

Spring 5-2013

The Cultural Omnivore in Its Natural Habitat: Music Taste at a Liberal Arts College

Anna Michelson

Macalester College, amichels@macalester.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/soci_honors



Part of the [Sociology of Culture Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Michelson, Anna, "The Cultural Omnivore in Its Natural Habitat: Music Taste at a Liberal Arts College" (2013). *Sociology Honors Projects*. Paper 41.

http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/soci_honors/41

This Honors Project is brought to you for free and open access by the Sociology Department at DigitalCommons@Macalester College. It has been accepted for inclusion in Sociology Honors Projects by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Macalester College. For more information, please contact scholarpub@macalester.edu.

The Cultural Omnivore in Its Natural Habitat:
Music Taste at a Liberal Arts College

by
Anna Michelson

Department of Sociology
Macalester College
Advisor: Professor Khaldoun Samman
May 6, 2013

Abstract

This mixed-methods study examines college students' music preferences in order to better understand the phenomenon of cultural omnivorousness, or eclectic taste. I found that the majority (76%) of students were cultural omnivores. Education is a very important influence on music taste, but it works in complex ways. Formal classes increase appreciation of new genres. Parent influences were a factor, but musicianship was a more important predictor of "highbrow" taste than parents' education level. The major way college education promotes omnivorousness is through increased diversity of social networks. There were, however, patterned dislikes that suggest both music as a symbolic boundary and omnivorousness as a status distinction. Even this overwhelmingly omnivorous population has hierarchies of taste, as some types of music and listeners are more highly regarded than others.

Introduction

What do our cultural consumption practices say about us? In many ways preferences that we assume are natural inclinations, such as taste in music or art, are socially constituted. Pierre Bourdieu (1984) famously developed this idea in his influential book *Distinction*, where he found that high status individuals distinguish themselves through the kinds of culture they consume. Cultural consumption is an important part of our self-image. Christopher Washburne and Maiken Derno (2004) write that

what on the surface may appear to be miniscule gestures of random alliances (somebody switching radio stations, fast-forwarding CD tracks, or expressing distaste for a particular song, for instance) turn out to have a vitally important impact on our own sense of identity as well as on how we chose to present ourselves to the world. (3)

Since the culture that people consume signals status and group identity, what they choose to consume (or not consume) can reveal deeply ingrained values and prejudices. Cultural preferences carry symbolic meaning and are used to demarcate symbolic boundaries between social groups, as Michele Lamont and Marcel Fournier (1992) have argued. These boundaries, however “symbolic” they may be, maintain group divisions and reinforce the inequalities inherent in these group divisions. Bourdieu (1984) maintained that knowledge of “legitimate” culture constitutes a type of capital (cultural capital) which can be turned into economic or social capital, or more concrete resources. For instance, familiarity with highly esteemed culture can help forge connections with high status groups, connections that could lead to a prestigious job. Thus something as abstract as symbolic boundaries and taste preferences can have very tangible

consequences. As long as the social connections to our cultural consumption preferences remain obscure, a powerful dimension of inequality goes unchallenged.

In the sociological study of culture much attention has been given to how demographic variables such as occupation, sex, or race influence one's propensity to be a consumer of "highbrow," "middlebrow," or "lowbrow" culture. One fascinating development in the study of culture is the figure of the "omnivore," or an eclectic consumer who enjoys diverse forms of culture across these traditional "brow" boundaries. Early studies defined omnivores as people with highbrow taste who also engaged with some forms of middlebrow or lowbrow culture (Peterson and Simkus 1992; Peterson and Kern 1996). These scholars positioned the omnivore in opposition to Bourdieu's exclusive snob and argued that omnivores were replacing snobs among upper class consumers. In recent years researchers realized that people who do not have a taste for high culture but still like a wide variety of culture could also be considered omnivores. Omnivore may more generally refer to someone with eclectic taste, taste which may or may not include traditionally highbrow genres.

Although omnivorousness may seem to signal the end of cultural stratification, the omnivorous trend does not necessarily imply equality. As Mike Savage and Modesto Gayo (2011) assert, "rather than the omnivore straddling different cultural domains as some kind of hybrid figure, it can best be seen as positioned squarely within dominant, expert positions within cultural hierarchies" (338). There are specific patterns among omnivorous consumers that point to social stratification. The people most likely to be

omnivores are upper or middle class, young, highly educated, and open to cultural diversity (Bryson 1996; van Eijck 2001; Ollivier 2008; Marsh 2012). These factors suggest that if there is such a thing as the “natural habitat” of the cultural omnivore, it would be a college campus. College students are a fascinating study population for investigating cultural omnivorousness. Not only does it allow us to study a population where one would reasonably expect widespread omnivorousness, it allows us to better understand the relationship between cultural preferences and education.

This study uses music as an indicator of cultural preferences. Music is a widely accepted marker of taste, and music categories are more stable than other cultural forms like television or films (Peterson 2005). With this in mind, I seek to further understand: a) Is omnivorous musical taste widespread among college students? b) What are the prevailing perceptions or stereotypes about certain musical genres? c) What is the relationship between musical preferences (most importantly eclectic preferences, or omnivorousness) and other factors, including education, amateur musicianship, and family background? and d) Does omnivorousness function as a form of distinction? Unlike much of the previous research on the subject, my primary concern is not whether fans of “highbrow” music also like “lowbrow” genres. Nor am I mainly concerned with whether or not upper-class individuals are “omnivores” or “snobs.” Rather, I am more interested in why people are omnivores, that is to say, understanding *which factors influence omnivorousness* and *why omnivorous taste is desirable*. If we want to peel back the layers of complexity surrounding social interaction, differentiation, and

inequality, we can begin by trying to understand our own prejudices and preferences, even those as seemingly innocuous as music.

This study attempts to understand these prejudices and preferences through a social survey and interviews with college students. I find that the majority of students are omnivores, and that education plays an important role in shaping their music preferences. Formal music education exposes students to new genres and gives them tools to understand and appreciate it. More influential, however, especially at the college level, are the new and diverse groups of people students are exposed to. Knowledge of music genres is primarily shared through these new social contacts, and as a result students listen to more genres. Even those who do not expand the variety of music they listen to become more tolerant towards the kinds they don't listen to. Educational experiences and social networks before college are also important influences on omnivorousness. Parent and family influences are important factors. Musicianship was also a large influence, as playing an instrument usually gave students a new appreciation for the kinds of music they were playing. Certain genres are disliked by a large number of students, often based on the ideology, authenticity, or skill associated with the genre. Finally, I find that even an omnivorous population has status hierarchies of both genres and listeners.

