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Producing the Folk at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival

In this paper, we consider how the folk are produced and consumed at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival (Jazz Fest). Founded in the aftermath of the civil rights movement as a cosmopolitan gathering of music, food, and art lovers, Jazz Fest has become one of the world's largest music festivals. The staging of the festival in the wake of Hurricane Katrina was seen as a symbol of the reviving spirit of New Orleans and showcased the festival as an icon of the city. Blackness and other forms of otherness are central to producing a concentrated experience of cosmopolitanism there and to constructing a "hip" identity. Festgoers and producers are "in the know" about the folk, even as they are separated from them by race, class, and/or education. Those who produce the folk participate in an imaginary leveling of difference, while festival visitors experience the spine-tingling transcendence of musical communion. At the same time, folk artists, demonstrators, vendors, and performers are tightly disciplined by the structures that specify precise limits on what they can and cannot do. A close examination of the production of culture at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival reveals a reproduction of a racialized social structure in which people of color (mostly African Americans) and other "folks" are sidelined while owner-connoisseurs are able to control presentation and production.

The New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival (Jazz Fest) is one of the largest music events in the world, a seven-day blow-out mega-fest with twelve stages showcasing headliners like Sting, Lenny Kravitz, and the Dave Matthews Band. Despite these commercial, pop culture draws, festgoers and festival producers consistently point to Jazz Fest as "the real deal." Producers, participants, and festgoers all construct Jazz Fest as authentic, native, and real—in sum, as the folk. From its 1960s-era inception, Jazz Fest was imagined as a celebration of the folk. More than a great party or even a showcase for local music, it is seen as a mechanism for preservation, interpretation, and celebration of the folk. Indeed, the days of the festival are filled with numerous presentations of New Orleans street music, neighborhood groups, marching clubs, folk crafts, and celebrations of local customs and traditions. Overcoming

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massive odds, the staging of the festival after the destruction that followed Hurricane Katrina was seen as a symbol of the reviving spirit of New Orleans, and it showcased the festival as an icon of the city and its relationship to the nation as a site of both American hipness and authenticity.

The Jazz Fest mission and ideology of interpreting and presenting tradition to the general public has much in common with other folk festivals and, like those festivals, faces the same ideological predicaments in how the “folk” are conceptualized and how culture is (re)produced for public consumption. Jazz Fest exists, however, not only in the realm of “heritage” but also in the tradition of pop culture and entertainment. Because of its enormous popularity and the location of both New Orleans and traditional (especially African American) culture in the American imagination, Jazz Fest sometimes resembles a once-a-year Disney World for the hip and cool, producing its own folk culture. Over the last four decades, devoted festgoers have created a vernacular culture that exists (mostly virtually) throughout the year and manifests during the seven days of the festival itself. Like Disney and unlike most folk festivals, Jazz Fest is both a cultural icon and an economic powerhouse that wields corporate-like power within the New Orleans economy and is even a recognizable power in the national and global music marketplaces. The festival’s importance in the city’s postindustrial economy cannot be overstated. Tourism is the lifeblood of this city, and Jazz Fest is big business. For local and regional performers and traditional artists, Jazz Fest is the gatekeeper to larger markets, and consequently (almost inevitably) it exerts a magnetic or even a distorting effect on local music and community traditions. And while Jazz Fest ideology and marketed authenticity remain rooted in folk reverence, festival practices often result in folk marginalization, as producers are enmeshed in the larger process of cultural commodification of music and arts in the global marketplace. The ideologies of Jazz Fest spring from a desire to create authentic representation of beloved traditions and the imagination to envision creating new social/racial possibilities. And the limitations of Jazz Fest rest on realpolitik, the everydayness of doing, and the power of the market.

In this article, we examine this central tension between those social realities and the ideology of imagination and desire, as well as the creation of a separate hip/cool culture that is a commentary on the production of whiteness and white time-out behavior. We look at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival as: a folk festival-like event that creates a marketplace that offers economic viability to folk artists while defining and limiting tradition; a folk art space where artists and tradition bearers are simultaneously showcased and sidelined; a vernacular culture of its own with festgoer performances; and a racial project where radically different racial and social relations are imagined, while entrenched structural inequalities are ignored. This article is part of an ongoing study in which we explore the festival as a social, racial, countercultural project emerging from the social landscape of the 1960s. Jazz Fest is a social institution, which, nearly four decades later, has come to embody many of the contradictions of America’s post-civil rights era (see Reed 1999). We concentrate on the production of concepts of “folk” and “authentic,” noting how they enfold larger topics such as race and class.

Social Production at Festivals/Production of Identity

A robust body of literature dissects public forums for presentation—the museum, the festival, the living-history exhibit, and other public representations of identity and heritage. These events and forums, with their overt purpose of cultural display, present compelling windows on values, social structure, and social projects (Bauman and Sawin 1991; Cantwell 1991; Dubin 2000; Gable and Handler 1997; Karp and Levine 1991; Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1998; Price and Price 1995; Stoeltje 1992).

In addition to drawing on the work of those who have written on festival and display as cultural performances and sites for “eating the other” (hooks 1992), we rely on a body of research that looks at consumption, commodification, and appropriation in more general contexts, including bell hooks (1992, 1994, 1995), Deborah Root (1996), Sally Price (1989), Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998), Mariana Torgovnick (1991), Coco Fusco (1995), and others. Because we see the idea of the folk in post-civil rights era America as grounded in issues of race and class, our work is informed by writings that examine the production of whiteness and racial projects, including Michael Omi and Howard Winant ([1986] 1994), Ruth Frankenberg (1997), Annalee Newitz and Matt Wray (1997), John Hartigan (1999), David Roediger ([1991] 1999), Faye Harrison (1995), Gillian Cowlishaw (2001, 2003), and Lee Baker (1998).

Jazz Fest is both like and unlike the folk festivals and cultural displays that have been examined to date. First, the festival itself is enormous. In the quintessential city of tourism, this event draws more tourism dollars than any other—including the famous New Orleans Mardi Gras—and has a proportional year-round economic impact on musicians, craftspeople, and the city as a whole.¹ For thirty years—from the 1970s until 2002—the festival brought increasingly powerful tourism dollars, which reached a high of \$300 million in spring 2001 (C. Price 2005). Festival attendance peaked that year with 664,000 festgoers over eight days. On one day alone in 2001, the New Orleans Fairgrounds swelled with 160,000 people.² Second, Jazz Fest is distinct because it holds elements of both a prestige forum and an exhibition or living museum of traditional culture. The festival showcases acts from local high school jazz bands and church choirs to international celebrities, such as Van Morrison, Sting, Al Jarreau, and neohippie jam bands like Phish and Widespread Panic. The diverse musical and artistic styles featured at Jazz Fest serve as a vortex of history, in which one can, in the space of a few hours, listen to avant-garde/experimental jazz, classic bebop, traditional jazz, R&B, blues, gospel, spirituals, and country fiddle tunes, thus experiencing a veritable musical genealogy, from roots to branches in a single festival day of space-time compression (Harvey 1989). Crucial to the emotional power of this temporal musical journey are the figures of the old musicians themselves, men and women (but mostly men) in their eighties and nineties, playing beautifully, and standing as living ancestors for much of the contemporary popular music of 1970s America, including country, rock, funk, and soul. Then and now, these folk musicians of all stripes (but perhaps especially those who appear as both poor and black) serve to ground the festival’s commercial and popular music in incontestable authenticity. Third, the Jazz Fest goes beyond music to represent other parts of tra-

ditional culture. Over time, festival producers increasingly employed professional anthropologists and folklorists (like ourselves) to aid them in ordering and defining their folklife programs. Such orderings and definitions are expressed in organizational structure and festival geography in which Folk, Contemporary, and Congo crafts have separate staffs and locations on the fairgrounds (which we discuss below). Fourth, the festival goes beyond a festival: it is also a nonprofit foundation that gives grants to musicians, supports and funds neighborhood marching clubs, and buses in thousands of school children each year for educational programs. The festival's nonprofit work harmonizes with its foundational folk mytho-history, again producing authenticity and opportunity. Few New Orleans musicians are able to support themselves with their music. The festival is sought after by those who would be defined by it, because it provides visibility and significant national and international opportunities for artists eager to reach a wider audience. This powerful authenticity fueled the creation of the Jazz Fest folk culture, ironically, a touchstone of opposition to modernity and globalization for many middle-class (especially white) festgoers (see Figure 1). The event itself is only a moment in the year's calendar, but it looms large year-round for its role in the city's tourism industry, in the local/regional valuation of music, as a gatekeeper for artists, and as a rich source of identity and meaning for those who participate in its vernacular culture. These facts all make Jazz Fest a compelling event for study, suggesting both comparisons to and distinctions from other festivals and cultural displays.



Figure 1. Watermelon Ritual Group. The organizers of the festival's annual watermelon ritual appear here with an African American member of the festival staff. Photo by Jeffrey David Ehrenreich.

Full Disclosure: Social Production of Knowledge

The truth is that we love Jazz Fest. Both of us have been festgoers for more than fifteen years, and over time, like many die-hard fans, we have become connected to the Jazz Fest structure. Helen has paraded through the fairgrounds as a member of the Happy House Social and Pleasure Club. In 2004, she worked a hectic day as a cultural interpreter in the Louisiana Folk Village and spent one weekend as an assistant to a tradition bearer demonstrating the New Orleans Baby Doll tradition (see Figure 2). Shana worked as a cultural interpreter from 1994 to 2001, has served on the Folk Advisory Board, worked in 2002 as a “regular” staff member, and in 2004 worked with Tulane University to sponsor a tent exhibiting occupational folklore.

For both of us, the Jazz Fest producers and participants form a network of relationships to which we belong and which we greatly value. We count many of the producers and performers as friends, even as family. We see the Jazz Fest as an important part of the New Orleans community we love. Jazz Fest is a good neighbor with a goal of inclusiveness—a nonprofit festival that gives away substantial money annually to help grassroots organizations and students. The festival is seen as so special and so beloved that many of the producers gave up more lucrative careers in order to work in a low-paying, high-stress job whose atmosphere was described by one festival employee as a “vortex of chaos.”³

Our analysis of Jazz Fest is based on multiple field seasons, archival research, and interviews with festival staff and festgoers. Of course, we have been observing for far longer than the five years we have been systematically taking notes, and we draw on these years of insider knowledge as audience members and devoted fans. Our study focuses on two official productions of the festival, the second-line marching clubs and the demonstrators in the Louisiana Folklife Village—the areas with which we have the most complex relationships—and the fest folk culture, of which we might fairly be considered members.

