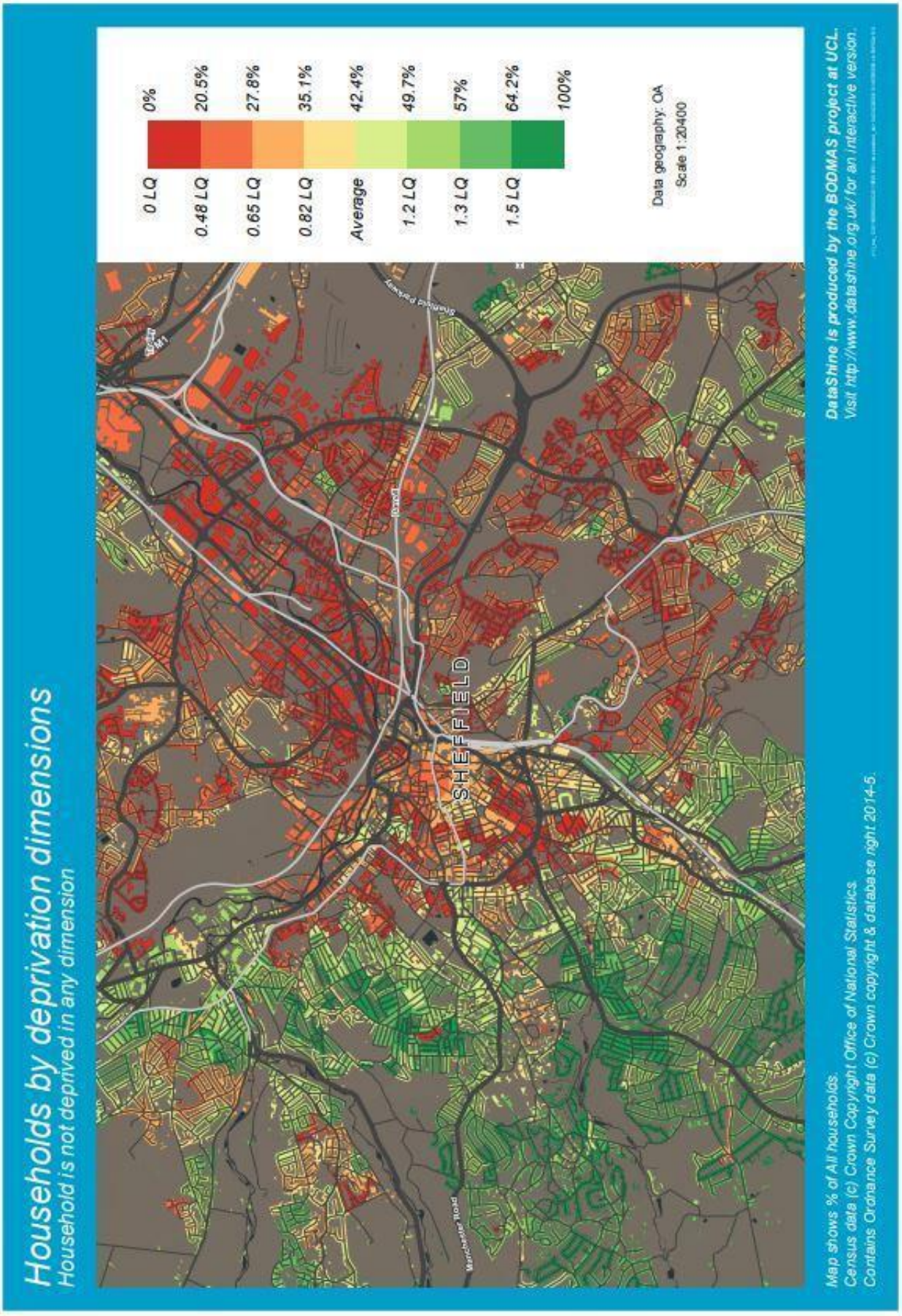

Figure 3. Datashine.org map of Households by Deprivation Dimensions, Sheffield.