I begin my investigation of cultural omnivorousness by summarizing the scholarly debate on the issue. Researchers have identified omnivorous trends in cultural consumption in the United States and abroad, including the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Taiwan. Although people do seem to be consuming a wider variety of

genres there are still patterns that point to social stratification. Some scholars propose moving beyond the omnivore label to a term that better describes its dominant position. In the section on research design I explain why I chose to continue using the omnivore label and I describe the methods chosen for this study. Mixed methods was the best way to overcome the limitations of both quantitative and qualitative studies, and accordingly I gathered data using both a social survey and interviews. The research findings section answers the main research questions. I find that the majority of students at Holden College are omnivores, and I explore demographic factors and students' own explanations of their preferences. I conclude by discussing the implications of these findings and suggest that future research go even further in exploring how omnivorosity functions as a distinction.

Literature Review

Discovering Cultural Omnivores

Richard Peterson and Albert Simkus (1992) coined the term “cultural omnivore” in their work linking musical taste to occupation in America. Using social survey data from 1982, they found that many people in high-status occupations liked an unexpectedly wide variety of genres, including those traditionally associated with lowbrow taste. In contrast, people in low-status jobs tended to have narrower taste. This trend was re-confirmed when the hypothesis was tested again with 1992 data (Peterson and Kern 1996). The omnivorous trend seemed to challenge Bourdieu's (1984) thesis that the elite distance themselves from the cultural preferences of the lower class. Peterson and Kern (1996) suggest several reasons for this shift. First of all, more genres have simply become

more accessible to more people. Secondly, they suggest that openness to different kinds of music is “part of the historical trend toward greater tolerance of those holding different values” (905). Thirdly, they point to a change in the overall cultural and artistic aesthetic from elite to inclusive. It makes sense, the authors argue, that the “Woodstock generation” would have broader cultural taste than their parents, and that they carried these tastes with them into adulthood. Finally, Peterson and Kern (1996) connect omnivorousness to status-group politics, noting that one way dominant groups work to subordinate lower status groups is to “gentrify elements of popular culture and incorporate them into the dominant status-group culture” (906).

Omnivorousness and Social Stratification

Although they argue that omnivores are replacing elitist snobs, Peterson and associates (1992, 1996, 2005) acknowledge that Bourdieu’s distinction theory is still relevant because the middle and upper classes are *more likely than the lower class* to be cultural omnivores, suggesting that omnivorousness itself may be a new status-marker. Several scholars have convincingly argued that omnivorousness is not the end of class-based distinction or “snobbishness” but merely a new form of it. As Michele Ollivier (2008) phrases it, omnivorous taste “builds upon, rather than displaces, the older categories of high and mass culture in which it remains thoroughly embedded” (122).

Indeed, Bethany Bryson (1996) has shown that there are patterned limits to omnivorous taste. Using General Social Survey data on musical dislikes in the United States, she found that the genres omnivores did *not* like (gospel, country, rap, and heavy

metal) were those genres *most liked* by the *least educated*. Bryson (1996) also showed that education, rather than occupation, was the biggest predictor of omnivorousness and that education significantly decreased the likelihood of exclusive, or narrow, taste. She argues that music genres are recognizable symbols for most Americans, and when otherwise tolerant individuals reject certain genres it is a way of demarcating symbolic boundaries (Bryson 1996: 888). She expands this idea to argue that omnivorousness may be a form of cultural capital, and proposes the term *multicultural capital* (Bryson 1996). This does not necessarily refer to the multi-racial context of multiculturalism, nor is it intended as an additional form of capital (social, economic, cultural). Rather, Bryson (1996) proposes it as a particular *type* of cultural capital which refers to the ability to effectively engage in multiple cultural settings by drawing upon different cultural frameworks.

Although William G. Roy and Timothy J. Dowd (2010) only briefly mention the omnivore debate, their descriptions of “bounding” and “bridging” are helpful in understanding how distinctions between musical genres function in relation to social groups. They define bounding is the act of drawing lines around genres or groups, and bridging is the opposite. Both producers and consumers take part in these processes. Producers bound and bridge in choosing what music to produce, who to market it to, and how to classify it. Listeners take part in the process by choosing what to consume and how they too categorize genres. There are important social consequences of bounding and bridging: “because the groups that are bounded and bridged by music are rarely

socially equal, music plays an important role in sustaining and reconfiguring stratification” (Roy and Dowd 2010:197).

Music Taste and Social Networks

Noah Mark (1998) argues that music preferences are based on social network ties. Distinct music preference groups form because people tend to associate with people similar to themselves. The more diverse one’s social network, the more types of music they are likely to be exposed to and prefer. Mark (1998) also argues that liking a kind of music requires time and energy, both to discover the music and maintain a preference for it. Therefore, the more a person likes one kind of music the less time they have to devote to other kinds. This means that when someone likes many different types of music, the preferences are likely to be weak.

Comparative Studies of Omnivorousness

Omnivorous musical taste, first identified in the United States, has been the subject of numerous comparative studies. Koen van Eijck (2001) analyzed a large sample of Dutch adults and, similarly to Peterson and his collaborators, found that high status individuals were more likely to be omnivores, although van Eijck found the increased likelihood to be minimal (van Eijck 2001). The most recent comparative study was conducted by Robert M. Marsh (2012), who looked at social structure and omnivorousness in Taiwan. Taiwanese trends were similar to those found in other countries. Omnivores exist, although many people still retain strong feelings (positive and negative) for certain types of music. Young, educated, and middle or upper class

individuals are the most likely to be omnivores. Both Marsh and van Eijck suggest further exploration of the influence of family background and amateur musicianship.

From 2003-2006 a team of researchers in the United Kingdom carried out an extensive *Cultural Capital and Social Exclusion* project which has added a wealth of information to the omnivore discussion. The project included both wide-scale surveys and follow-up interviews. In one analysis of the project, Mike Savage (2006) found that although some respondents did indicate omnivorous taste, overall music in the UK remained “polarized and divided” (160). There were “clear musical taste communities,” although the taste communities did not easily fit with “familiar ideas about ‘high’ and ‘popular’ music” (Savage 2006: 160).

Also working with the *Cultural Capital and Social Exclusion* data, Alan Warde, David Wright, and Modesto Gayo-Cal (2007) contest the idea that there is such a creature as *the* omnivore, but suggest that several variations exist. One of these can be described as “lowbrow omnivores,” people who like a variety of music but not necessarily the “highbrow” genres. There was a group of people who enjoyed a wide variety of culture, but were careful to choose “‘quality’ pieces of popular culture,” suggesting a taste hierarchy within the “lowbrow” realm of pop culture (Warde et al 2007: 153-154).