Because of these complex relationships, our position is perhaps not the same as that of some ethnographers who offer critiques of public displays.⁴ We have multiple relations to the festival we are interpreting, sometimes simultaneously. We are fans who seek free tickets. We are producers who seek to bond with musicians themselves. We are ethnographers who set down our pens and dance. We are performers who take notes on our own performances. We are white women in a majority black city. We are divided subjects. We experience discomfort in the awareness of our multiple roles. We find transcendence in the gospel tent. We don’t have time to talk because we have work to do. We replicate social structure as we seek to subvert it. Perhaps it is for this reason that we have sought to write about the Jazz Fest in collaboration with each other, in order to tease out the multiplicities in our experience. This task challenges us to theorize a reflexivity that is multilayered and hybrid, drawing on postmodern and feminist approaches. The insider/outsider dichotomy often disintegrates for us. We are producers/consumers/performers/ethnographers. As it turns out, the majority of our “informants” engage in similar shape-shifting during the course of the festival. Realizing this, we argue that the very permeability and fluidity

of insider/outsider boundaries are a central part of the drama that propels the Jazz Festival and creates the fest folk culture.⁵

Yet we continually find ourselves writing in a way that simplifies and reduces our subjectivities. It is as if in seeking to reveal the festival in all its complexity, we reduce our role—and that of other producers, participants, performers, and vendors—in order to tell this bigger story. In seeking literature that helps us with this complex reflexivity, we draw on Haraway's theories of hybridity (1991) and the experimental ethnography of the Bad Subjects collective (1997). In order to manifest some of these complexities in our writing, we explore an experimental commentary technique in which we adopt a different voice to comment on our writings and conclusions and to offer vignettes from the festival, personal memories, and jottings from our field notes. Throughout the article, we use two voices and three ways of referring to ourselves.⁶ For most of the article, we use a pretty standard academic voice, referring to ourselves mostly as "we" and noting individual actions of an author in third person. In sections set off in italics, we often speak in the first person, reflecting on our experiences in a series of inserts we call "Moments in Shape-Shifting."

Moments in Shape-Shifting 1

Helen: I was just reading something in Martha Ward's new book Voodoo Queen: The Spirited Lives of Marie Laveau (2004), a narrative of someone who witnessed a voodoo ceremony, the agony of an unwilling witness, the agony of resisting the spirits. Resisting



Figure 2. Helen as Presenter, with guitar-maker Paul "Junior" Ortis. The normative role for the anthropologist or folklorist is as presenter, translator, and mediator between the folk and their audience. Photo by Jeffrey David Ehrenreich.

spirit possession causes tremendous physical and psychological stress. And there's a way that being an academic at Jazz Fest—to take notes, to interview people—is to resist the spirit, to refuse to be taken in and remain self-conscious and make other people feel painfully self-conscious when what they want to do is surrender. And I think that's why I have been disciplined for taking notes. People have seen me, people I'm sitting next to—it's like being at a revival and resisting the altar call.

Some of these sections are, in effect, transcripts of us interviewing each other. That is, recognizing our complicated relationship to the festival and our own fandom, we directly implicated ourselves in our own study and became each other's informants/interlocutors. Comments were transcribed by the other author, and then (like good ethnographers) we let our informant see her words. Other comments are lifted straight from our field notes and offer a less groomed, more spontaneous, participant evaluation.

Our work, then, is a form of autoethnography (Reed-Danahay 1997), and we see ourselves implicated in whatever critiques we offer. We offer these memories, snippets from field notes, and interviews with each other as further sources of insider knowledge, as commentary on our own work and our privilege to publish, as a way of calling forth the sometimes submerged racialized atmosphere of the festival and as a method to provoke shifts from academic observers to white, middle-class Jazz Fest participants—that is, to write out our own emotions and dialogue. These narratives allow us to take more than one stance toward the festival and to reveal observations and conversations in a different way. We recognize that we are always analysts, always cooking the raw data of the festival, but then so are all the other fans, producers, and performers.

Writings about museums and festivals have a particular critical edge, perhaps in part because they are often the creations (or cocreations) of members of our own tribe—folklorists, anthropologists, and historians. Perhaps we look at museum displays and festivals as a form of term paper or article submitted to a jury of peers, for which the producers are then held accountable by the anthropologist enjoying the luxury of a single shape: cultural critic. As confessed amalgams, we never have that moment of solidity. Rather, we bring all our hybrid identities to this analysis—and a sampling of the multiplicity of voices we use. We hope this approach captures some nuance that doesn't perhaps show as directly in a more traditional analysis.

Moments in Shape-Shifting 2

Shana: Maybe it's like quantum ethnography—we're always in a state of flux until we take a measurement, and when we take an ethnographic measurement, we become a shape. You can see us in some way in those moments of measurement, the moments we write these sentences.

On a few occasions, we sat in positions of agency, as definers of structure and policymakers. Beyond those times, we see ourselves painted with the larger brush of festival reality (see Figure 3). Jazz Fest is a space of possibility, a cocreated reality

between producers and participants, that shapes middle-class time-out behavior (cf. Cantwell 1991). We argue that the social production of meaning at the Jazz Fest is determined by racialized and localized understandings of roots and heritage, and that race and class are pervasive, even when only implied or unconscious. Because of the highly racialized class structure of New Orleans, race also indexes class, and the two are complexly woven together in the deployment of the folk. In some sense, this essay is about the racialized power to define and produce. Frankenberg characterizes whiteness as shaped by power: “Whiteness turns out on closer inspection to be more about the power to include and exclude groups and individuals than about the actual practices of those who are to be let in or kept out” (1997:13). The larger race/class power structure available to all white Americans allows festival producers to enact their own definitions of folk culture and roots music while community voices are muted and allows participants and fans to revolutionize social realities in this defined space while not moving beyond the borders of the fairgrounds (Errington 1987).

The Search for Authenticity

The fact that the folk are marginalized in festivals that seek to celebrate them is not news. It is easy to show how producers objectify people over whom they have power. We seek to write humanistically about the producers in their context and to ex-



Figure 3. Watermelon Shana. In various years, Shana participated in the watermelon ritual. The ritual uses a chant from street watermelon vendors (“Watermelon, watermelon, red to the rind . . .”), which the creators/organizers found recorded in a book about New Orleans culture. In this photo, Shana is wearing a T-shirt representing the Pet da Kat Krewe, one of the folk groups that visit the festival en masse and enculturate new festgoers. Photo by Jeffrey David Ehrenreich.

amine the on-the-ground processes by which the folk are produced and consumed (and the ways in which they resist). We begin with a particular period in time and a cluster of encounters: a meal at Café du Monde in the New Orleans French Quarter, a conversation at the Hogan Jazz Archive at Tulane University, and an evening at Preservation Hall.

In the 1960s, Allison Miner came to New Orleans in search of the authentic, and she helped create a festival that reflected her own admiration for “real music.” In the 1998 film *Reverence*, she said of her early days in New Orleans that she was frustrated because she “didn’t know where the real music was” (Nesbitt 1998).⁷ She found the real music in Preservation Hall, Economy Hall, and the Tulane University Hogan Jazz Archive. Her concept of the festival was twofold: paying homage to the great and enduring past, and teaching others to appreciate these musicians as much as she did. “I wanted a little more reverence for what these people are doing . . . not just slap them up on stage and slap them off.” She wanted, in short, a forum to pay homage to the accomplishments of the native folk of Louisiana through music, crafts, and food.

The New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival began in 1970 in reverence for the folk, a search for authenticity in a world that seemed increasingly manufactured.⁸ Jazz Fest can be seen as part of a national tide that embraced a turning away from modernity and instead sought authenticity. At that point in history, choosing to present the folk rather than the modern was itself a form of symbolic opposition to power structures (cf. Bauman and Briggs 2003; Del Negro 2004:41–73). Two places emerge as crucial sites of production for the festival in personal narratives and press clippings about the early event: the Hogan Jazz Archive at Tulane University, where New York–based producer George Wein, with the assistance of archivist and jazz historian Dick Allen, “found” his local partners in the persons of Allison Miner and Quint Davis; and Preservation Hall, the French Quarter music venue where locals and visitors alike could hear “real” New Orleans traditional jazz music. At a time when other music clubs were featuring more popular and contemporary styles, Preservation Hall served not only as a source of talent (as many of the elderly musicians who played there were featured in the new festival) but also as an inspiration to the festival organizers, in shaping their desire to pay homage to “living legends,” and as a compelling argument for the power of living ethnological exhibits.⁹

Today, when people speak of “Jazz Fest,” they are usually referring to the seven days of music, food, and crafts staged annually at the Fair Grounds Race Course. In its early days, the Jazz Fest was structured more like a film festival or other jazz festivals—a series of concerts/workshops for which people (mostly aficionados) bought tickets. Festival organizers, however, particularly Miner and Wein, wanted the festival to be different, featuring a pronounced reference to the past and, in their minds, the authentic. So, they created a daylong event, a Louisiana Heritage Fair, that featured local food, musicians, and craftspeople and that was designed to feel much like a folklife festival.

Wein is also the creator of the groundbreaking Newport Jazz Festival and developed a festival production company that produces events around the globe. He cited the Heritage Fair as the key aspect marking off the New Orleans event as different from all others. “I would not be here if it were only to stage a three or four-night jazz pro-

gram," Wein was quoted as saying in a 1972 newspaper article. "It is the combination of jazz in all its forms with the special influences of Cajun music, gospel singing, South Louisiana foods, and native arts and crafts that makes this festival a thing apart. I believe in time it will become an event of international stature" ("Truly Unique" 1972:37). To help people understand this new concept of "heritage fair," the 1972 Jazz Fest program put the fair into context, comparing it not to the Newport Jazz Festival but to the Newport *Folk* Festival, which Wein also produced. The program said, "The Louisiana Heritage Fair . . . has its precedent some twenty years ago when the first Newport Folk Festival was created as a *living exhibition* of native American crafts and music" (New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival 1972:17). The very choice of the word "heritage" to describe their festival indexes the foundational role of the concepts "indigenous," "native," "local," and/or "folk." Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett analyzes the concept of "heritage" as a process of "transvaluation of the obsolete, the mistaken, the outmoded, the dead, and the defunct" (1998:149), in which value is created through exhibition. It was no coincidence that the early Jazz Fest shapers chose the Newport Folk Festival as a model to present their own "living exhibition" of Louisiana music, food, and crafts. Parker Dinkins, Jazz Fest fair director from 1974–75, said in an interview that the Music Heritage Stage directly referenced the obsolete, as the stage was started "to give performance space to performers who were out of style" (Interview, June 4, 2001). From its inception, then, Jazz Fest has been embedded in modernity. Its origin stories tell us that it was created in oppositional discourse against the commercial and the cosmopolitan, favoring the folk and the local against the trappings of modernity (Bauman and Briggs 2003).

Loss and Nostalgia

So, in 1969 Wein, Davis, and Miner launched their living exhibition. The festival that began with long talks in the Jazz Archive and over beignets at Café du Monde was staged in Beaugard Square (later Congo Square) and featured four stages of music, handmade crafts, and local cuisine. It was an abysmal financial flop. Miner said, "We had more people on stage than we did in the audience." In a published "postmortem" on the festival, Wein said that part of the problem was that the community did not understand what they were trying to do. He said it would have been easy to book acts with broad appeal to audiences. "However, if I did what I do in Newport . . . who needs New Orleans? . . . So I made the decision that what counts in New Orleans is the music heritage. Thus the Heritage Fair" ("Jazz Fest Postmortem" 1971). Rather than trade in the folk for the more commercially successful night concerts, Wein was determined to give the fair time to develop. In 1971, he declared his resolve in a letter to the editor of the *Vieux Carré Courier*, "Now we must make it big as well as important, which it already is" (Wein 1971).

