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Music Industry, Model for Control Societies

An immediate shift in dance, mood and the overall ambiance of Miley Cyrus' Bangerz concert took place with the words, "I hopped off the plane at L.A.X. with a dream and my cardigan. Welcome to the land of fame, excess, whoa! Am I gonna fit in..."(*Party in the USA*: Cyrus, 2009) which mediated a community nostalgia of a time when this pop star occupied an entirely different subjecthood only a few years prior. A humorous affect was caused by incongruences between the overall aesthetic features of Miley's image and performance from the first time she released this song before rising as one of the most prominent figures in pop culture. Pop stars, such as the recently infamous Miley Cyrus, inhabit liminal spaces in contemporary society; on Ford's list of top 100 influential people, featured on the front of magazines and as headliner news stories, and in the daily discussions had in classrooms and homes. In the music realm, contemporary culture has widely embraced technological advancements in the past few decades that have allowed for an evolution of listening experiences from authentically live expressions, into recorded, mass-produced, mashed-up, reproduced and often synthetic-sounding songs that play in the backdrop of public places and during private experiences to mediate emotion. Musicians are amongst the only always-present variables in the changes procured to the music industry by rises in technology, and can thus be examined as both products of a new "control" society examined by scholars working in postmodern theory, as well as active contributors in the use of music as social control. Unfortunately for a crowd not partial to the new Miley, postmodern theory supports the notion that this pop star's music has omnipresence in media and daily life enough to affect the ideologies and behaviors of communities and

individuals. By tracing the construction of Miley Cyrus as the mainstream subject she has become, and the power she has gained with success gained by subverting any objective identity, theories primarily discussed by philosopher Gilles Deleuze and sociologist Tia DeNora can be used to explain dynamics of pop culture that create subjects of the musicians and of communities in a new capitalism and “control society”.

Implications of the postmodern concepts that points to musicians as both products of a new “control” society as well as actors in mediating social control can first be extracted from Gilles Deleuze’s “Postscript on Control Societies” from the book Politics. The essay first gives Michel Foucault’s background on “disciplinary” societies, then explains the means by which “control societies” take over. Disciplinary societies “operate by organizing major sites of confinement...each with its own laws: first of all the family, then school (“you’re not at home, you know”), then the barracks (“you’re not at school, you know”), then the factory, hospital from time to time, maybe prison, the model site of confinement”(177). Individuals in this model travel from confinement to confinement, acting as trained subjects following the rules of each single space they occupy in the present moment. Behavior changes based upon location and in relation to the structure of the environment and their place in each respective hierarchy of power. For example, a student will occupy a subservient position in the school, a child in the home, and the soldier in barracks, whereas administrators might be the school principle, the parent and the commanding officer. Yet given advancements with computer technologies, the twentieth century saw the end of such a linear and traceable strand of power, as “passwords” and “codes” became new regulatory means against “piracy” and “viral contamination”. Disciplinary figures in confined spaces no longer regulate behavior because technology can affectively take their places, rendering them mostly obsolete. With the subsequent breakdown of “interiors” as Deleuze calls

them (“prisons, hospitals, factories, schools, the family”), there no longer exists an individual that exists outside of their confinement site, but “dividuals” constantly adapting and adhering to laws imposed by an omniscient “control” system of technology that exists without boundaries. “In disciplinary societies you were always starting all over again (as you went from school to barracks, from barracks to factory), while in control societies you never finish anything- business, training, and military service being coexisting metastable states of a single modulation, a sort of universal transmutation”(179). Identity for people in the control model will always be adapting to the ever-changing “metastable states” that they inhabit.

While in the disciplinary model, man has a clear sense of self that is discrete from the mass population, and discrete from their location; the control model blurs the individual into the masses, where identity and agency are constantly in flux. “Disciplinary man produced energy in discrete amounts, while control man undulates, moving among a continuous range of different orbits”(180). The control society depicts people as inexhaustible resources for goals of the new capitalism: “What it seeks to sell is services, and what it seeks to buy, activities”(181). The new capitalism no longer concerns itself with production, “which is often transferred to remote parts of the Third World”(181), but with sales and markets in which to distribute the already created materials. Because of this, “Marketing is now the instrument of social control, and produces the arrogant breed which are our masters. Control is short-term and rapidly shifting, but at the same time continuous and unbounded, whereas discipline was long-term, infinite and discontinuous”(181). Rather than relying on an organized system of confinement spaces in which subjects follow rules to create products from raw materials, control men belong to a network of rule-enforcing technologies that push for maximum amounts of selling/marketing of goods.