Beyond the Omnivore?

In recent years some prominent voices in the debate have tried to move past the “omnivore” label to a term that better reflects the hierarchies of musical knowledge.

Peterson (2005), who pioneered the omnivore concept, acknowledges that omnivorousness will eventually be replaced by a new distinction, just as the omnivore replaced the snob. Savage and Gayo (2011) propose the term “expert” instead of “omnivore” because it better articulates “the dominant and subordinate positions related to different levels of expertise and knowledge” (338). Furthermore, they call for “field analytical position” which is “more attentive to the nature of engagement in the musical field” and “understanding the patterning of practices and tastes, and in particular a means of delineating the tensions and inequalities that are embedded in them” (Savage and Gayo 2011: 352).

A more finely-tuned analysis is needed, especially regarding the inequalities embedded in omnivorousness. However, I maintain that the terms omnivore and expert do not have to be mutually exclusive, and that the omnivore label is still useful as long as one considers the issues of inequality. In my understanding, “omnivore” does not necessarily imply liking everything, but merely liking a wide variety. By definition then, omnivorousness implies knowledge of, and a level of expertise in, a wide range of genres. Because omnivorousness is thus fundamentally based on knowledge and expertise, omnivores occupy a dominant position in the musical field. Omnivorousness is closely tied to education and knowledge. Previous studies (Bryson 1996; van Eijck 2001; Marsh 2012) have shown that education is an important predictor of omnivorousness, and Ollivier (2008) has connected openness to cultural diversity with omnivorous cultural consumption. For the most part, college students fit this demographic description of the omnivore to a tee, suggesting the college campus as the omnivores’ “natural habitat.”

Studying young people at an educational institution can provide insight into how and why education influences cultural preferences, and how those cultural preferences function in everyday life.

Research Design

This study examines the music preferences of students at Holden College, a small Midwestern liberal arts college. Working roughly within the “field analytical” framework suggested by Savage and Gayo (2011), I pay particular attention to the nuanced ways students actually listen to music and how they differentiate between subgenres in order to better understand the way omnivorousness functions. A mixed method, employing both a survey and interviews, was the best way to get a broad yet detailed picture of musical tastes at the college.

A social survey was sent to a random sample of 400 Holden College students. The sample included students aged 18-25, which ensured that all participants were of age and able to give their own informed consent to participate, and it kept the focus on the typical student at this college, who is a young person under the age of 25. The survey received 168 responses, and nine of the survey respondents also participated in interviews. The surveys asked about which genres students listen to, which genres they dislike, and demographic information such as class year, parents’ education level, and participation in music classes or groups. The interviews expanded on these variables and allowed students to contextualize their preferences in their own words.

Different scholars have operationalized genres, preferences, and omnivorousness in different ways. Savage (2006) warns that basing questions on genres will produce

responses based on stereotypical perceptions of that genre, whereas questions on specific musical works can reveal a clearer picture of actual preferences. However, since it is precisely those stereotypes I am interested in, the study is structured around genres rather than specific works. The survey listed 28 music genres, and respondents were asked to select all those they listened to and all they disliked.

Survey results were transferred into Excel and genres were coded into the six categories (see Appendix A). Omnivorousness was operationalized as liking at least one genre from four of the six possible clusters. This was based on the question “Which genres do you listen to? Select all that apply.” Thus, it measures people expressing a preference for many of types of music and does not measure the intensity of the preference nor how frequently they actually listen to it. This is consistent with most previous operationalizations of omnivorousness, such as those of Peterson (2005), who strictly defined omnivorousness as the number of tastes selected, which “has nothing to do with” the frequency of engagement (264). Peterson (2005) notes that number and frequency may be, but are not necessarily, correlated, and that “little is yet known about the relationship” (264).

In the analytical stage genres were grouped into six different clusters based on similar style, content, or other musical and cultural similarities (see Appendix A). This categorization was roughly guided by music industry standards. For example, rock, alternative/indie rock, oldies, heavy metal, and punk, all somewhat related to the broad category “rock,” are all grouped together. Cultural omnivorousness implies liking many

varieties of music. Therefore, individuals who like many genres may not be labeled omnivores if those genres are quite similar. It makes sense that someone who likes rock, alternative rock, punk, and classic rock would not be considered to have preferences as diverse as someone who likes rock, alternative country, jazz, and classical music, even though both indicated liking the same number of genres. Thus, the categories are useful to illustrate the breadth, or variety, of musical genres preferred. I recognize that not all genre categories listed are perfectly comparable. For example, rock is much broader category than alternative country. There may also be more cultural distance between some groups than others. However, the genres represent meaningful categories to the study population, and the cluster system allows us to measure the variety of genres liked.

Most investigations into cultural omnivorousness are quantitative studies based on large scale social survey data, although several qualitative studies have been conducted (Ollivier 2008; Savage 2006; Warde et al 2007; Savage and Gayo 2011). Like Savage and Gayo (2011), I believe qualitative methods are necessary to go beyond a simple “like” or “dislike” assessment and find out the nuances of musical taste. Interviews included questions about family background, educational experiences, music classes and performance groups, and how the students defined genre categories. Students were asked about the music taste of Holden College in general, whether they thought there were many “music snobs,” and to describe in detail their musical likes and dislikes. Interviews began with two exercises. One replicated the three survey questions about musical likes and dislikes, which allowed me to identify interview participants as omnivores or not omnivores in accordance with the same operationalization used on the survey. The other

exercise asked participants to organize the genres into logical groups, which helped justify the categories used to operationalize omnivorousness.

Findings

In keeping with expectations that young, educated people are likely to be omnivores, the majority of students at Holden College (76%) are cultural omnivores. Education is an important influence, though it works in complex ways. “Education” is made up of several interrelated components. Formal music classes (such as music theory, music appreciation, world music, etc.), musicianship, diverse social networks are all aspects of the educational experience that influence omnivorous musical taste. Data suggests that exposure to an educational environment that values and promotes tolerance increases chances of both listening to and tolerating more genres. Upperclassmen are more likely to be omnivores than underclassmen, and upperclassmen also tend to *dislike* fewer genres. Looking at the effect of *college* education specifically is difficult, though, because many students had exposure to some or all of these factors before college.