When Wein calls the festival "important," he is indexing the sense of urgency to provide space to both underappreciated local music and dying or dead styles. At least one critic believed that the very existence of the Jazz Festival sounded the death knell of jazz. In 1972, Tom Bethell, a jazz scholar and an early critic of the Jazz and Heritage Festival, denounced the impulse to "embalm" living cultures, suggesting

that the very act of “preserving” was in itself a death sign. “If they have to create a festival for it, it must be moribund,” Bethell (1972:5) wrote. Bethell’s sentiment echoes that of Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, who brings this point home by quoting Stephen Mullaney on performances of culture for public audiences. “Such performances . . . are to be understood within a dramaturgy of power that first exhibits what it ‘consigns to oblivion’” (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1998:159–60). In this way, the festival itself can be understood as an act of nostalgia that emerged out of longing for disappearing traditions. These were widely perceived as in the process of being annihilated by the mass production of records, turntables, and jukeboxes, nearly making live music obsolete. Bethell wrote in his 1972 article that “in the 1920s, there was so much demand for live music that life itself came close to being a jazz festival.” He went on to bemoan the present situation, in which “there are still occasional parades and there are rare funerals with musical accompaniment. [But] these occasions are becoming such curiosities that hordes of anthropologists generally show up” (Bethell 1972:5).

The founders of the Jazz Fest, like the anthropologists Bethell evokes, were attracted to traditional music as an indigenous art form that was closely identified with a people and a way of life. The notion that it was disappearing only made their work more important, rather than making it less relevant. The idea of memorializing roots music while honoring living legends and creating a happening event where different musical genres and eras could converge became a central theme at the festival. However, by the time Jazz Fest was created, these forms were already on the margins of popular music and ignored by most people, even in New Orleans. By rescuing traditional (read: folk) forms and their practitioners from obscurity, the festival producers were instrumental in creating conditions for a “revival.” But they were also creating a structure whereby festival producers had the power to define what was traditional, what was worth saving, and what was *important*. The threat of dying tradition is an integral part of the framing of the folk. In fact, the more the folk are endangered, the more festival producers themselves—the ones who have an understanding of the value of these traditions—are empowered (or even mandated) to try and save them, to rescue them from oblivion. Thus, the ominous specter of disappearing traditions is integrated into the theoretical framework of the festival’s production. The festival producers become more than just people who are providing one of the world’s largest parties: they have a mission. This framing adds drama to the festival as the stage where this salvage operation is set, and it adds value to the festival itself. Because what is disappearing is necessarily scarce and therefore valuable, the discourse of disappearing folk adds value in the larger white, middle-class cultural exchange system.¹⁰

Perhaps most importantly, the discourse of endangerment and disappearance gives agency to the producers. The producers take on a complex role as organizers and financiers, as historians, and as managers of a delicate operation to salvage the folk. To rescue, to educate, and to empower the artists themselves, they take traditional music out of its neighborhoods and out of the social context in which it is historically embedded, enacting an operation of transformation.¹¹ George Wein, Quint Davis, Allison Miner, and others involved in producing the early festivals set in motion a process by which indigenous New Orleans music would be produced as folk

heritage. Drawing in part on the academic discourse of ethnomusicologists and jazz historians, who looked to the past for authentic musical forms, the producers in effect began to serve as mediators between “forgotten” indigenous music and the popular music industry, in opposition to which the folk were increasingly defined. During the 1960s, several prominent rock groups, and especially the Beatles and the Rolling Stones, were naming black blues musicians as their formative influences. The fact that they named which artists they were specifically imitating led to wider recognition of musicians such as Little Richard, Chuck Berry, and Muddy Waters. As historian Brian Ward put it: “venerable bluesmen like Muddy Waters, Mississippi John Hurt, John Lee Hooker, and Howlin’ Wolf . . . were suddenly in demand again,” but this “had the unfortunate effect of reducing black creators to perpetual ‘forerunners’ in the minds of white rock fans—a tendency accentuated when bands like the Stones let their blues heroes open concerts for them in the States—‘forerunners’ was precisely what those artists were in this context of intercontinental, cross-racial hybridity: r&b was simply the most important of several influences which collided and merged in these white anglo-pop-blues” (Ward 1998:175).

Second-Line Groups in New Orleans

Perhaps no groups are more intimately associated with the identity and authority of the Jazz Fest than the New Orleans second-line clubs and the Mardi Gras Indians. In the representations of the folk as the legitimating roots of contemporary pop music, the New Orleans second line plays a particularly significant role. The New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Foundation’s logo, an iconic silhouette of four second liners dancing with umbrellas, appears on staff members’ business cards and nearly all official documents, banners, and promotional materials. The term “second line” simultaneously refers to multiple phenomena. It is a distinctive syncopated rhythm, typically associated with the music played by New Orleans brass bands during traditional neighborhood parades (Riley and Vidacovitch 1995). It is a way of dancing in these parades, an uncodified and improvisational way of stepping to the rhythm. And it is a particular type of massive parade, organized by African American benevolent societies in New Orleans’ inner-city neighborhoods (Jankowiak, Regis, and Turner 1989; Regis 1999). Within the parade, the club members and musicians are said to compose the “first line,” while the joiners, or followers, who make up the overwhelming mass of participants, are the “second liners.” It is the unique dynamic interaction between musicians, club members, and followers, that characterizes a “second-line parade.” In such an event, there is no distinction between performers and observers, as all would-be bystanders are vigorously encouraged to join in (see Figure 4). Such encouragement usually takes the form of friendly gestures and shouts, such as “come on!” and “roll with it.” However, it can also take a more assertive form as paraders relish their ability to take over the streets, transforming (at least temporarily) blighted, crime-ridden neighborhoods into joyful spaces of conviviality and solidarity. As one lyric often chanted by second liners within the parade vigorously urges, “If you ain’t gonna dance, get the fuck on out the way!”

In neighborhood-based parades, the primary message expressed by the club members



Figure 4. Dancing to Treme. The second liner who joins in the dance behind the Treme Brass Band participates in the blurring of boundaries between observer and performer. Photo by Cindy Brown.

who sponsor these events is the respectability of blackness: fiscal potency, organization, family, community uplift, solidarity, beauty, dignity, and freedom. In this way they challenge dominant representations of blackness, which are circulated through the print and televised news media and which routinely depict African Americans as helpless victims of an oppressive society or as nihilistic criminals and victimizers (see Duneier 1992; Hutchinson 1996). Second-line parades produce a space for urban residents to express their identities and experiences in their own terms. The routes traced through the city during the clubs' four-hour Sunday afternoon parades, which celebrate the anniversaries of specific clubs throughout the year, map out relationships between club members and their families and important businesses (such as bars and funeral homes) and commemorate places associated with deceased friends, relatives, and club members. Parade routes inscribe the collective memory of social relations into the urban landscape (Regis 2001). Both within the clubs' anniversary parades and in their organization of jazz funerals for deceased members, traditional New Orleans parades connect the living with those who have gone before. It is not insignificant that when Allison Miner was asked by a journalist about her qualification to run a music festival, she insisted that "her experience with New Orleans jazz, really . . . is 'walking many miles through the streets of the city with funerals and parades'" (Citron 1972).

When George Wein speaks about the qualities he was looking for in local partners to help him organize a festival in New Orleans, he explained, “They had to know something about blues, gospel, Cajun music and [Quint and Allison] also knew about the whole culture, that I knew nothing about, the Indians and the whole structure of New Orleans and Louisiana Heritage” (New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival 1996). Here, Wein refers to the Mardi Gras Indians, another neighborhood tradition that stands for (or specifies) the crucial ingredient of *local culture* that a New York–based music producer couldn’t possibly have known about. Second lining at the Jazz Fest plays a crucial role, subverting the territorialization of distinct genres by parading through the soundscapes of several stages, including the Gospel Tent, the Jazz and Heritage Stage, the Economy Hall Tent (traditional jazz), the WWOZ Jazz Tent, and Congo Square. Festgoers listening to favorite bands, shopping for crafts, or standing in line for a crawfish plate may be surprised by the head-turning trumpet call of an approaching brass band, the deep groove of its tuba, or the colorful plumes of the dancing club members’ fans. Joining in the parade, at the encouragement of the club, band, and their entourage, they can become a part of jazz festival performance (see Figure 5). The Mardi Gras Indian parades that traverse the festival grounds twice a day infuse the atmosphere with the sacred mystery of their masquerade, invoking the memory of enslavement, maroonage, and the struggle for freedom in a powerful gesture of defiance to the antebellum and postbellum plantation (Berry 1995; Berry et al. 1986; Blank 1978; Lipsitz 1990; Smith 1994). The polymorphic second line that inevitably forms behind the Indian maskers uses tambourines, cowbells, handclapping, and chanting to contribute to the syncopated spirit groove of the Indians marching in costume. Since the beginning of the festival nearly forty years ago, these parades have thrilled and captivated festgoers.

In an April 2001 interview, Ronald W. Lewis, founder and president of the Big Nine Social and Pleasure Club, which parades annually in the city’s Ninth Ward streets, spoke to Helen about his experience participating in the festival parades.

It’s an exciting time, we look forward to being able to tell the world “we here!” and to show the world that this is something unique. . . . I really wish more of our people could see a bigger picture, could relate to people outside our society. . . . A communication gap has limited our success. . . . I’m not being racist. The only way we can gain more respectability and recognition is through the white media.

Thus, the festival provides an opportunity for club members to interact with diverse groups of people, including whites—an opportunity that he considers valuable. Lewis, who has increasingly served as a public spokesman for his tradition by giving talks at Tulane University, music symposia, and other venues, clearly sees having access to a larger world as a satisfying experience. Significantly, he emphasized that parading in the festival also enables him and his club members to bring friends, family, and neighbors into the Jazz Fest, “people in the community that otherwise wouldn’t have the opportunity to be here.” Clubs have access to community tickets at reduced rates. Thus clubs are important not only as figures of the city’s authentic folk performance traditions but also as conduits for regular working-class folks gaining access to the festival through subsidized tickets.¹²



Figure 5. Woman in bikini top. Festgoers, often dressed in very informal or even skimpy clothing, provide a sharp contrast to the formally attired performer from the New Orleans Original Big Seven Social and Pleasure Club as they second line across the fairgrounds. The consumers/festgoers are also participating in the dancing, as locals do in neighborhood parades. Here the boundary between the roles is sharply marked by stance, gaze, attire, and skin color. Photo by Cindy Brown.

But other conversations with social club leaders reveal that they are also aware of the way in which second-line clubs are part of the stratified order of performance at the festival. This becomes clear when they compare their status to that of other performers, as the following excerpt from Helen's fieldnotes indicates:

"Five hundred dollars. This is what we get. That amount there have no impact when Fall comes around for our parade. What you call folk-lore. We get this acknowledgement. [But] these shoes cost five hundred dollars." I look at his shoes more closely now. They are ostrich skin, a gorgeous shiny red leather. "At the same time, we come out here and get paid those peanuts. Those out of town entertainers. They leave, they leave here with the bank *full*. That's what I have a [gripe] with, the monetary disbursement thing. Not the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage."¹³

This club member makes clear that his difficulty with the way clubs are treated by the festival is in no way a criticism of the idea and structure of the festival as a whole, so much as with the way in which the clubs are situated in the festival's financial hierarchy. The festival structure itself, however, seems to remind him that participating clubs *are performers here*. They go in the performers' entrance. They

gather in a backstage area before their parades. They are issued contracts. They are paid for their show. And yet the festival structure also tells them implicitly that they are *second-rate performers* in a festival that books national and international stars. They are told by festival staff what their fee will be and when they will appear, rather than participating in a process of negotiation. They are corralled in a tent called “parade central,” which serves as their backstage area prior to their performances. They have no changing rooms, privacy, air conditioning, or refreshments other than a water dispenser. And they are paid at a rate that amounts to less than fifty dollars per person. They have no choice about what brass band will play during their parade. The festival gives them access to the world at the same time that it keeps them in their place.