In 2006, fourteen-year-old Destiny Hope Cyrus (now Miley Ray Cyrus) landed the lead role in Disney TV series *Hannah Montana*, where she played the familiar role of a young girl living a double life as famous singer and normal teenage student. Cyrus's real-life challenges in finding a fixed identity manifest in her TV character of Miley Stewart, who like Cyrus, must conform to the rules of each space she occupies in the moment. Miley Stewart travels back and forth from her life as a student and daughter of song-writing Billy Rae Cyrus, to world-famous pop star on tour in front of millions of fans and in charge of many people working under her. The TV show provides an example of a disciplinary model of the music industry for a young musician: without the constant monitoring of tabloids, live television, and surveillance technology the young girl is able to travel from site of confinement to site of confinement, constructing her individual identity dependent on these locations. Miley Rae Cyrus struggled with the shadow of *Hannah Montana* until she committed fully to her new persona, which now can be seen being confidently displayed in all music videos and performances of her new and most successful album, *Bangerz*. A large factor in Cyrus' most recent success, which includes her multi-million dollar worldwide tour and maintaining a constant presence among Billboard's *Hot 100 list* of songs, comes from her constant media presence, which has allowed her to be an active administrator of the overall aesthetic experience for viewers/listeners.

Evolution in music technology closely follows innovations in computers and communication devices that also allow for a fundamental change in its structure. While Deleuze explains that control societies "function with a third generation of machines, with information technology and computers"(180), a similar affect occurs in technologies that allow for music recording, reproduction and devices that create personal dictatorship over what music plays in the background of any experience. Before the invention of recording devices that were able to

capture music performances, musicianship occurred in live settings with only performative aspects. Reproduction of music occurred not with burning discs and mass distribution of albums, but when songs were adopted and played by more artists in more spaces. Similar to worker individuals confined to spaces of production from raw materials in factories and schools, the musician was confined to spaces of creation and spaces of performance. An artist or band composed music with physical instruments and voices, practiced the music, and then performed the music. Each of these steps occurred in discrete places with discrete amounts of work with little need for marketing and sales of a product.

Jonathan Sterne's 2012 book MP3: The Meaning of a Format relates technological advancements in the music industry to effects in the way we think about music as an experience, how we accept what we know about music, and what affect music ownership has on our lives. More specifically, the chapter "Is Music a Thing?" asks how innovations in technology that allow for recording and mass distribution change the relationship the masses have with music listening experiences. The chapter begins with a brief historical account of the means for objectifying music as a commodity: "If we look back over the past quarter century, it would appear that the commodity form of music has undergone a massive transformation. Twenty-five years ago, it was dominated by recordings on physical media: compact discs, tapes and (though in decline) LP records"(Sterne, 184). Each of these innovations has made an impact on the commodification and distribution of music giving large power to the record industry as an administrator and distributor in the music industry as a model for Deleuze's control society. Now, the web of constantly changing and undulating control lies in mass file-sharing sites that provide MP3's to internet users without payment: "...it is true worldwide more recordings now circulate through channels that do not carry the official sanction of recording industries or

states”(185). With the music industry as a pseudo-control society, mass file-sharing takes the place of Deleuze’s “third wave of machines, with information technology and computers”(Deleuze, 178).

Music is no longer accessed/bought in discrete amounts for set amounts of money, but acquired through omnipresent sites that connect users from across the world. Music listeners are no longer confined to obtaining music from specific and limited sites, but are created as “dividuals” in the process of file-sharing online. Sites such as “Gnutella and BitTorrent” make up an even larger community than purchasers from iTunes store, and Sterne comments they have the subsequent effect: “a sizable dimension of the market for physical recordings has dried up”(185). In this example, power is stripped from confined sites, and distributed into a massive web community that millions of music listeners worldwide belong to; without payment, MP3’s are easily accessible and have an even larger presence in daily life giving it more power as a device for social control.