Furthermore, as others (Ollivier 2008; Savage and Gayo 2011) have suggested, omnivorousness does not mean cultural equality. Consistent with Bryson’s (1996) findings, there are patterned limits to omnivorous taste. Hierarchies of taste can be found even on an omnivorous campus. Most students (all but one out of 168 survey respondents) have kinds of music that they not only do not listen to, they *dislike*. Music is valued according to the ideology, authenticity and musical skill associated with the genre,

and music constructs symbolic boundaries along these lines. People also listen to different music in different ways, and listening patterns reveal additional hierarchies of musical taste.

Education and Music Preferences

Survey data reveals that across many (though not all) genres, upperclassmen are less likely to *dislike* a genre than underclassmen (see Appendix B, Table B.5). There is also a general trend that the higher one's class year, the more likely one is to be an omnivore (see Appendix B, Table B.3). Although there is a decrease from juniors to seniors, the senior percentage is still higher than the freshman percentage. It appears that time spent at college increases tolerance, reduces dislikes, and increases the likelihood of omnivorousness. Now the question is— why?

Formal academic classes, either in music history, appreciation, or theory, enhance understanding of genres and their roots, and understanding is directly related to appreciation. Survey data shows that people who took music classes are more likely to be omnivores than those who didn't (see Appendix B, Table B.1). People who took music theory or world music were especially likely to be omnivores. James, a senior, said that his college music classes “have given me a musical appreciation for classical music which I didn't previously listen to,” and he now counts composers he previously disliked among his favorites. Similarly, Nick's college music classes exposed him to avant-garde classical music and free jazz, which has “made a big impression on me and the way I think about music and art in general.”

Although college education has been shown to be an important predictor of omnivorousness, gauging the influence of college education specifically is complicated by the fact that many formative music experiences occur before college, including access to academic music classes. Melanie took a high school class about the history of pop music, which she says made her more appreciative of country and rap. For Matt, a high school class about the history of hip-hop and its jazz influences gave him an appreciation for both genres. He now listens to jazz, which he never listened to before. These examples strengthen arguments about how education leads to omnivorousness in general, but the prevalence and strength of these pre-college experiences complicates how *college* education specifically influences cultural preferences.

Peer Networks. It seems that the major way college encourages omnivorousness is by exposing students to new, wider social networks than the ones they grew up with, and thus to people with more diverse music tastes. When asked if their music tastes had changed since coming to college, half of interview respondents said “yes” and half said “no.” Of the “no” responses, many reported no major changes in the variety of music they listen to, but that they had expanded depth in a certain artist or become more tolerant towards other genres. Matt, a junior, said that “my interaction with music outside of my preferences have changed, but not my preferences...Like the acceptance of other styles of music, how people interact and relate to them...I am more understanding and accepting of that than I was before I came here, but the things I like the most are still the things I like the most.” Matt directly attributes this to his interactions with people, saying

I think I understood my own biases when I came to interact with more people that had those types of biases about my favorite genre of music, and it was kind of like, ‘Whoa, am I doing that to other people, in terms of their country music?’ And I took a live and let live mentality about music. I do not see it [the music’s appeal], but I see that you see it and I accept that.

Stephanie, a senior, attributes her new appreciation for a previously disliked genre to friends made in college. “I never listened to heavy metal before I came to college, ever,” she said. “I thought it was all angry, all awful. But my good friends since freshman year, they both really like heavy metal, so I’ve listened to it more, just when we’re hanging out, and its grown on me.” Sometimes new music suggestions can come from unlikely places. Evan became a fan of Broadway music after being introduced to it at a meeting of a heavy metal fan club. “There’s an irony in that,” he acknowledges. Melanie also talked about getting new music from friends. “We introduce each other to new things, like ‘Oh, you like them, let’s listen to them and see if I like it too.’ That’s how you get more musical aspects.”

Parents, Education, and Omnivores. The music one’s parents listen to is the first music one is exposed to, and many interviewees still had strong preferences for the music they grew up listening to. In many cases listening to oldies or classic rock with their parents was a first introduction to popular music. Many students still listen to this music and acknowledge that it shapes their appreciation of contemporary music. Cassie still listens to folk and Christian music, which is all that she listened to until third grade. “I didn’t listen to anything other than what my parents were listening to, which was folk and Christian music...That is something I still listen to, it stuck around.” Christian

music is one of the genres many Holden students dislike. Cassie's case suggests that the people who transgress these genre norms probably developed the preference early in life, and the identification is strong enough that they keep listening to it in college, even when it is unpopular with other students. The next issue to explore, then, is whether parental influences stronger than education when it comes to music taste.

One may wonder if there is any correlation between parents' education level and their students' music preferences. If we look at all levels of parents' education (from high school through an advanced degree), there is an ambiguous correlation between omnivorousness and parents' education (Appendix B, Table B.2). Over 90% of Holden College parents have an undergraduate degree or higher, so the values for less than a college degree are based on a very small number of cases. If we look only at the students whose parents had a undergraduate degree or higher, we see a negative trend between education and omnivorousness. Students with at least one parent with an undergraduate degree are more likely to be omnivores than students whose parents have a Master's degree, PhD, or professional degree, though students whose parents' highest level of education is a Master's degree are still more likely to be omnivores than students whose parents have a PhD or professional degree. This is contrary to Peterson (1992, 1996, 2005) and more consistent with Bourdieu's distinction thesis that high status individuals are musical "snobs." This would seem to suggest that cultural capital in the form of elite, highbrow genres is transmitted from parent to child. We would then logically assume that students who currently listen to classical music developed that preference in childhood. This was not the case, however. The majority of interviewees who like classical music

only started listening to it after they joined school bands or orchestras, suggesting that music classes and musicianship may be more important factors than parental influences.

Musicianship. Musicianship aids understanding of a genre, and understanding increases appreciation. Let us look more closely at James, who is the closest thing we have to a classical music “snob.” He listens to both classic rock and classical music but not much else. His parents are highly educated, with one parent holding an MD and the other a PhD. One might assume that his taste for classical music comes from his high status parents. This is not the case, however. Neither of his parents likes classical music and growing up he listened almost exclusively to classic rock. This is consistent with Bourdieu’s theory that high status elites only listen to a few select genres, but it complicates that theory in practice because those select genres are not “highbrow.” James’s grandparents did take him to a classical music concert as a child, but it wasn’t until he joined orchestra (in late elementary school) that he started really listening to and appreciating classical music.

Nick, Stephanie, and Erin all had similar experiences about being exposed to classical to music as a child but not really listening to it until they started playing it. For both James and Erin, the music they play in their ensembles directly influences the music they buy. “The classical music I buy is the stuff I play in orchestra or in ensemble, because they’re pieces that I get to know so I feel more of a connection to them,” Erin said. Students talked about this most often in terms of classical music, but it applied to other genres as well. In high school James took a jazz class that was part history, part

performance. He had never really been into jazz before, but “learning about the history and the theory of composing jazz music and improvising got me a lot more interested. I was able to appreciate the art of it, having done it myself, because it’s not as easy as it looks.”