Alex Clifford, an independent music producer who previously worked for Jazz Fest, echoed club members’ concerns about the low wages being paid to the clubs for their performances. “They set the standard. When the festival started, there wasn’t much of a market for second-line parades, so they set the standard. They determined the value that would be put on it. It’s so unfair. It does not honor or do justice to the tradition” (Interview, May 2002). Clifford argues not only that the festival underpays traditional second-line performers within the grounds of the festival itself but also that it has, in effect, a determining influence on what these groups can earn in other contexts, such as conventions, concerts, and other public events. Festival producers control the exchange value of the second line.

Moments in Shape-Shifting 3: Performing Blackness with Happy House

Helen: I’m there because my club president has asked me to fill out the ranks of club members who are participating in the infield second-line parades. Our club gets a fee for performing, which we use to help pay for our annual dance. Many of the club members are elderly African American women, and although they may not be virtuoso dancers, they have an embodied knowledge of music and dance that comes from having grown up in a community where dancing is an integral part of social life. And I bring with me all of my self-consciousness of being white in a black club performing blackness in a white space. Lining up backstage is probably the best part; we’re there with the other clubs. Camaraderie comes from the fact that we’re all there as paid performers, as members of the social club community. As a member of a black club, I may be, for some people and at particular times, an honorary member of that community, particularly in those moments when I am coperforming, contributing to the enactment, of that tradition.

“Go white girl!” “You’re not white, you’re black!” So I have been told while dancing behind the brass bands at second-line parades. While those words sometimes only serve to remind me of my whiteness, I realize they are usually meant as encouragement: you go. The second lines offers possibilities of crossing racial boundaries, something I explore in my ethnographic work on second lines outside of the jazz festival. It is easier to feel that transcendence at a second line when you’re clearly participating in a black social space. Your presence in that space is often read as a desire to close social distance. In the space of the Jazz Fest, it’s not read that way. Because the social club performers are meant to represent blackness in a white space, there my whiteness is more problematic.

I always felt like an uncomfortable subject of the exoticizing gaze. Dancing in front of the photographers, for example, I was both hypervisible and invisible. In retrospect, I'm pretty sure that they wanted to photograph the black second liners and not me.

Because festgoers and photographers might expect to encounter blackness when they come across a second line, the surprise of meeting a white person in the body of the parade may be disconcerting. In any case, it spoils their fun and the desire to have an unmediated experience of blackness through embodied culture, music, and performance.

Louisiana Folk Village

Programs from the first years of the festival list all crafts in one category, whether they were handmade caftans or palmetto baskets woven by members of the United Houma Nation. At the height of the festival's ethnographic divisions, there were five distinct areas that sold or demonstrated handmade art or crafts: the Louisiana Folk Village, Contemporary Crafts, Congo Square Crafts, the Louisiana Marketplace, and the Native American Village. Of these, all focus on offering items that are handmade or unique rather than mass produced, but each area references different authenticities that have emerged over forty years of festival history, at least in part from political struggle.¹⁴

In 1982, the first official structural split in the crafts was between "folk" and "contemporary," with the folk section referencing the past, de-emphasizing consumerism, and highlighting pedagogy. That year, for the first time, the program lists two directors for crafts, a "Folk" coordinator and a "Contemporary Crafts" coordinator. Although both areas are aligned with the handmade, they provide the two poles for the Jazz Fest's folk-elite spectrum.¹⁵ Compare the descriptions written by Jazz Fest staff members of the two areas. Of the Folk Village, they write, "Beneath the shade of a live oak tree in the center of the village, the folk demonstration stage presents entertaining interviews and colorful performances by folk tradition bearers. These informal demonstrations invite visitors to engage with Louisiana's living treasures" (New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival 2004). This description focuses on learning, informality ("beneath the shade of a live oak tree"), and the authority of the demonstrators ("living treasures"). In the contemporary crafts description, the focus is on artistic merit. The festival becomes a "showplace," and the artists represent the "best" in the nation. "The contemporary crafts area is a nationally recognized showplace of artists displaying and selling handmade fine art and fine craft. Each weekend offers a different array of acclaimed craftspeople representing the best of Louisiana and the nation" (New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival 2004).

Eventually festival organizers took the division a step further and by the 1990s had created the "Louisiana Folklife Village." This area is geographically separated from other crafts and at one point had a large arch as an entranceway, a portal through which people stepped from the commercial into the folk. Several years ago, the new director of the area took down the large arch and erected instead a circle of totems that set off the area. While in 1972 the ideas of "authentic" and "native" focused on

anything that stood in opposition to processed, machine-made modernity, by 1990 the focus had shifted from the produced to the producer—that is, to “native” or “authentic” people. In 1972, the program identified only one group of craftspeople as a group, Louisiana Indians. Represented that year were craftspeople from the Coushatta (Koašati), Choctaw, Tunica-Biloxi, and Houma nations. All other craftspeople were simply listed by name. Today in the Louisiana Folk Village, all people are identified by their region and, often, their ethnic group.

Over time, a distinction was created between “folk” craftspeople and “contemporary” craftspeople. More recently, a third distinction was added, the Louisiana Marketplace. One difference between these groups is their relationship to festival real estate. “Contemporary” artists and those in the Louisiana Marketplace pay for the privilege of having space to sell their wares, for having square footage with access to an affluent Jazz Fest audience. “Folk” artists, on the other hand, are paid to demonstrate and sell their wares.¹⁶ This structural difference indexes a huge chasm between the payers and payees. There could be several reasons for this chasm. A possible reading is that “folk” artists are more valuable on the open market than “contemporary” artists and therefore can command payment. However, conversations with festival staff and our insider knowledge of the Folk area do not support that reading. Our interpretation is that the difference in administrative structure reveals three assumptions: First, “folk” artists are inherently noncommercial, mostly producing their crafts or performing their occupation or ritual for an understood community, and therefore they need compensation for sacrificing their time to present these artifacts to tourists. Second, even “folk” artists who are interested in selling are often seen by producers as both socially and economically marginal. They have to be paid because they could not attend otherwise, and there would be no “folk” in the Folk Village. Third, “folk” art is not something that has an understood value in mainstream society—people have to be taught to appreciate it. Even if folk artists were interested in selling and could raise the money for a booth, they couldn’t make any money at the festival, because their crafts don’t have mass-market appeal.

Folk artists understand the chasm. Folk artist Suson Launey presented at the festival for over ten years. In 2001, when we talked, Launey was a resident of Iota in southwestern Louisiana and a member of the women’s annual Mardi Gras run. She was at Jazz Fest as a representative of the Cajun Mardi Gras tradition in particular and Cajun culture in general. Each year at Jazz Fest she sets out a display and sells the traditional Mardi Gras masks that she makes for the women. Since a folklorist first asked her in 1992 to start presenting this tradition at festivals, she began festival demonstrating as a career. At one point, she was regularly attending about four festivals around Louisiana during an average year. Launey’s work at festivals coincided with her being forced to give up her upholstery shop because of heart problems. She said that the festival work provides her with needed extra income and meaningful work. She does not depend on Jazz Fest sales to pay the rent, she said; however, at the time that she was interviewed, what she sold at Jazz Fest and other festivals determined her quality of life for the upcoming year. She depends on her festival sales to repair washing machines that break or to replace worn-out plumbing. Clearly, Launey was drawn to festival work for both cultural and economics reasons. Her self-presentation

in narratives about both her cultural identity and economic travails, mostly told to festival producers or staff, humanizes her own life trajectory. (This was the capacity Shana occupied when she and Laune recorded their conversation.) Folk presenters and producers are tied with webs of conversation that acknowledge each other's life stories. The cultivation of those relationships nonetheless occurs in an asymmetrical context, in which producers could choose not to invite someone back—not a power Shana held at the time of the interview. Although Laune carefully laid out, in equal measure, both economic and cultural reasons for participating in festivals, she understood that she was in a space that promotes a noncommercial rhetoric. In an interview, she told Shana:

I have things to sell to them, but I'm not here to sell. I'm here to promote my culture. Tell people about what's going on. And that's what I do. If they buy, fine. If they don't buy, fine. I'm getting the word out about this. I'm demonstrating, you know? Well, the contemporary crafts, they're going in primarily to sell, that's what they're looking for is to sell. We're not—a lot of them over here, don't have, like the Mardi Gras Indians, they [the Indians] don't have things to sell. A lot of us don't have things to sell. Sometimes I sell, and I stop selling and I just promote. And that's what you're here to do. Selling is *lagniappe* [a little something extra] to us, and it should be. At least in my opinion, that's what it should be. It's an extra. I'm glad to be able to sell, but I'm here to promote my culture and to tell them about the Cajun Mardi Gras. That's what I'm here for, that's what I look forward to doing. (Interview, April 27, 2001).

Laune heartily endorses this distinction between the folk and contemporary crafts areas: "Selling is *lagniappe* to us, and it should be."

For the Folk Village, authenticity and prestige is constructed through the emphasis on the noncommercial, the demarcation of space, signs denoting representativeness, and through the prestige of being paid rather than having to pay for space. All festival craft vendors possess the skill or ability to create art; but folklife demonstrators also must assert culture and community (Karp 1991:283). That is, their works (and their persons) are displayed as much for their culture as their craft, and the two cannot be separated (see Figure 6). Indeed, the goal is to contextualize the craft within its roots. The idea is that the craft or ritual will be a mechanism for festgoers to experience another culture or community. Folk Village staff choose participants for the Folk Village based on a number of factors, including personal knowledge of the folk artists (those webs of conversation mentioned earlier) and the artist's history of demonstrating at the festival.¹⁷ However, each of the three Folk Village coordinators that Shana worked with chose people as representatives of groups or cultures. Certainly this happens in contemporary crafts as well—no contemporary-crafts coordinator is going to sell booth space to only one genre and wind up with a festival featuring only glass blowers. A range of presentations is sought. However, the locus of representation is focused on skill and product, whereas in the Folk Village the focus is on culture, community, and identity. To this end, Folk Village artists are surrounded by explanatory signs and talk on stage with trained folklorists who serve as "interpreters" for the audience (Karp 1991:280).



Figure 6. Sunpie Barnes. In the Folk Village, Bruce “Sunpie” Barnes, a New Orleans culture bearer and a well-known musician and educator, is presented as performing “Carnival Masking Traditions.” Note that in the sign, his name is in far smaller print than the text describing the tradition that he performs here. Photo by Jeffrey David Ehrenreich.

One difference in festival agenda between the vendors and the demonstrators is spatial. The vendors are arranged in large tents in which individual booths face outward; each vendor has his or her own space, much like miniature stores. The demonstrators are grouped according to type of demonstrator (occupational crafts, ritual and music, domestic crafts), and they do not have booths. Rather, they are arranged at tables facing toward other craftspeople. The effect is much more like a large room in which people can wander and mingle, with backdrops that attempt to create a natural context for the craft. Thus, organizers seek to create a more intimate, conversational space where performers and visitors can interact as people.

