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Interpersonal Communication

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Ethnography Project Proposal

Situation 1:

The first situation I propose is one of the frequent “jam sessions” my brother and I hold in the basement of our parents’ house. There is a designated music space with a multitude of musical instruments, including guitars, electric bass, drums and more. I often notice interesting social interactions in the context of our jams, in between and afterwards. The normal sequence of our hangouts usually follows the pattern of(after greeting): play, talk (repeat however many times we want) and eventually retire from the playing segment of our hangout to talk, usually reflecting on our musical conversations.

I am particularly interested in the non-verbal communication during the jam session, but will also include our talk in between each musical conversation. I expect the in between talk to be helpful in clarifying or making sense of what the musical interactions tell me about the nature of our communication.

The four individuals I would like to observe during these “jam sessions” are my younger brother, my two friends Shiro and Mitch and myself.

I am excited to see and hear the variety of ways that musical conversations can tell us about human interaction. I believe that the “critical dimension of language” mentioned in Deborah Tannen’s chapter 19 of the textbook can be applied to musical interaction, especially

improvised musical interaction. Semantics of a musical conversation could be translated to musical motifs and cadences, or phrases (these are easily the equivalent of verbal sentences). Pragmatics can be assessed by how we express these motifs and cadences, through the conversational signals, which I believe can be directly applied to music. Pacing (tempo) and pausing (rest), loudness (dynamics) and pitch are all very important factors in a musical conversation. Interestingly, intonation is a prominent term in the music world, but it is used to describe the continuity of the pitches on one given instrument. This is more of a technical term in that sense. Maybe I should refrain from using this term for my observations to avoid confusion?

I think that taking note of how each of the participants use these signals will say a lot about the interaction going on. In our musical conversation, am confident in identifying “rich points”, “politics of grammar” and the devices that are made up of these signals. In addition to translating these concepts into music, I will also use them in the traditional way, during our in between talk. Given that the musical interaction will be video recorded, I will take note of all meaningful physical gestures, as they usually support the nature of the musical conversation.

Tannon describes intonation as the “music of talk”. Conversely, I’m proposing a project that analyzes the “talk of music”.

Situation 2:

The second situation I would like to propose is the same as the previously mentioned situation but without the actual jam session taking place. This would be the aftermath of a jam session with the same participants. I expect the conversation and interaction to be reminiscent of the jam session but not entirely. This should be a good backup plan if the first situation does not

work out for whatever reason. It will still have something to do with our musical interaction but will definitely include other topics of conversation.

In this particular group of people, deep, introspective subjects tend to arise. This is another reason why I would like to record and analyze this group. The potential settings for this group of people can include my brother's bedroom, my studio room(in our basement), my living room, the B-line trail or a local public park. These hangouts and jam sessions normally occur after 730pm.