Dislikes and the Limits of Tolerance

The five most disliked genres at Holden College were heavy metal, Christian/gospel, Top 40/popular country, and classic country. This is mostly consistent with Bryson (1996), who found that the most disliked genres in the population overall were heavy metal, gospel, country, and rap. Rap was popular among Holden students, which is unsurprising since rap is generally preferred by younger people. Only 16% of students disliked rap, compared to the 40% or more who disliked each of the five genres listed above. A majority of respondents (56% and 50.9% respectively) dislike heavy metal and Christian/gospel music. Why are certain genres disliked in an omnivorous population that appreciates, or at least tolerates, almost everything else?

The number one reason students gave for disliking a genre was “sound,” that they simply did not like the sound of the music. The most prevalent example was the “twang” of country music, which was mentioned by almost all interviewees. Although students presented not liking the sound of a music as a neutral, “that’s just the way it is” explanation, Frith (2004) suggests that it is not that simple. “Technical, ‘objective,’ judgments,” he writes, “(this player is lagging behind the beat, has erratic pitch, played the wrong note) are often confused with ideological, subjective ones” (Frith 2004: 27).

Thus the real question is not the sound itself but the “emotional response to the sound” (Frith 2004: 30). What exactly does “twang” *mean* to listeners?

Ideology. Students often associate country music, one of the most disliked genres overall, with conservative politics. The majority of Holden students (79.1%) identify as liberal or very liberal, 17.2% as moderate and just 3.2% as conservative. No survey respondents identified as very conservative. It is interesting that conservatives had higher rates of omnivorousness (83% as opposed to the average 76%) than other political identifications (see Appendix B, Table B.4). Perhaps their status as the political minority at the college has something to do with their openness in musical taste. The number of conservative responses was too small to make a meaningful generalization, however, though with a larger or more balanced study population this relationship between conservatism, omnivorousness, and political minority is worth exploring.

Some participants explicitly framed preferences in ideological terms, drawing clear symbolic boundaries based on perceived political values. Evan, who liked some kinds of country, acknowledged that the genre was unpopular at Holden and that country was “a dirty word” there. James explained that he disliked country music in part because “I consider myself pretty liberal and I think of country music as being conservative.” Similarly, Nick, a southern liberal, stopped listening to Lynyrd Skynyrd after he “got some more historical context and really listened to their lyrics” and found them offensive. Melanie also had reservations about country based on associated values: “I have mixed feelings about country. I love some Taylor Swift...but I have mixed feelings about some

of the messages in country, because it does have a lot of misogynistic messages, like ‘I got my truck and my woman and my beer.’”

Cassie is an interesting case. She used to hate country music until she spent a week with her grandparents and “did nothing but watch CMT (Country Music Television).” She now considers herself a big country fan. However, Cassie differentiates between subgenres of country. She said

there’s still some country artists that I find disgusting. Like Toby Keith. Like the whole super patriotic, ‘we’ll kick your ass ‘cause we’re America,’ I don’t want to hear it. At all. And that’s what half his songs are. So I definitely shy away from the über-patriotic, really masculine country. But otherwise, I like a song that’s about being a farmer or drinking beer.

Growing up in an urban area, she used to have the impression that country is “about a bunch of rednecks...it’s looked down upon.” Once she was actually exposed to it by relatives, however, she found she liked a lot of country music. This supports the social network theory, and the idea that in many cases just being exposed to or becoming more familiar with a genre will increase tolerance or liking of that genre.

As this case illustrates, nuances between subgenres or types within a genre can be revealing. Cassie identifies with the “country” genre overall, though the strong ideological sentiment expressed above clearly expresses symbolic boundaries. The survey separated country into three subgenres: Pop/Top 40 Country, Classic Country, and Alternative Country. Interestingly, respondents were twice as likely to dislike Pop/Top 40 Country as Alternative Country (47.2% versus 23.9%). When asked about it in interviews, however, even students who said they listened to alternative country had

difficulty describing it or naming any associated artists. It appears that much of the differentiation between those two sub-genres has to do with the “pop” and “alternative” labels and the perceived level of authenticity and skill involved in music production.

Authenticity and Skill. Students at Holden tend to seek out artists they view as talented or skilled musicians. Most of the time, they want *musicians*, not *performers*. An artists’ perceived authenticity is tied not only to musical skill but to their larger image and whether their music seems to be a genuine artistic expression. Whether a genre is liked or disliked is often linked to perceptions about the talent or skill involved in the music production. For example, many people who did not like electronic music explained that while it takes creativity to make electronic music, it does not take the same skill to as it does to make instrumental music. As one interviewee put it, “Why should you be famous for something I could do myself?” Another interviewee called auto-tune, or electronic pitch adjustment, “the death of music, because it takes talent out of the picture and anyone can become a musician without having much previous experience.”

According to Frith (2004), whenever people judge and place value on music, the explanation for their judgment is sociological, not musical (20). “What’s going on, in other words, is a displaced judgment: ‘bad music’ describes a bad system of production (capitalism) or bad behavior (sex and violence)” (Frith 2004: 20). Many students expressed concern about the corporate music industry suppressing creativity. “It bothers me that a lot of artists don’t actually write their own music...so much of the talent seems to be lacking in the actual artistry of all this, and that bothers me,” one interviewee said.

Melanie admitted that sometimes she enjoyed “trashy pop music,” but “if I’m looking for music that I find genuine, I would seek out a different sector of music.”

Students dislike music that is seen as overly manipulated or commodified. Cassie laments that “music has turned into this big thing to be sold, and it becomes less about the music and more about selling things.” Part of the reason people dislike country is because it is perceived as over-produced and commodified. Stephanie grew up in a rural area where country was popular, although she does not like it. “When I think of country I think of Shania Twain, Taylor Swift, that guy with the big hat who plays guitar...I feel like they’re taking a very rich musical and cultural tradition, like from Appalachia and out West, and watering it down to the point that it’s not even recognizable.” However, she was careful to distinguish between mainstream country and related genres like bluegrass. Though Stephanie did not listen to bluegrass frequently she was more tolerant of it because she found it more original than country, less commodified and with better musicians. It is, in other words, more authentic music, *better* music.