Demonstrators and vendors also gain access to the festival through different routes. Vendors are admitted through a jury process. Potential vendors submit slides of their work, and a panel of people is chosen by the Jazz Fest staff to evaluate the artistic quality. Obviously, they are also interested in getting a wide variety of vendors at the festival, but within genres the applicants are judged, supposedly, on objective artistic measures. Demonstrators, on the other hand, come into the festival through less-direct routes. Usually a member of the festival staff approaches a potential demonstrator about possibly coming to the Jazz Fest. The names of these potential demonstrators come from many sources—other folklorists working in the state, talent scouting at

other folklife festivals, and even firsthand fieldwork. For years, the final decisions about who will demonstrate belonged to the folk coordinator and to the associate producer/fair director, with input from a folk advisory panel made up of professional folklorists and anthropologists. This panel, of which Shana was a member from 1995 through 2002, met twice a year to suggest ideas for demonstrators, critique past festivals, and regulate the definitions or politics of the concept of folklife as presented by the festival. The panel had the effect of defusing authority from localized festival staff to a dispersed board of experts.¹⁸

One of the key differences between the artists of the contemporary and folk areas is the degree of control they have over defining themselves. Contemporary artists submit self-chosen works to a supposedly impartial group of fellow artists. Folk artists, on the other hand, are usually chosen by professional academics or festival producers—not peer artists—and what they are allowed to present is regulated by academic definitions of who they are, culturally or ethnically, and who they are representing. In fact, the contracts for the Folk Village demonstrators clearly spell out how they will be defined for the purpose of the festival and what they may sell. The contract, in other words, tells the demonstrators what traditions they will be allowed to claim.

However, those controls and the noncommerciality of the Folk Village space are often contested. Almost without fail each year, some Folk Village demonstrators will erect a display or try to sell merchandise that is considered inappropriate by the festival staff. For example, one year a man was selected to come to Jazz Fest to represent the cowboy traditions of Louisiana. He was a whipmaker and, because this was part of his cowboying heritage, he demonstrated and sold leather whips. His wife came with him and erected a display of earrings that she had made. The earrings had cowboy themes—tiny horseshoes, and so forth. After consultation with other staff people and other folklorists at the festival (including Shana), the Folk Village coordinator asked the woman to remove the earring display. Both husband and wife protested. These earrings, they asserted, clearly were cowboyish. What was the problem? The problem, of course, was that cowboy earrings are not defined by scholars of Louisiana as a traditional regional craft and, additionally, she, the wife, could not be considered a “tradition bearer.” So the earrings had to go. The whipmaker and his wife were very unhappy with this decision and the ability of the producers (and their academic consultants) to define or limit their “folkness.”¹⁹

On another occasion, a big chief of a Mardi Gras Indian gang began selling Polaroids of festgoers posing with his magnificent suit. Other demonstrators complained. Shana was working the festival that day and concurred with the Folk Village coordinator that the chief must cease immediately because this was not allowed by his contract, he was upsetting other demonstrators (who were “playing by the rules”), and his actions resituated the Folk Village as a quasi tourist site, which violated the idea of the *folk* demonstrators as above the tawdriness of the common market. He was told by festival staff to stop. He put his camera away. But when Helen walked up to him with a colleague who wanted to talk to him about his bead work, he quickly offered to let them pose for a photo for ten dollars. “The proceeds go for our youth, to help pay for their plumes,” he explained. “We try to help them out, to make sure

the tradition gets passed on to the next generation.” Thus, framed within the logic of folklife preservation, the big chief was pushing against the boundaries erected by the festival to keep folk crafts education and commercialism apart. This chief, like other Mardi Gras Indians, spends thousands of dollars making his suit every year, and he was not interested in keeping his tradition pure from commercialism. He is well aware of the hundreds of festival attendees who photograph Indian parades during the festival and has seen Michael P. Smith’s glossy book (1994) filled with photos of Indians and second liners (which retails at \$39.95). Not without some humor, he proposes to reverse the usual direction of the photographic gaze by aiming his Polaroid camera at the tourist posing with his artistic creation. His use of the Polaroid thus contested the festival’s definition of “folk” authenticity. Further, well aware that some festgoers might object to participating in cash transfers in a folk space, he preempts any arguments with the unassailable rationale that the proceeds will go to subsidize the apprenticeships of youthful Indians, who are learning the beading techniques and the masking tradition from their elders.

Moments in Shape-Shifting 4

Shana: This is a good example of my shape-shifting and the difficulty of gaining perspective and getting a read. I was both documenting the festival and working at it, but at the moment when the other folk craftspeople complained, I assumed one shape—Jazz Fest producer charged with patrolling boundaries of “folk” and norms of behavior. I was thoroughly aggravated with anyone deliberately “breaking the rules” and complicating my life. Later, I was amazed at my own lack of introspection about the chief’s brilliantly counterhegemonic action of taking Polaroids. I told this story to many Mardi Gras Indians, and they loved it. Somebody finally was sneaking something over on the Jazz Fest! So now I hold two completely different opinions: as a producer, I still would not let this chief sell Polaroids; as a cultural observer, I would encourage him.

In sum, although the festival creates a rhetorical space in which everything is celebrated equally—the contemporary as well as the folk—the two groups are treated very differently, from the pay structure, to the way they gain access to the festival, to the spatial arrangement of their displays. Folk demonstrators are well aware of these differences and that they stand as representatives of the “other” to festgoers.

Julie Cruikshank has discussed similar negotiations by indigenous participants in the Yukon International Storytelling Festival, noting “the inability of festival organizers to stage-manage all performances, and the unwillingness of [storytellers] to be restrained by tidy regulations” (1997:59). She advances the argument made by Fred Meyers (1994), “that public performances of indigenous culture should be understood as tangible forms of social action rather than as texts or representations standing outside the real activity of participants” (Cruikshank 1997:56). In this light, folk demonstrators at Jazz Fest can be seen to be actively working to revise normative power relations at the festival through their (more or less subtle) flouting of the rules.

Jazz Fest Folk: It's All Good

As we see from our look at the second line and the Folk Village, Jazz Fest produces images of the folk for public consumption, creating/producing categories and understandings of “folk” and “traditional.” In addition, Jazz Fest produces its own vernacular culture. The majority of festgoers are white, and a good portion are relatively affluent. In a rough head count in three tents over the course of three days in 2004, the percentage of African Americans in the audience ranged from 3 percent to 30 percent. However, more than half of the time, less than 10 percent were African American. In the 2006 post-Hurricane Katrina festival, African American attendance dropped even further, with an informal head count showing that less than 5 percent were people of color at most events. We have a baseline of comparison. In 2003, Jazz Fest showcased African superstar Hugh Masekela as part of its celebration of South African independence. A head count of rough groups of one hundred at his 2003 performance yielded about 30 percent of the audience as African American. Masekela was invited back for 2006, and the audience was a similar size, but the head count yielded only about ten percent African Americans.²⁰ In the Jazz Fest setting, middle-class white people get the opportunity to partake of otherness in a space where difference is recognized, because it is labeled, tamed, and domesticated (Sandoval 1997:88). The festival, for all its sensory blowout, is also a controlled, safe space. Although the deliciousness of the event for whites lies in part in the potential for such large crowds to go out of control, the fact is that Jazz Fest is often cited as the safest event of its size in the United States. In an interview, the head of security for the festival said he works many concerts around the nation and many festivals. Over the course of a weekend, he said, they seldom have anything more exciting than someone passing out from heat exhaustion. In casual interviews, people often cited “the Jazz Fest spirit” as contributing to the fact that they had never seen a fight at Jazz Fest or heard of anyone being robbed. A folk craftsperson remarked that she had never had anything shoplifted by festgoers.²¹

Jazz Fest does not seek only to provide an all-out weekend for music aficionados. On one level, the festival attempts to create an equalizing world where the differences between folk, elite, and pop music are all leveled by love and connoisseurship—music: cool jazz to rockabilly; food: gourmet dishes like oysters in phyllo dough with cream sauce or a slab of barbecue chicken; crafts: precision-blown glass with silver inlays or fans made with palmetto and sewn with rattan. The politics of the Jazz Fest are that *it's all good*. It's the Jazz Fest spirit.

Fifty years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, social spaces in America are still fairly segregated, and all festgoers who are so inclined can savor the special conditions under which music seems to break down barriers of class, race, and geography. In music events, we are, at least for the moment, one nation under a groove. As another writer put it, “Jazz Fest provides a unique occasion for locals and visitors of all colors and backgrounds to mix happily in a collective embrace of Louisiana culture and spirit” (Hearn 2000:17). In everyday life, most of the festgoers are separated from folk presenters and performers by social class and by their positioning in the racial-spatial order (Rahier 1998). In a sense, the festival creates a virtual communion across boundaries of race, class, and culture.

Moments in Shape-Shifting 5

Shana's field notes, spring 2001: I'm in the audience at Congo Square. Frankie Beverly and Maze—a very popular act and so the audience is large. The stage manager, who's African American, announces: "This is beautiful. Black people and white people together. It's beautiful." And in that moment we are all together.

Shana to Helen, 2007: This was a racial experience for me. I am one of a minority of white people in the audience, at a mostly white festival—and the thing he chooses to comment on is racial harmony. That flooded the audience . . . and people looked around with liquid eyes. It was an incredibly powerful experience. I had a moment of the transcendence of race, in which I as a white person in a black space was completely included.

Harder to articulate and more precarious is a feeling of forgiveness, and with it, of redemption. The white body can be read as a de facto emblem (a badge) of connection to Jim Crow and histories of oppression. For a white person in a black space to be momentarily relieved of that racial reading can feel like transcendence, a lifting up of an invisible weight. But, of course, what Shana was not reflecting on at the time was how this "black" space was opened up in a white setting by the choices of (mostly) white producers. (Amazingly, Frankie Beverly and Maze had not previously been invited to Jazz Fest, despite the group's long-lasting New Orleans popularity. This is probably because the group has relatively few white fans.) Yet even this critique of the racist structure does not lose sight of the event as one of racial *sincerity*, on the part of the producers, the African American announcer, and the mixed audience (cf. Jackson 2005). Jazz Fest provides "real" events in "fake" settings, giving audience members permission to leave race opaque but simultaneously grounding the identity of all participants in "intention, faith, belief, inclination and commitment" (Jackson 2005:21).

Moments in Shape-Shifting 6

Helen: The first time I went to Jazz Fest in the late 1980s, a friend of mine took me to see a group I had never heard of. The show was in a big tent with stripes—it might have been the gospel tent, or it might have been some other tent. Sweet Honey in the Rock was performing. And I don't know if I can verbalize it; it's hard to describe what happened—I had an experience in that tent of losing any sense of being separate from anybody else in that space. I felt, for lack of a better word, love for everybody in the room. Bugs the shit out of me when Cantwell (1991, 1993) writes about it. I think that was before I became an anthropologist.

The experience is framed by the closing remark "that was before I became an anthropologist," indexing a theoretical innocence that seemingly made this experience possible and that allows it to remain in memory as a "pure" moment of transcendence, uncontaminated by social theory and critical cultural studies.

Shana: I was in that tent at the same time for the same performance, although I didn't know you then. I think neither of us was in anthropology. What I remember was that I was mesmerized. Like you, I lost myself in the larger body. One of the singers was coming forward on the stage, toward the audience. Singing so strong. And she walked right up to the edge and fell off! The whole tent held its breath. We were one breath, one body. Hundreds of people silent as one. A beat or two passed, and from where she hit the ground the singer took back up the same note. We cheered. That's a Jazz Fest moment. I felt joyful and giddy. I was hooked.