Musicians now take part in a “healthy competition”(Deleuze, 179) for sales created by the new capitalism that forces them to constantly work towards marketability in order to gain the most profit on their products. The 2013 MTV music awards shown live on almost all television networks showed a provocative and shocking twerking performance by Miley Cyrus that lead to mass media coverage and replays of the event via YouTube and on social media sites. Here, television/internet serve as pieces of modern technology that act as mediums for transmitting musical performances in addition to their visual performances. Cyrus took advantage of the opportunity for mass marketing and sales as an administrator in the sample control society, and successfully displayed another facet of her ever-changing identity. These products are no longer limited to just songs and concert tickets, but the overall aesthetic effect of the musician and

his/her agency. In this respect, pressure for artists to reach maximum marketability influences their identities to a point where subjecthood depends on popular trends in music culture. The artist must become what the public demands, but at the same time the artist has the power to create music what will ultimately assist in the creation of subjects from their listeners.

Music represents “information” in control societies, which can never exist outside of the mediums by which it is distributed. Codes and passwords serve to protect information from piracy and viral contamination, which copyright laws constructed by record industries serve to protect musicians and their work. A chapter titled “Information” in McKenzie Wark’s book, A Hacker Manifesto, gives an account of information as a discrete thing that “wants to be free” but is “everywhere in chains”, referring to the power held by the class in any capitalist society by a ruling class; a class that sets the price for distribution of information through any mediums. Wark explains “Information may be transferred from one material support to another, but cannot be dematerialized...”(Wark, 127), acknowledging that although information, music in this case, is proven to exist as an independent thing because of its ability to be transferred from one medium to another, but will forever be trapped by some form of material support. Because the ruling class always has a motive of maximum monetary gains, the message transmitted along with the distribution of information through any medium can never be free of ideological/behavioral affecting devices. The ruling class in the music industry, with the absence of piracy and file-sharing websites, is made up of the record industry as well copyright laws and those who pursue enforcing these laws. Yet with the new aforementioned control model in the music industry, listeners are able to access music without going through these confined spaces allocated for music purchases, and thus evade empowering the record industry.

The control model gives power to the musician, who can now directly transmit their message through web-sharing. Because of this, a degree of Miley's identity seems to exist outside of her always-changing subjecthood defined by an a hope to "fit in" (*Party in the USA*, 2009) and gives way to a the attitude, "We run things, things don't run me" (*We Can't Stop*, Cyrus 2013). Along the same lines of musicianship, mash-up artist DJ Danger Mouse created an album in his bedroom using his own computer devices to combine songs from The Beatle's *White Album* and Jay Z's *Black Album* then released the album online *The Grey Album*, allowing anyone to download it free of charge. The power for expression exists completely in DJ Danger Mouse's hands, since innovations in technology (configurable culture); allow him to produce a creation without mediation from disciplinary administrators (record company, etc.). Although Wark's assertions are correct: music as information can never exist without some material support, it seems that given file-sharing technology via the Internet, musicians can gain some direct control over their own music distribution and subsequent impact on social behaviors that will follow from their products.

Given this power for musicians to become active members of distributing their music with social control, the notion of music as a device for social ordering allows musicians to gain even more control as administrators. Professor of Sociology of Music and Director of Research, Tia DeNora, confronts the power of music in defining social settings, influencing behavior, and ultimately helping to construct an amount of agency in listeners. The chapter, "Music as a Device for Social Ordering" from her book, Music in Everyday Life recognizes a large presence of music in both public and private spaces, and uses interviews with a wide demographic of people to determine effects in both spheres. DeNora begins by quoting John Law, writing about "Pools of order" or what DeNora calls: "the concept of social order as an achievement, an effect

of temporal action...such actions draws upon (and is in turn shaped by) media and materials of all kinds- objects, discourses and technologies”(DeNora, 109). Media and materials that have a prominent presence in society determine subjects’ actions. Music occupies one such material of social control, and the chapter in its entirety discusses how music may be used “as a means of organizing potentially disparate individuals such that their actions may appear to be intersubjective, mutually oriented, co-ordinated, entrained and aligned”(DeNora, 109). This suggestion that music actually influences social behavior and can largely manipulate people to act in a control manner must be supported by some research, which DeNora provides with concern to mediating mood and sexual intimacy, then delves into the uses of music of retail stores to manipulate their customers.