Musical Hierarchies

Prestigious Genres. Even at a college where the majority of students of omnivores, some genres are clearly ranked above others. Jazz and classical music are most frequently invoked as the most prestigious. It is interesting that jazz is included in this category because it had formerly been considered lowbrow, but it seems to have been appropriated into the highbrow canon. Nick said that “listening to jazz is to a degree a

status symbol. I feel there are people who don't really like jazz but listen to it anyway because they think it will make them look smart...like wealthier people who go out and have a cultured evening listening to jazz...they're not necessarily there because they enjoy it but they want to be seen." He admitted that "for a while in high school I really wanted to like jazz so I could be one of those high class, refined people, but I also didn't really have the patience for it." It wasn't until college music classes helped him understand it better that Nick really developed a taste for jazz. Erin explained that in high school "I decided I had to be really mature and grown-up and only listen to classical music." Although now she has "no shame" about listening to Top 40, her high school experience still speaks to the idea that classical music is perceived as the most desirable and most elite genre. Nick noticed this phenomenon among his classmates in high school: "When listing their favorite artists people would throw in Beethoven or Mozart. It's always like, do you actually listen to classical music? Because if you do that's cool, but don't just say you're into something because that's what everybody thinks is interesting, or makes you intellectual."

In some cases education, or rather lack of it, can be a barrier to these prestigious genres. Cassie, one of the most omnivorous interviewees, expressed anxiety about classical music. It's something she never really listened to before, and although she doesn't feel compelled to listen to it now, she said

I guess I feel like I missed the boat. I have some friends who are really into classical, and I feel like I don't have background knowledge, like I'd be ten steps behind if I jumped on board...I don't have the musical theory knowledge to talk about it, I suppose [and]I don't know much about different composers. I don't feel I have the language to talk about it.

Cassie said that although knowledge isn't *necessary* to listen to classical music, it would be necessary if she wanted to talk about it with her friends or other fans. Thus in some cases education and musical knowledge functions as a boundary, or gate-keeper, between genres.

Snobs and Omnivores. When asked about “musical snobs,” no one invoked the image of an elitist who only listens to classical music and shuns everything else. Instead, snobs were described as people who brag about listening to obscure artists. Cassie thinks that there are “definitely” people who say, “I knew them [band or singer] before you did,” or “I knew them before they were big.” She admits that she sometimes does this, but explains that it is not about showing off exclusive knowledge so much as sharing a new band she’s excited about. She was proud of her diverse tastes, saying, “I think that varied music tastes are something I really try to keep up. It’s something I really like.”

Though this type of new snob was identified in nearly all interviews, most people did not think that many people at Holden were snobs. Most interviewees thought Holden College was very omnivorous, and they described Holden’s collective music taste as “a weird assortment of music” or “an eclectic variety.” It is perhaps best summarized by Matt:

It’s a very, very strange and interesting mix. There’s so many people I know that really like house music and punk rock and hip-hop all at once, and I’ve never experienced that type of mix before...I think it’s a hallmark of Holden students, to be someone who listens to Deerhoof [an experimental rock group] and Notorious B.I.G. back to back...It’s very different tastes in music combined into one person.

The interviews provided fascinating insight into these individuals who represent “very different tastes in music combined into one person.” Almost all interviewees had some set of preferences that aren’t usually thought of together. Evan was passionate about heavy metal and Broadway music. Melanie loved hip-hop and country. James liked classic rock and classical music. These are just a few examples, but it is clear is that students at Holden College have eclectic taste, and this is perceived as a trait of the school.

Although the snobbish hipster with a penchant for obscure artists is the elitist in the status hierarchy of college music tastes, it is an undesirable elite. Students *want* to be open-minded omnivores. Those who did talk about obscure artists were quick to distance themselves from that image. As Nick said, “I’m not trying to be the dude who listens to all the obscure music that no one likes. I just have strange tastes.” For the most part, interviewees agreed that most Holden students were not music snobs. They are, in Matt’s words, “generally of the open-minded persuasion, they just really enjoy listening to different types of music.” Melanie agreed that people are usually more interested in sharing music they like rather than guarding its exclusivity. “New snobs” take omnivorousness to an extreme that goes against omnivorous values of openness and tolerance. New snobs make explicit the ideas of knowledge, dominance, and expertise embedded in omnivorousness, and that makes people uncomfortable.

Omnivorousness and Power. Omnivorousness is based on an openness to and tolerance of a wide variety of music, but the idea of tolerance is not unproblematic. It is

helpful to borrow from political scientist Wendy Brown (2006), who writes that “discourses of tolerance inevitably articulate identity and difference, belonging and marginality, and civilization and barbarism, and that they inevitably do so on behalf of hegemonic social or political powers” (Brown 2006: 10). Brown does not suggest that tolerance is a bad thing to be avoided, but that it should not go unexamined. In the field of music, omnivores value tolerating or accepting nearly all genres. However, “tolerating” a genre or even qualifying it as a “guilty pleasure” implies there is something “bad” about it. Brown (2006) states that “almost all objects of tolerance are marked as deviant, marginal, or undesirable by virtue of being tolerated, and the action of tolerance inevitably affords some access to superiority” (14). Omnivorousness is seen as a moral superiority, a distinction, because liking a wide range of genres indicates that one is willing to transgress traditional boundaries of taste for the sake of “good” music. Choosing what to listen to or not listen to has consequences:

The very act of passing an aesthetic judgment assumes and bestows authority upon the judge. By explicitly disaffiliating ourselves with certain forms of musical expression, we make a claim for being “in the know” about things, we demonstrate an educated perspective and activate a wide range of underlying assumptions about what is “good.” (Washburne and Derno 2004: 3)

Even when one avoids overtly labeling music as “good or “bad,” as some students made a point of doing, musical choices reflect internalized conceptions of what is acceptable to listen to.

Modes of Listening. Beyond whether students listen to something frequently or infrequently, they listen to different music in different ways. This may sound like a very basic assertion, but modes of listening are patterned in ways that give us insight into how people value different genres. For instance, even the people who do listen to pop qualify

it as a “guilty pleasure” or background noise, rather than a genre deserving the same kind of attention as classical or other genres. Stephanie listens to Top 40 frequently, but only as “background music, something upbeat to listen to while cleaning.” James listens to other music while in the car or exercising, but with classical music listening is the main activity, the only genre where he will “listen to music and do nothing else.” Erin may have “no shame” about listening to Top 40 and pop, but at the same time she listens to her favorite genre, folk, “in a different way” than she listens to other music.