For festgoers, the juxtaposition of so many diverse art forms in one space creates a heightened experience of cosmopolitanism. The typical (white, middle-class) festgoers can experience an astonishing range of musical styles, indigenous foods, and crafts without having to challenge their comfort level. The heady experience of transculturation was praised in reports on the Louisiana Heritage Fair of the early years, as this 1973 story indicates:

It's a come as you are party where those dropping in include politicians, professionals, celebrities, fashion models, college students, families, artists, photographers, out-of-towners, and other jazz aficionados. From Thursday through Sunday, salt and pepper throngs from Desire to Uptown, Gentilly to Gretna, Mid-City to Metairie, the Quarter to Chalmette will pass through the gate at the Fair Grounds. . . . (Ouale 1973:11)

Another journalist enthused, "*If you haven't for one reason or another, been able to attend a black church to hear rousingly righteous gospel music, here is your chance to hear and see some of what you've missed*" (Lentz 1973; emphasis added). Thus, you can experience authentic "blackness" without putting yourself in a black neighborhood, with all the complications (and possibly discomforts) that go with that. Notice that the whiteness of the "you" in the article is assumed, without ever being spelled out. Going to a black church on a Sunday morning, for those in search of authentic black sacred music, requires that one find a guide or a host, or venture out into the other's social space unaccompanied. "Am I welcome here?" the urban explorer invariably asks. Of course, the festival space, for some, desacralizes at the same time that it decontextualizes black sacred music (see Johnson 2003). Uncertainty about the meaning of gospel is created by its positioning in a "fair" as one of many genres. As one longtime festgoer, Jack, told Shana, "I only go to church once a year, when I go to Jazz Fest."

Moments in Shape-Shifting 7

Shana: It's Friday around 5 or 5:30 p.m. and I sat down in the Lagniappe Stage, an open area. I was tired and I'd been taking field notes all day. I was writing up field notes and the woman next to me fell into conversation with me, curious about what I was doing. I told her I was asking people about how they felt about Jazz Fest. She immediately wants to tell me her story. She's from Birmingham, probably in her early forties. She and her

husband have been coming to Jazz Festival for about ten years, she says. "People had been telling us about it for years. We always said, 'We don't like jazz. I'm not going to a festival named jazz.'" In 1992, however, some friends called, and they reconsidered in order to come hear Jimmy Buffet perform. "I got here and I thought, 'Oh my god! What is all this and how did I not know it existed? It was a whole other world of music that we didn't know existed. What is this?' Good gracious. I found out I really did like jazz. I don't really like modern jazz, but I love traditional jazz. It changed our whole lives. It changed our whole perception of the world." The precise moment of transformation was one the woman well remembered. She and her husband were walking across the fairgrounds during that first visit. The pair of them were snaking their way through the crowd, and for a moment she lost contact with her husband. She looked up and she was holding the hand of a black man. "In another setting, if a black man had grabbed me by my hand, it would have been, 'Oh my god!' But here we—a lot of barriers were gone and a lot of stereotypes were gone. . . . We just looked at each other and burst out laughing. A lot of barriers were gone."

Jazz Fest is as much performed by the audience as by the professional/folk/authentic artists. Jazz Fest inspires specific fest attire, attitudes, and language. For instance, people have specific clothes that they wear only to Jazz Fest, or they prepare clothes for the event, making it almost a cross between Halloween, Woodstock, and a day at the beach. Jazz Fest is a space for displaying skin and slogans. Often subversive, silly, or political in nature, slogans and T-shirt imagery are usually good natured or whimsical, like "cleverly disguised as a responsible adult" or large tie-dyed shirts with images of Peter Tosh or Bob Marley. Taking a page from the New Orleans Mardi Gras tradition, many longtime festgoers have organized themselves into "krewes"; two of the largest are the Pet da Kat Krewe and the Lanna Kat Krewe. The Pet da Kat Krewe has been around for at least ten years and now has more than a thousand "members" and a Web site. They "meet" annually at the Jazz Fest and hold a crawfish boil on the weekdays between the two weekends of the festival, but they also travel to other music festivals. Jazz Fest has particular, notable "characters" who, while not part of the official roster of Jazz Fest artists, are nonetheless well known and looked for by festgoers year after year. Some of those characters include Beatle Bob, the Watermelon guys (see Figure 1 above), Half-fast Eddie, and Sana, the dancer in the gospel tent. Sana died in 2003, and a ritual was held for her at the 2004 festival. Harry Breaux, the dancer with the red clogs at the Fais-Do-Do Stage, was shot and killed on a side street in New Orleans during the 2004 festival, and a small memorial altar was erected on festival grounds for him. Festgoers are not passive consumers of the music, but rather they bring their own bongos, tambourines, and even guitars. At the 2004 festival, a group brought a small wading pool and in that way insinuated themselves into the performance. And like members of any traditional group, participants resist and protest corporate control of what they have defined as their space. When Jazz Fest brought in the car manufacturer Acura to sponsor the largest stage, the festival set up a tent where festgoers could see Acuras on display. To many fest folk, this violated the Jazz Fest spirit, and within days, hundreds of pins and T-shirts popped up showing a small boy urinating on an Acura.²²

The well-known fest folk mentioned above are such an integral part of the performance and setting that Jazz Fest has organized narrative stage sessions centering on, basically, the devotion of the audience. In those sessions, fest folk pointed to Jazz Fest as unique, as offering something they can't get anyplace else. The Pet da Kat Krewe members are overwhelmingly white collar and middle class. The members Shana interviewed were financial analysts, computer programmers, and teachers. They said they book their annual vacations at Jazz Fest, because it is a place they can find "spirit" and the "renewal" they need to go back and work at their jobs for the rest of the year.

Meeting in the Presence of the Other: The Original Fest Folk

Quint Davis recalled meeting cofounder Allison Miner when they lived in the French Quarter. Their balconies across the street from each other, they "heard each other's musics [including] rural and urban blues and gospel and traditional American music from the Smithsonian [Folkways recordings]" (New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival 1996). Self-styled progressive whites have tended to define their relationships to each other through black social space, black music, and black culture. As Norman Mailer put it, one "would be hard put to find the taint of hip without the blood of jazz" (Mailer 1957:22). What better way to articulate a countercultural identity than to define oneself as hip through the connoisseurship of black roots music? Thus meeting in the presence of the other lies at the very origin of the festival, in narratives told (and retold) by the festival's founders during commemorative events. In some ways, Quint and Allison's meeting across the balconies is re-enacted at each Jazz Fest by thousands of festgoers: people can find and identify each other through their music consumption, usually across boundaries of otherness. In the case of Quint and Allison, their auditory meeting gave way to more embodied acquaintance, and the two eventually became lovers. In her famous analysis of homosocial space, Eve Sedgwick (1985) has argued that women often serve to mediate the relations between men; so too in New Orleans, whites define their relations through blackness. In fact, white festgoers and producers define their identities through varieties of otherness, which we argue are manifested in the construction of the folk during the festival. Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs (2003) have argued that such constructions through otherness are among the foundational processes of modernity. Ruth Frankenberg (1997), David Roediger ([1991] 1999), and others have shown that such processes of defining whiteness through otherness operate at a macrolevel, both temporally and socially, and have been integral to the social construction of whiteness in the United States. In the context of this particular event, we argue that whites are able to construct identities through difference in the temporally and spatially condensed experience of the festival.

The construction of such identities in America often involve a claim to special status as dis-implicated in racist structures of domination and exploitation. Critic Coco Fusco (1995) points out that cross-cultural borrowings by the subaltern and by members of privileged groups are not evenly evaluated: Who gets to borrow at the Jazz Fest? When Widespread Panic's lead singer does Dr. John's "I Walk on Guilded Splinters," he grounds his neohippie jam-band pop music in roots authenticity, but

when a Native American artist from Louisiana borrowed from Southwest or plains designs, her crafts were confiscated (Brown 2000). Fusco has issued a call that those who study and critique society must “cease fetishizing the gesture of crossing as inherently transgressive,” without regard for historic and current structures of domination and marginalization (Fusco 1995:76). In the context of Jazz Fest, we build on Fusco’s provocative analysis to suggest that our own border crossings—as festgoers, as producers, as writers—do not in themselves rework social and cultural power structures. Furthermore, the differential valuing of cultural purity and traditionalism as an emblem of authenticity at this festival has yet to be explicitly problematized. In fact, there seem to be divergent logics at work among festival producers. On the one hand, the diverse musical offerings celebrate innovation and creativity. On the other hand, narrow conceptualizations of folk authenticity often exclude genre-bending hybridity in the folk and heritage areas. Our larger project aims to explore how this festival can be simultaneously transgressive and oppressive and how this paradox is experienced by performers, producers, and consumers.

Producing the Folk

In this article, we have explored the contested relation between producers and performers of the folk in the context of a major music and heritage festival. We write about the on-the-ground processes by which the folk are produced and consumed (and the way in which they resist). We strive toward a reflexivity that accounts for these complex, hybrid identities that producers, folk performers, consumers, and participants embody. For those who produce and those who consume the folk at the Jazz Fest, blackness and other forms of otherness are central to producing a concentrated experience of cosmopolitanism and to constructing (and maintaining) a hip identity. Festgoers and producers are *in the know* about the folk, even if they are separated from them by race, class, and/or education. Those who produce the folk participate in an imaginary leveling of difference by juxtaposing performers, artists, and festgoers who in everyday life are widely separated from each other. More precisely, everyone can participate in the hipness of difference through their participation in the celebration of the folk. By learning how to make Cajun carnival masks, conversing with Susan Launey about alligator locomotion, honoring the living ancestors of American popular music, second lining behind a social and pleasure club, and chanting with the Mardi Gras Indians, one becomes a part of the folk.

Folk artists, demonstrators, vendors, and performers are tightly disciplined by the festival structures, such as contractual obligations, which specify precise limits on what they can and cannot do or sell, and by those festival producers who determine who gets in and who will not be “asked back” to next year’s festival. But folk performers and artists are not passively undergoing production by festival staff. Indeed, we have seen how folk artists take issue with the power/knowledge alignments that result in contracts that offer “peanut” wages and producers who can confiscate earrings or forbid a Big Chief to sell a few Polaroids. The folk continually work—subtly, persistently, and steadily—to assert their own notions of peoplehood, of tradition, and of community in the context of festival production. Among festgoers and producers, it is still possible to

apprehend a shared fantasy about the festival as a dream of racial transcendence. Writer and historian Robin Kelley, in his brilliant book *Freedom Dreams* (2002), argues that it is crucial to take utopian aspirations seriously, even when their practical realizations are imperfect or highly problematic. Jazz Fest was and is a utopian project. At the same time it is a huge money-maker and institution that reinforces rather than transforms existing social structures. This tension strikes us as profound, because we still wish to honor that original dream of transformation.²³ The festival continues to gain its power from the fact that many festgoers return year after year in search of moments of transcendence, if not redemption (see Figure 7).

Festivals have long been seen as conscious community displays, often showcasing versions of community ideals rather than lived experience. In this idea of self-conscious display, festivals have become a site for cultural critique. That is, because the festivals are consciously produced by people who have the power to create and craft such exhibitions, folklorists, anthropologists, and cultural studies scholars have deconstructed the events, examining what is chosen to be displayed, who consumes the displays, and what social/cultural purposes are being accomplished. The types of performances and exhibits presented and the kinds of people consuming them offer an unveiling of a community's power structures and values that can remain obscure or cloaked in day-to-day interactions.



Figure 7. Moment of transcendence. A woman participates in an "intertribal" dance in the festival's Native American Village. Photo by Cindy Brown.