In prefacing the importance of music for her interviewees in creating a setting for intimacy, behavior caused by music is referred to as “aesthetic agency”: “...music operates on an interactive plane, and so, too, music can be used to regulate the parameters of collaborative and collective aesthetic agency”(DeNora, 111). Melinda, a woman with a “new friend” who she hopes to get intimate with, describes the importance of setting to “make the action right, not merely in the embodied and technical sense, but as a way of prospectively calling out forms of agency that are comfortable and preferable...”(DeNora, 112). She describes the perfect type of music she would use in constructing the perfect setting, which fall perfectly into what previous studies have revealed about women’s musical preferences in these settings: “leisurely pace...with narrative of intimate conduct”(DeNora, 114). DeNora attributes women’s desire for suggestive narrative lyrics with women’s overall ineptitude in openly expressing sexual desires. In this case, music serves as an excellent mediation of emotion, and effectively creates an environment of candidness that could not have easily been reached otherwise. The rhythm and

pace of the music were both important to Melinda, and the lyrics also had the power to influence a feeling of comfort and sexual expression. These observations lead to the claim, “Music is thus part of the cultural material through which ‘scenes’ are constructed, scenes that afford different kinds of agency, different sorts of pleasure and ways of being”(DeNora, 123). Fifty-two women were interviewed for this “music and daily life study”, most of which reported to enjoying slow music that would configure a sentimental environment. The musician does not have direct control in this situation, but they maintain a level of influence with their creation of the music and lyrics that mediate emotion and help to construct social agency for listeners in intimate settings.

While the deployment of certain music to attain a certain mood-setting occurs at a conscious level, retail companies’ usage of music in creating environments with the aim to influence customers occurs on a subconscious level for all but the operator of the store’s playlist. “Indeed, music’s link to the regulation of self and the configuration of subjectivity and agency is of concern to a range of economically and politically interested actors...”(133) here DeNora refers to the use by manufacturers, marketeers, political parties, nations and regimes, churches and cults, and municipalities, all of whom have invested much time trying to figure out exactly what affect music can have on their subjects. The retail sector have an especially vibrant use of music, because shoppers are actively constructing their identity based on the style of clothes they buy. DeNora states, “At the level of practice, identity is now construed as put together in and through a range of identifications with aesthetic materials and representations, perhaps most clearly visible in the consumer realm where shopping is now about much more than status distinction”(130), referring to aesthetic materials and representations as the entire experience had in a retail store. If the music playing creates an environment that the shopper feels displays the

level of status they wish most to identify with, they are more likely to purchase the product. This research supports Wark's portrayal as information "always in chains" by a ruling class that both owns and makes use of the mediums by which information gets distributed. Retail storeowners hardly make up a class in their own right, but DeNora's research in this chapter serves as an important example of music's ability to define an entire aesthetic experience, influencing people to behave in certain ways outside of their consciousness. "The retail outlet provides cultural resources that in turn structure agency; it is a setting in which the public- goods, images and ambiences- is transposed on to and serves to construct the private realm of subjectivity, value and expressive action"(DeNora, 146). If applied outside of just the retail outlet, the use of music in this sense may become even more invasive and manipulative by the capitalist powers that have monetary gains in mind.

Miley serves as an example of the artist existing at the crossroads of subjecthood, and subjection; a look at her many transformations in genre, style, and image that contributes to an overall aesthetic experience for her listeners and viewers traces the affect of the pseudo-control society in music on the artist as an administrator and as a worker. Implications of applying the "control society" model onto the music industry allows a clearer perspective on the changes that have been brought about with recent technological advancements. Mass file sharing has taken power away from definite powers, the record industry, and in many ways has returned it back to the musician who then has more control over the message they distribute to fans. Conscious and unconscious uses of music to control mood and in ways manipulate social behavior are always already lined with messages in the artists' lyrics and rhythms. The music industry as a model of Deleuze's control society allows for an overall greater understanding of the effects music can have on daily life and ideologies, and just who or what actively has power over it.

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