To some discerning students, the *way* people listen to music is just as important as *what* they listen to, which adds another dimension to the musical hierarchy. Nick said, “I’ve found that I get along better with people who I have almost no taste in common with if I can tell that they listen critically...I feel you can listen to very interesting music and not really be paying attention.” James also noted that different people hear music differently:

Just because I dislike some combination of sounds doesn’t mean other people hear it in the same way...Some people have a better ear than others, just because they’ve been trained differently or they’re born with a better ear...It doesn’t mean that they have a bad taste in music, it just means that they are not listening to it in the same way I might be listening to it.

Although he doesn’t think people who hear things differently have bad taste, by saying people who are “trained differently” hear music in a different way James still points out another way that education contributes to musical distinctions.

Modes of listening can also be understood in a broader sense. In many cases college students didn’t listen to what they listened to in high school as frequently as they

used to. This is sometimes due to a major shift in taste, but in many cases they added more (similar) music to their collection and therefore had less time to listen to their old favorites. Erin talked about listening to music in phases. “I go through phases. Phases can be a yearlong or a week long...I usually have one or two songs that I’m listening to in those couple weeks. I’ll just listen to the same songs over and over again.” Should someone be considered an omnivore if, during the course of their life, they listen to a wide variety of genres, but go through “yearlong phases” where they only listen to one or two different styles at a time? This would not show up on many measures of omnivorousness. Yet theirs is decidedly a different experience than someone who only listens to only a few types of music their entire life. Given the complex ways that people differentiate between different kinds of music and the numerous ways they listen to it, it is clear that studies merely asking about broad questions about genres miss out on a lot of important nuances that highlight how music actually functions in the realm of social relations.

Conclusion

A college campus is indeed the “natural habitat” of the cultural omnivore. Omnivorousness is widespread, widely valued, and associated with the college’s collective identity. Formal music classes and participation in performance groups allow students to appreciate new genres of music. More significantly, however, college exposes students to new music through new and diverse social networks. As a result, students start listening to more genres, or at least become more tolerant towards them. The role of college education on omnivorousness is complicated by pre-college experiences. Parents’

music preferences usually stay with students through college. While a parent with a bachelor's degree increases one's chance of being an omnivore, those chances actually decrease with more advanced degrees. However, contrary to Bourdieu, it did not appear that preference for exclusive genres like classical music were transmitted from parent to child. Rather, students became interested in classical music only after joining a school music group. Of course, the relationship between family background and musicianship needs to be more closely examined, as it is unlikely all students have equal access to music group membership. Nonetheless, this finding demonstrates the complex ways that different facets of education influence music taste.

Certain genres are widely disliked, often based on the ideology, authenticity, or musical skill associated with the genre. Music has long been used to maintain symbolic boundaries and distinctions between social groups (Bourdieu 1984; Lamont and Fournier 1992; Bryson 1996). Although omnivorous music taste may at first appear to signal the decline of group-based distinctions, it is in fact a new kind distinction. It is a desirable characteristic that some possess and others do not. Even an omnivorous population has status hierarchies, with some genres and listeners more highly regarded than others.

Although the new idea of "the snob" is no longer based on preferring one or two elite genres, it is still based on an idea of exclusive knowledge because it has to do with breadth, depth, and exclusive knowledge of what is "good" music. The new snob is most often associated with bragging about knowledge of obscure artists. Although the idea of the "new snob" is widely identified, people are quick to distance themselves from it, as

the exclusive nature of the new snob goes against the very principle of omnivorousness. Omnivorousness necessarily demands for a greater depth of engagement in the musical field. As Mark (1998) argues, familiarity with any genre is an expenditure of time and energy. Not everyone has these resources equally at their disposal, making it easier for some people to be omnivores than others. As I have shown, some factors, particularly education, make people more likely to be omnivores. Because not everyone has equal access to educational opportunities and musical knowledge, omnivorousness is embedded in systems of inequality and the maintenance of symbolic boundaries.

This topic merits further research and it would benefit from a variety of methods. Quantitative studies are useful in determining broad trends, but qualitative studies are better equipped to identify the meaningful nuances of cultural consumption. These nuances, such as differentiations between subgenres, can be revealing. There are also different ways of operationalizing omnivorousness. As a few have already done, future studies may move away from the genre categories and focus on specific music works or some other variable. My study was conducted at a very specific site, a small Midwestern liberal arts college, with a specific study population. My analysis did not focus on racial and gender differences as the study sample fairly homogeneous (89.7% white and 67.1% female). Although students were randomly asked to participate, it is likely that the students who responded were those most passionate about music, and thus may not represent the average student. It would be interesting to see if results were replicated at a larger university, or whether different kinds of colleges influenced cultural consumption differently. A longitudinal study would also be interesting to track individual preferences

through college, and to see if people who are omnivores in college continue to be omnivores through adulthood, or whether people who are not omnivores in college pick it up later in life.

Although it has been shown that omnivorousness is bound up in relations of knowledge, power, and cultural domination, more research is needed to better understand how this distinction works. A deeper exploration of multicultural capital (to borrow Bryson's term) would add an important dimension to the debate. New projects could focus more specifically on one area of the findings discussed here. For example, a thorough investigation of omnivores' ideological resistance to country music could add important insights to our understanding of symbolic boundary work.

The relationship between pre-college experiences, family background, college, and omnivorousness demands further attention. A correlation between education and omnivorousness has been established, but not yet fully explained. Academic classes, social networks, and musicianship are all important factors, but the interrelated nature of these factors calls for further examination. A college campus may be the "natural habitat" of the cultural omnivore, but why? Does college create omnivores, or do omnivores choose to (and, crucially, *have the opportunity to*) go to college? Omnivorousness is a multifaceted phenomenon, but one thing is clear: this is an important area of study and more studies are needed in order to further understand the complex social relations that play out in the figure of the cultural omnivore.