When community insiders design festivals, they incorporate into the social space of the festival the very social structures, cleavages, and strengths that shape their home communities' quotidian experience. The producers' social geography is then reproduced—beauties, flaws, fault lines, and all—in the public performance and presentation of the festival. That is, festivals are community microcosms on many levels, and the creators of the festivals present for analysis entire maps of social structure—not only through their creations displayed for consumption but also through their systems of production and structures of participation. After looking at the social structure of the production of the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, the events and crises that came in the wake of Hurricane Katrina seem inevitable and sadly predictable.

Moments in Shape-Shifting 8: Understanding Shifts in Whiteness

Shana: All of these stories are commentaries on my whiteness and my powers. I chose them for a reason. Each of these reflexive quotes is a moment in the shape-shifting of whiteness. In the policing of Polaroids, my whiteness coincides with my gatekeeping authority. At Congo Square, it coincides with an experience of being white in a majority black city. In the Lagniappe Stage, my whiteness was as a co-conspirator—there was an assumed complicity, an assumption that I would bring my own experiences of whiteness to bear in interpreting the story. Through mutual recognition of our (southern) white femininity, she (the festgoer who found herself holding hands with a black man) is acknowledging crossing a color line. She knows that I will understand the taboo—and her story—for the meaning it has.

Producing Whiteness

Jazz Fest not only produces the folk through its organizational structures and processes of authentication; it also produces a certain experience of whiteness through the construction of festgoers as normative consumers of folk culture and roots. Critical to this production of white normativity is the erasure of any uncomfortable references to poverty, inequality, or structured privilege. In demographic terms, the massive and enduring displacement of low-income New Orleanians, the steep increase in ticket prices, and a reduction in the community ticket program in recent years further ensures the disappearance of the material, embodied presence of less-affluent and marginalized communities from the festival grounds.²⁴

The systematic masking of any form of structural inequality, whether with respect to gender, sexuality, race, class, or geography, can be difficult to pin down ethnographically, as it often operates through the implicit, unspoken, common sense of festival production. Yet, as the following section illustrates, it was clearly manifested in an event that occurred in 2005, the year in which the festival featured South Africa as the international theme country. The excision of a photograph of a South African township from a festival exhibit was requested by South African Airways, one of the sponsors of that year's festival. Although the curator of the exhibit opposed the deletion, the producers backed the sponsor's request and mandated the removal of the photo.

Moments in Shape-Shifting 9: Whiteness and a Photograph

Helen: I was asked by the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities to serve as an external evaluator for the South Africa folk crafts exhibit on the fairgrounds. My task was to gauge the efficacy of the presentation and content of the exhibit in serving a pedagogical function for its audience. The text and photo panels produced with LEH funding were well written, beautifully illustrated, and effective in providing a social/cultural context for festgoers' appreciation of South African folk craft production. Yet my curiosity was piqued by the noticeable superposition of a photograph onto one of the text panel's photos. When I inquired about this with my contact at the festival, she explained that the curator and writer of the exhibit had taken a series of photos on a visit to South Africa and had included a photo of a township in the original panel. South African Airways, one of the sponsors of the festival that year, having helped to fund the participation of artisans and musicians, objected to the photograph as reproducing stereotypical images of South African poverty and asked that the photograph be removed or replaced with a more positive representation of national culture. The curator refused, but was overruled by higher-up festival producers. I found this censorship significant enough to include it in my otherwise very positive evaluation of the work of festival staff in producing the exhibit.

Arguably, Helen was using her power and relative autonomy as a university-based scholar to express a critique that was muted within the festival organization by systemic hierarchies and financial imperatives. In the compromises routinely made for the sake of "edutainment," one rarely finds the silencing process at work in such an unambiguous moment of censorship. Here, the discourse of South African Airways exhibited a confluence of nationalism with their economic interests in tourism promotion. Moreover, the sponsor's economic interests dovetail neatly with festival producers' interests in the erasure of inequality and discomfort for middle-class festgoers (and would-be travelers to South Africa). Both festgoers and potential tourists might be expected to avoid the discomfort brought about by a sharp awareness of the gap between wealth and poverty. Festival logic reinforces an understanding of diversity and multiculturalism that ignores socioeconomic differences structured in inequality. Indeed, as Susan Auerbach observed in another festival context, "the differences highlighted are innocuously cultural, rather than political or socioeconomic" (1991:236).

Remarking on the growing industry of whiteness studies in 2001, Ruth Frankenberg observed that "one of the truisms about whiteness . . . is the idea that whiteness is an unmarked category" (2001:73). The observation that this notion is "a mirage or . . . a white delusion" has not made it disappear (73). And yet the critical question remains, according to Frankenberg, to elucidate for whom is whiteness invisible and to consider the processes whereby whiteness becomes visible, in effect, becomes *marked* (78, 83). At the Jazz Fest, whiteness is invisible, arguably, only to white folks, who proclaim their own innocence and colorblind ethos, while avoiding the opportunity to examine their locations in positions of privilege in a society and a festival structured in dominance. Those festgoers who jokingly refer to Jazz Fest as "white fest" are far from blind in this regard. And though they may find themselves privileged by income,

social connections, or their role as artists, musicians, and professionals, they examine their own inclusion and participation with a critical distance. The irony is that the festival's normative discourse makes blackness visible as "jazz" and "heritage," while the half-joking epithet "white fest" reverses the objectification, making whiteness plainly visible. What is more, the phrase "white fest" simultaneously marks both whiteness and the festival as sites structured by unequal access and privilege.

To be fair, Jazz Fest producers did not create the societal disparities in New Orleans and the nation that shape race and class participation among festgoers. Neither should they (or we) be held singularly accountable for dismantling racial inequality and privilege. Nonetheless, the invisibility of racial economic inequality on the festival grounds is strangely echoed, following Frankenberg's analysis, by the silencing of racialized inequality in festival discourse. This seems to mirror a shift in American popular consciousness from a race-evasive stance to what she terms a "power evasive race cognizance" among white folks in the United States. That is, a newer generation of Americans are increasingly race cognizant, "aware of the racialization of daily life and subjecthood," without necessarily being antiracist (Frankenberg 2001:90–1). Frankenberg's analysis suggests that white Americans increasingly believe that while "history" had perhaps dealt an unfair hand to racial and ethnic minorities, history *was* history, period. For many white interviewees, "that 'history' was over, and if people of color continued to fare badly, this was possibly thanks to their own lack of effort" (Frankenberg 2001:89).

Jazz Fest, to borrow a phrase from Howard Winant, embodies "racial projects at play" (2001:101). The notion of "racial projects" was first developed by Michael Omi and Winant in their 1986 book *Racial Formation in the United States*. Racial projects, for Winant, "link significations or representation of race . . . with social structural manifestations of racial hierarchy or dominance" (Winant 2001:100). "Each [racial] project offers an alternative interpretation of the meaning of race, and thus of the post-civil rights signification of whiteness" (102). Festgoers, performers, and producers are clearly not homogenous in their views on race after the civil rights movement. Nonetheless, it is possible to observe a dominant discourse at the festival that foregrounds difference and mutes references to present-day inequalities. Racial oppression would appear to be safely in the past, while civil rights gains are a secure achievement to be celebrated. Jazz Fest is arguably a comfortable space for white folks who are engaging in the consumption of racialized authenticity while enjoying the benefits of (invisible) white privilege in a purportedly colorblind society.

The Festive State

Since August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina and New Orleans have become national symbols of the social divides in U.S. society. The drama of the disaster unveiled social inequalities and dysfunctions that have been invisible in ordinary times, or worse, have been normalized as taken-for-granted aspects of social life. In this sense, as Anthony Oliver-Smith noted at a panel on Hurricane Katrina during the 2005 American Anthropological Association conference, disasters make "social ills visible" (cf. Domínguez 2005; di Leonardo 2007).²⁵

When Hurricane Katrina sideswiped New Orleans, many Americans were stunned by the televised images of thousands of poor, mostly African American citizens who had little means to escape the path of an impending natural disaster and wound up massed in the Superdome and the city's convention center facing dire circumstances (see Domínguez 2005). A major tourism destination without the overt racial problems and well-known poverty that besiege cities such as Detroit or Washington, D.C., New Orleans was not categorized in many American minds as primarily an urban problem but rather a fun playground. Significantly, rather than helping New Orleans avoid poverty and inequality, the city's role as playground to the world continuously reproduces unequal social structure. Even as it offers opportunities for a national audience to experience our culture, *the festive state of the city* has muted the voices of those who try to focus attention on urban issues (see Guss 2001).

There is (or, before Katrina, there was) an illusion that New Orleans is a healed city. In May 2000, folklorist and civil rights activist Worth Long remarked to Shana that during the 1960s, civil rights workers came to the city during intermittent reprieves from the battlegrounds of Mississippi and Alabama to hear music and enjoy the city's easygoing conviviality. Many visitors and residents have been able to experience a sense of transcendence of race/class divides through music and consumption. The widely shared illusion that the magical healing power of music and food somehow solves the problem of racial and class inequality in New Orleans is a seductive one. When Bruce Springsteen closed his powerful Jazz Fest set in 2006, producer Quint Davis came on stage and said simply: "Witness the healing power of music." And the emotion across the field was as palpable as at a fundamentalist church revival. Newspapers around the nation used this moment and the festival to talk about (and mitigate) the city's devastation. Speaking later to a reporter, Davis asserted: "The festival was strong enough to power two weekends. Even Mardi Gras was more relatively abbreviated, compared to what this was. That says something about what the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival has become within the life and culture of New Orleans and, in this larger fishbowl right now, as a metaphor for what New Orleans means to America" (Spera 2006:C1). This is a powerful idea: that gathering together to honor music and tradition will heal us. But, ultimately, it is an idea that has failed us. Katrina has forced us to see this more clearly, but, of course, it was always there.

In fact, the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival and the drama of a natural/social disaster such as Katrina provide radically different but complementary windows into the social structure of the city. Both are time-out experiences, in which ordinary ways of being and relating are suspended.

As national and international media attention on New Orleans wanes, the reconstruction and rebuilding effort in the city remains underanalyzed.²⁶ The Bring New Orleans Back Commission's cultural committee appointed by Mayor Ray Nagin included a famous musician, a real-estate developer, and major actors in the art, film, and music industries. Yet the crucial social networks celebrated on the grounds of the Jazz and Heritage Festival were nowhere to be seen, while powerful men pontificated on the city's cultural heritage and future. The public-private partnerships that emerge from such exclusionary practices are unlikely to serve the

interests of the producers of the city's celebrated cultural traditions. For example, a proposal for a musicians' village aimed to bring displaced musicians back to New Orleans, recognizing their importance to the city's economic future. Yet the grassroots social organizations that support those musicians remained in exile in Houston, Atlanta, and small towns and trailer parks throughout Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Texas. The cultural icon of the second-line parade was continually evoked in reports, editorials, and political speeches, including President Bush's televised national address from Jackson Square in September 2005. Yet, when the New Orleans Police Department raised parade permit fees in January 2006 from \$1,600 to \$4,000, they did so without holding a public hearing. City officials seemed prepared to tax the tradition out of existence. However, a coalition of social clubs sued the city on constitutional grounds for creating an arbitrary permitting scheme. In the resulting settlement, the city agreed to reduce permit fees. But it remains to be seen whether this legal strategy represents a decisive shift in social clubs' ability to determine their own destinies in the festive city. In the social production of "reconstruction," as in the social production of the festival, structurally powerful actors continue to discuss culture bearers without inviting them to participate in the formulation of cultural policy. The producers' benevolent inclusion of tradition bearers in the city's major public festivals, such as Jazz Fest, continues, even as performers struggle for a place in the city.