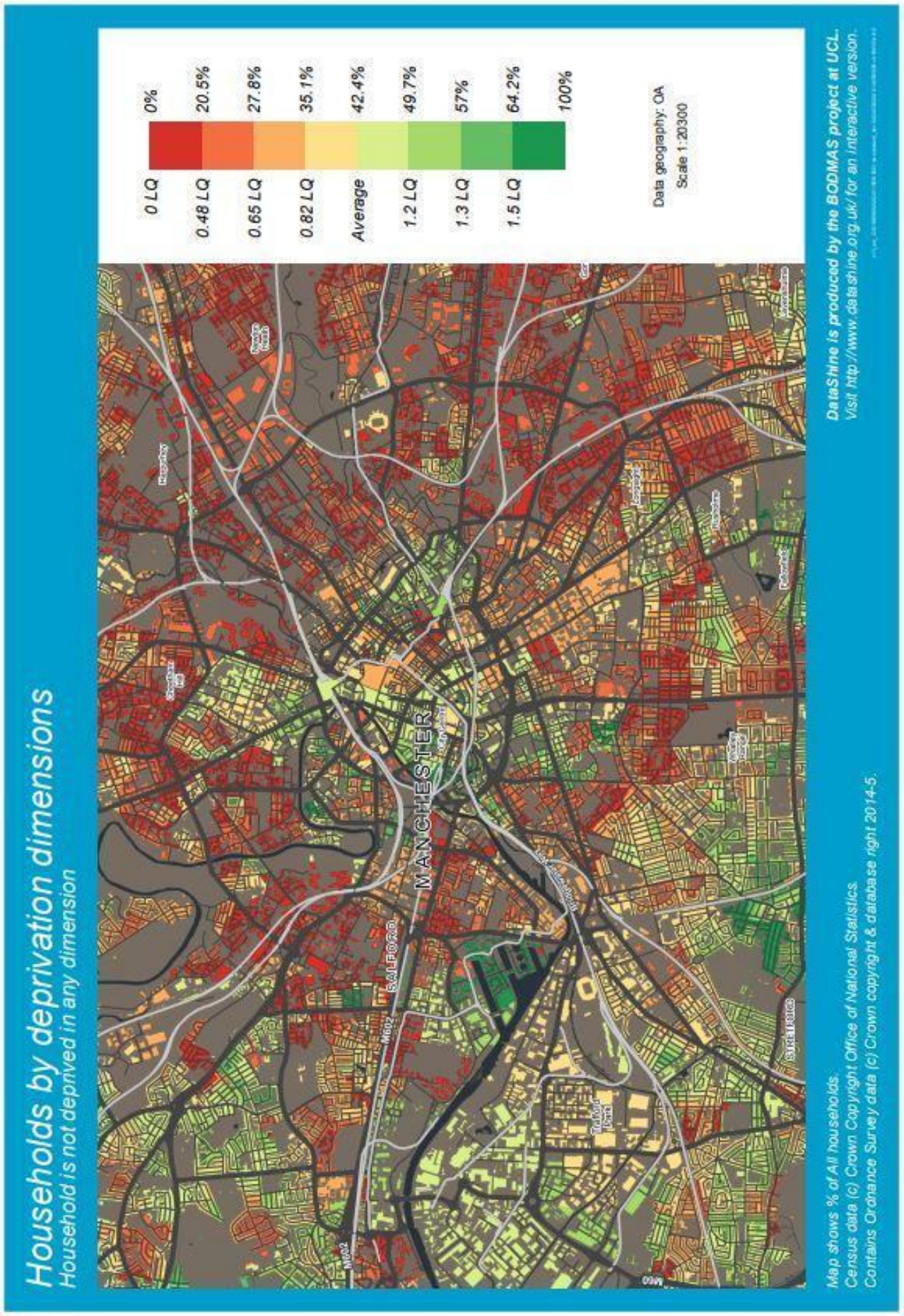

Figure 4. Datashine.org Map of Households by Deprivation Dimensions, Manchester.