References

- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Brown, Wendy. 2006. "Chapter One: Tolerance As a Discourse of Depolitization." *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press.
- Bryson, Bethany. 1996. "'Anything But Heavy Metal': Symbolic Exclusion and Musical Dislikes." *American Sociological Review*. 61 (5): 884-899.
- Frith, Simon. 2004. "What Is Bad Music?" Pp 15-36. *Bad Music: The Music We Love to Hate*, edited by Christopher Washburne and Maiken Derno. New York: Routledge.
- Lamont, Michele and Marcel Fournier. 1992. "Introduction." Pp 1-17. *Cultivating Differences*, edited by Michele Lamont and Marcel Fournier. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mark, Noah. 1998. "Birds of a Feather Sing Together." *Social Forces*. 77(2):453-485.
- Marsh, Robert M. 2012. "Musical Taste and Social Structure in Taiwan." *Comparative Sociology*. 11(4): 493-525.
- Ollivier, Michele. 2008. "Modes of Openness to Cultural Diversity: Humanist, Populist, Practical, and Indifferent." *Poetics*. 36(2-3): 120-147.
- Peterson, Richard A. 2005. "Problems in Comparative Research: The Example of Omnivorousness." *Poetics*. 33(5):257-282.
- Peterson, Richard A. and Roger M. Kern. 1996. "Changing Highbrow Taste: From Snob to Omnivore." *American Sociological Review*. 61(5): 900-907.
- Peterson, Richard A. and Albert Simkus. 1992. "How Musical Tastes Mark Occupational Status Groups." Pp . 152-185 in *Cultivating Differences*, edited by Michele Lamont and Marcel Fournier. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Roy, William G. and Timothy J. Dowd. 2010. "What Is Sociological About Music?" *Annual Review of Sociology*. 36: 183-203.
- Savage, Mike. 2006. "The Musical Field." *Cultural Trends*. 15(2-3): 159-174.
- Savage, Mike and Modesto Gayo. 2011. "Unraveling the Omnivore: A Field Analysis of Contemporary Musical Taste in the United Kingdom." *Poetics*. 39(5):337-357.

- Van Eijck, Koen. 2001. "Social Differentiation in Musical Taste Patterns." *Social Forces*. 79(3):1163-1184.
- Warde, Alan, David Wright, and Modesto Gayo-Cal. 2007. "Understanding Cultural Omnivorousness: Or, the Myth of the Cultural Omnivore." *Cultural Sociology*. 1(2):143-164.
- Washburne, Christopher, and Maiken Derno. 2004. "Introduction." Pp1-14. *Bad Music: The Music We Love to Hate*, edited by Christopher Washburne and Maiken Derno. New York: Routledge.

Appendix A: List of Genres and Categories

[Note: The category divisions did not appear on the survey]

Rock
Alternative or indie rock
Punk
Classic Rock/Oldies
Heavy Metal

House/Dance
Electronic
Pop/Top 40
Hip-Hop/Rap
R&B/Soul

Blues
Christian/Gospel
Jazz
Big Band/Swing

Broadway Musicals
Opera
Classical
Contemporary Instrumental

Bluegrass
Popular/Top 40 Country
Classic Country
Alternative Country/Roots

Folk
Latin
World
Reggae
New Age
Other

Appendix B: Tables

Table B.1 Omnivores and Music Education

	% Music Appreciation	% Music Theory	% World or Ethnic Music	% Instrumental or Vocal	% No Music Classes	% Other Music Education
Not Omnivore	23.53% (4)	14.29% (4)	5.56% (1)	22.22% (20)	29.03% (18)	25.00% (2)
Omnivore	76.47% (13)	85.71% (24)	94.44% (17)	77.78% (70)	70.97% (44)	75.00% (6)

Table B.2 Omnivores and Parents' Education

	% Some High School	% HS Degree	% Technical School	% Some College	% Undergraduate Degree	% Master's Degree	% PhD or Professional Degree
Not Omnivore	0% (0)	25% (1)	60% (3)	0% (0)	17.14% (6)	19.2% (13)	32.69% (17)
Omnivore	100% (1)	75% (3)	40% (2)	100% (2)	82.86% (29)	80.88% (55)	67.31% (35)

Table B.3 Omnivores and Class Year

	% of First Years	% of Sophomores	% of Juniors	% of Seniors
Not Omnivore	38.46% (15)	18.92% (7)	14.29% (6)	24.00% (12)
Omnivore	61.54% (24)	81.08% (30)	85.71% (36)	76.00% (38)

Table B.4 Omnivores and Political Identification

	% Very Liberal	% Liberal	% Moderate	% Conservative	% Very Conservative	% Other
Not Omnivore	23.91% (11)	22.89% (19)	25% (7)	16.67% (1)	0% (0)	33.33% (2)
Omnivore	76.09% (35)	77.11% (64)	75% (21)	83.33% (5)	0% (0)	66.67% (4)

Table B.5 Musical Dislikes by Class Year				
	% of First Years	% of Sophomores	% of Juniors	% of Seniors
Rock	7.7% (3)	2.9% (1)	0% (0)	4.3% (2)
Alt or Indie Rock	2.6% (1)	5.9% (2)	0% (0)	4.3% (2)
Punk	25.6% (10)	17.6% (6)	15% (6)	17.4% (8)
Oldies	2.6% (1)	2.9% (1)	7.5% (3)	2.2% (1)
Heavy Metal	64.1% (25)	50% (17)	55% (22)	54.3% (25)
House/Dance	23.1% (9)	17.6% (6)	25% (10)	8.7% (4)
Electronic	17.9% (7)	17.6% (6)	20.0% (8)	10.9% (5)
Pop/Top 40	25.6% (10)	20.6% (7)	22.5% (9)	8.7% (4)
Hip-Hop/Rap	20.5% (8)	17.6% (6)	12.5% (5)	15.2% (7)
R&B/Soul	7.7% (3)	2.9% (1)	5.0% (2)	2.2% (1)
Blues	2.6% (1)	8.8% (3)	7.5% (3)	0.0% (0)
Christian/Gospel	48.7% (19)	44.1% (15)	62.5% (25)	47.8% (22)
Jazz	12.8% (5)	14.7% (5)	10.0% (4)	0.0% (0)
Big Band/Swing	12.8% (5)	11.8% (4)	10.0% (4)	8.7% (4)
Broadway	12.8% (5)	14.7% (5)	17.5% (7)	19.6% (9)
Opera	35.9% (14)	38.2% (13)	32.5% (13)	37.0% (17)
Classical	12.8% (5)	8.8% (3)	10.0% (4)	8.7% (4)
Contemporary Instrumental	15.4% (6)	11.8 (4)	12.5% (5)	13.0% (6)
Bluegrass	23.1% (9)	23.5% (8)	15.0% (6)	15.2% (7)
Top 40 Country	30.8% (12)	50.0% (17)	52.5% (21)	54.3% (25)
Classic Country	48.7% (19)	32.4% (11)	35.0% (14)	43.5% (20)
Alt Country	28.2% (11)	20.6% (7)	17.5% (7)	28.3% (13)
Folk	7.7% (3)	5.9% (2)	12.5% (5)	4.3% (2)
Latin	2.6% (1)	2.9% (1)	10.0% (4)	6.5% (3)
World	0.0% (0)	5.9% (2)	7.5% (3)	2.2% (1)
Reggae	5.1% (2)	2.9% (1)	15.0% (6)	13.0% (6)
New Age	25.6% (10)	23.5% (8)	30.0% (12)	28.3% (13)