Notes

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1. According to the New Orleans *Times-Picayune*, the festival brings in more tourism dollars but not more tourists (Mowbrey 2001). The city of New Orleans doubles in size during Mardi Gras, the world's largest free party, and in 2001 it attracted 2 million people. Jazz Fest tickets cost \$45 at the gate in 2007, and many festgoers, who also shop in the crafts area and visit the city's art galleries and fine restaurants, are affluent.

2. Jazz Fest attendance dropped sharply after September 11, 2001, and to date has not climbed back up to the 2001 numbers. In 2004, attendance was expected to rebound when torrential rain caused the closing of the festival for an entire day and an early closing for another day. On the third day, the threat of severe thunderstorms led most local festgoers to stay home. Total attendance that year reached only 377,000 people (Webster 2005). Estimates of how much the festival lost in 2004 range from \$600,000 to \$1 million, and the loss reverberated throughout the organization. The foundation board fired half of its eight-member staff, and the nature and viability of the festival itself were questioned. The board also fired the company that had produced the festival since its inception (Festival Productions, Inc.) and accepted bids to hire a nationally known, mainstream festival producer/concert promoter to run the festival. But many of the national promoters proposed a more commercial direction for the festival, and at the last minute, the board "voted with their hearts" and rehired the home-grown production team, headed by Quint Davis (Waddell 2004). Davis, of Festival Productions, Inc., partnered with California-based AEG, the nation's second-highest-grossing concert promoter. This provided Davis with additional financial support in case of (quite literal) rainy days and also provided access to a larger line up of big-name music celebrities to add to the Jazz Fest roster of performers (cf. Foster 2005). In 2007, Jazz Fest posted its biggest year since 2003, and 375,000 people came to the event, despite one day of hard rain. Jazz Fest no longer releases daily attendance figures.

3. We use "producer" here to refer collectively to all those staff members who work at the festival. Our use thus differs from that of festival insiders, who distinguish the high-level producers at Festival Productions, Inc. (FPI) from the staff of the nonprofit New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Foundation and all those seasonal, temporary, and volunteer workers and contractors whose labor makes the festival happen but who may not be setting festival policy. We acknowledge that this lumping together necessarily causes us to overlook important organization dynamics, and we hope to explore them in future research.

4. Olga Najera-Ramirez, drawing on Américo Paredes, has noted that when we observe festivals, we occupy multiple roles at one time (Najera-Ramirez 1999:184; Paredes 1977).

5. E. Patrick Johnson was thinking along similar lines when he wrote, "I construct my ethnographic practice as an 'impure' process—as a performance. Moreover, rather than fix my informants as static objects, naively claim ideological innocence, or engage in the false positivist me/them binary, I foreground my 'co-authorship,' as it were, of the ethnographic texts . . . for I was as integral to the performance/text-making process as were my informants" (2003:10).

6. We are indebted to Nicky Gregson and Gillian Rose (2000) for inspiring this strategy.

7. Simone de Beauvoir had a similar complaint when she visited New Orleans in the 1950s: "we wanted to hear real jazz played by a Negro band; or wasn't there any left in America?" (1998:98).

8. The official start of the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival is a debated topic. There were two festivals before the one we're citing as the first. In its July 20, 1972, issue, *Downbeat* magazine dismissed the first two because, "The first two festivals were produced under different auspices and didn't have the 'heritage' portion." The Jazz Fest producers themselves officially date the first festival as 1970. The Jazz Fest celebrated its thirtieth anniversary in 1999.

9. Our narrative here is based on newspaper clippings from scrapbooks about the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival that are located in the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Foundation Archive. The scrapbooks contain numerous articles from local dailies and alternative weeklies, as well as mimeographed unpublished manuscripts compiled by Allison Miner. In those situations in which some citation information was missing from an article, we have provided the facts of publication that were available and cited the document in the scrapbook. Another important source of festival history comes from the interviews with Allison Miner in Amy Nesbit's 1998 film *Reverence*.

10. See S. Price (1989). The identification of disappearing traditions works hand-in-hand with broader processes of authentication in generating value. As Regina Bendix has pointed out, "once a cultural good has been declared authentic, the demand for it rises, and it acquires a market value" (1997:8).

11. Nick Spitzer writes about the creativity involved when folklorists and performers engage in the recontextualization of folk traditions in the context of festivals (1992:90–1).

12. This section contains characterizations of the festival that were accurate in the period prior to Hurricane Katrina and the recent restructuring of the festival. Although some of the financial and logistical arrangements between festival producers and second liners have changed (for example, specific

dollar figures and access to community tickets), the fundamental dynamics of the relationship remain the same.

13. This club member spoke with Helen on condition of anonymity.

14. The black boycott of the 1978 festival led to the creation of a semiautonomous marketplace called Koindu (later Congo Square) that included music, crafts, and cuisine. The activism that led to Koindu is part of an important counterhistory to the dominant festival narratives (Akinshiju 1978; "Blacks Threaten" 1978).

15. Congo Square is another major crafts area. Here the locus of authenticity for vendors and artists is, specifically, the relationship of the craft to "Africa." In some ways, Congo vendors are evaluated more along the same lines as contemporary-craft vendors. They must apply for space and are evaluated by a jury process. However, there are two categories of people allowed to have space: artists, who must make all their wares themselves by hand, and vendors, who may sell wares made by others. However, all the vendors' wares must be handmade and must be produced by artisans in Africa, the Caribbean, or the Americas.

16. The Louisiana Marketplace was created in 1992 as a separate area for artists who were from Louisiana but were not considered "folk"—either because they didn't stand as representatives of a group or because their craft was not "authentic." For example, in the Louisiana Marketplace one can find primitive artist paintings, homemade soap, or crawfish-and-rubboard earrings. Sometimes "folk" artists choose to sell in the Louisiana Marketplace, perhaps because it offers a more clearly commercial space.

17. The process of choosing who will or will not be invited is complicated. Our summary here is based on Shana's insider knowledge. Shana recalls recommending people for the festival based, not on any particular artistic merit, but on their ability to work well with a crowd and thus serve as good cultural ambassadors.

18. In further shifts in Jazz Fest's presentation of the folk, the advisory panel was for a short time practically defunct. However, it is now operating with folklorists and anthropologists who are consulted about presenters and presentations.

19. Shana was working in the Folk Village at the time of this incident and was consulted as one of the anthropologists/folklorists on "the infield." She concurred with the decision that the earrings could not be sold under the contract signed by the whip maker.

20. Jazz Fest does not keep data on who buys tickets. The head count was conducted in 2004 by Shana, who divided three tents (the blues tent, the WWOZ jazz tent, and the gospel tent, which all have chairs arranged in rows) into sections of one hundred seats and then used her own native judgment as a European American to count those seated. Obviously, this is not an ideal method. It ignores the unreliability of phenotype as a marker of self-identity and neglects that many local people may identify as Creole. Even with this crude method, which probably overcounted people of color, we were shocked by the low percentages of nonwhites in most of the tents, most of the time. With the exception of the gospel tent, African Americans were never more than 10 percent. (The gospel tent figures were much higher, in part because church members come out to support performances.) African American presence is notably higher at specific performances. For example, a much rougher head count Shana did at the open-air stage where Macy Gray was performing estimated an African American presence of 25 percent. At the performance of Hugh Masekela, a famous South African artist, Shana estimated the African American presence at 30 to 40 percent. The percentage at the Mystikal and Frankie Beverly and Maze was as high as 60 percent. But these counts were all in outdoor settings where people are more difficult to group and counts are less systematic. In 2007, the festival made clear attempts to present artists who would appeal to African Americans, and the overall African American presence seemed, subjectively, to be greater. Nevertheless, we feel comfortable saying that, in general, and despite the Jazz Fest rhetoric of inclusion, Jazz Fest is overwhelmingly white in a city that has traditionally been overwhelmingly African American. Interestingly, there is what might be called an overrepresentation of Asian Americans at the festival. The head counts revealed that at any given time about 1 to 5 percent of the audience was Asian Americans, in part because of tourism from Japan and Korea. We expect to write more about the idea of race at the Jazz Fest in future research.

21. The brutal murder of a festgoer in 2004 as he walked to his car at the end of the day provided a shocking interruption to this discourse. The way in which this event was reported by the *Times-Picayune*

(New Orleans's daily newspaper) only confirms the dominant discourse about the expectation of joyful calm and safety of the festival space (see Benoit 2004; Simpson 2004; Spera 2004:A1).

22. During the 2006 festival, the recent failure of federal levees and the growing dissatisfaction with the Iraq War fueled the popularity of the slogan "Make levees, not war," a variation on the preceding years' "Make groceries, not war" slogan. The 2007 festival, billed as "Presented by Shell" witnessed "No War for Shell" and "War is Over! If you want it" pins. Pin wearers surely constitute a small, but highly visible, minority of festgoers.

23. We want to honor this dream of transformation without falling into the celebratory rhetoric of the festival about itself. Any critical analysis of the festival, it seems, risks spoiling our pleasure and disturbing the liberal discourse of festival producers. Indeed, this may be at the root of an elusive social tension at the festival. Perhaps we have (at least) two groups with (at least) two different dreams. One dream is about creating spaces for experiences of racial harmony and transcendence. The other is about economic parity and equality. Performers such as the anonymous critical social club leader (quoted above) are trying to advance something different than the racial project advocated by the producers. This critic clearly wants access to larger audiences. Yet, he expresses the desire to be treated like other performers. He is looking for a different kind of political action than that contained by fleeting moments of harmony and transcendence. The coexistence of different political projects that talk past one another is one of the most fascinating aspects of festival discourse. Like other aspects of festival practice we seek to analyze, it embodies much of the complexity of racial ideologies at play in contemporary North American society. Thus, the colorblind ideal, which tends to imply that any discussion of race is itself inherently racist, accommodates the valorization of transcendence and redemption while silencing structural analysis; simultaneously, the view that working for racial justice and greater equality requires continued attention to race would predispose one to resist the dream of transcendence as a mirage.

24. As of this writing, we do not have hard data on the historical shifts in the scale of the community ticket program. A festival insider who wished to remain anonymous has suggested to us that the reduction of *community* tickets, per se, is not so much an issue as the wholesale reduction in *free tickets*, which were an integral part of a barter system operating at all levels of the festival (personal communication, May 27, 2007). The use of these free tickets as currency in the city's economy in the months and weeks leading up to the festival is suggestive of how many New Orleanians came to feel personally connected to the festival, in part because their contributions to it were recognized through their receipt of free tickets. Though not explicitly intended for community outreach, these tickets created far-reaching social networks throughout the city and brought people into the festival who otherwise would not have attended.

25. Domínguez (2005) reflects on the processes that make "social ills invisible" in the United States and objects to the distancing and exoticization of New Orleans's social structure as reflecting "third world" conditions. "Exceptionalizing New Orleans, that is, deciding that this is yet another peculiarity of a city many Americans have long treated as unique and different from the rest of the country, is one big mistake I hope the American public will not allow itself to make. New Orleans is really a very American city, its French and Spanish history notwithstanding. Poverty and blackness are very American things. . . . A very disproportionate part of the American population of African origin is poor, without decent healthcare, and with inadequate economic opportunities or means" (Domínguez 2005).

26. Notable exceptions include the recent analyses of Mike Davis (2006) and Dan Baum (2006) and the collaborative ethnography written by members of the Nine Times Social and Pleasure Club (2006). See also Breunlin and Regis (2006).

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