

2024

Music and society: the effects of capitalism on busking

<https://hdl.handle.net/2144/48961>

Downloaded from DSpace Repository, DSpace Institution's institutional repository

Music and Society: The Effects of Capitalism on Busking

by

Amana Bhumitra

Undergraduate Honors Thesis, Department of Sociology

Boston University

College of Arts and Sciences

May 2024

Advisors: Professor Leland Clarke and Professor Heather Schoenfeld

Abstract

In this thesis, I examine the relationship between musical busking and capitalism. Busking refers to the act of street performance to solicit donations. I utilized literature on the legalities surrounding busking, as well as Marxist theory and symbolic interactionism to analyze the capitalist intersections. It examines an overlooked, pure form of music and artistry. Analyzing the legal framework and the permitting systems of the MBTA and MTA allows further insight into the plights of navigating busking as a performer. Furthermore, Adam Krim's study "Hip-Hop Sublime" argues the mass production of specific styles of music through a Marxist lens, and discusses the commercialization of music, which busking resists by allowing all artists a platform. There is limited research into the lives of buskers, previous scholarship focuses on musicology, economics, and historical research. The approach of lived experiences in a sociological framework is unique in this realm of research as it comes from the perspective of those who are undervalued and ignored by mainstream society. It is important because buskers are integral fabrics of the urban communities and soundscapes. Using Facebook groups and canvassing popular busking locations in New York City and Boston, I interviewed 30 musicians to investigate their experiences. Specifically to analyze "How does busking interact with capitalism?" These interviews can help shed light on the art form and foster a deeper appreciation of busking. I argue that the relationship between busking and capitalism is multifaceted. My findings suggest that busking is a form of resistance, an emotional experience and a non-commodified pure form of artistry, however, monetary compensation impacts buskers' motivations and strategies. Busking serves as a political and social form of resistance through the interactions, emotional experiences, and motivations of the buskers. The findings suggest that

buskers resist the legal framework working against them to protect their First Amendment rights and to preserve their artistry. However, monetary compensation is still a priority for the buskers which is evident through their strategies, like social media promotion and song choice, as well as their motivations. Overall, the motivations, strategies, and emotional experiences all contribute to the anti-capitalist art form of busking while adhering to capitalist structures in our society.

Introduction

Busking, often regarded as the epitome of grassroots artistry, entails performers showcasing their talents in public spaces, captivating passersby with music, dance, magic, and other forms of entertainment. However, beyond its surface charm lies a complex interplay between artistic creativity and capitalist structures, raising intriguing questions about the commodification of culture, the dynamics of public space, and the relationship between art and commerce. Busking refers to street performance and the “history of busking is the history of urban civilization. There have been street performers at least as long as there have been streets” (Campbell 2011). It can be traced back to the Middle Ages as people would juggle, dance, sing, and perform other acts for tips. Busking in the United States dates back to the Revolutionary War when Patriots sang on the streets of New England. As urbanization progressed, so did busking and it has transformed into the street performance we know. Street performance grew immensely in the late nineteenth century as German and Italian immigrants entered New York City. It was banned by Mayor Fiorello La Guardia on January 1, 1936, labeling it as a performance for beggars and should not be tolerated by the city. The Beatnik Riot on April 9, 1961, was when folk

musicians protested against this ban and contributed to the culture of questioning authority amidst the protests of the Vietnam War, this included guerrilla theater in the streets and a boom in busking (*NPR*). In 1970, the ban was officially lifted under Mayor John Lindsay, and later the subway ban was also lifted in 1985 after the *People Vs. Manning* case which determined it was in violation of the First and Fourteenth Amendments (Tanenbaum 2012). This led to Music Under New York (MUNY) which is an MTA organization that gives permits for street performances. However, the permit system is highly contested amongst buskers. This research examines how the laws regarding street performance and the perceptions around busking influence musicians and their professions. Furthermore, it examines the intersections between capitalist structures and busking as an occupation. This study hypothesizes that monetary compensation is a key factor in decision-making for buskers; however, the career of busking is an intentional choice to prioritize freedom of choice in musical selection and working hours which creates an anti-capitalist framework of labour services.

While busking is traditionally viewed as a symbol of artistic freedom and spontaneity, it exists within a capitalist framework that shapes and influences its practice in profound ways. By delving into the historical roots, socio-economic dimensions, and cultural implications of busking, this paper argues that the relationship between musical busking and capitalism is multifaceted. The musicians utilize strategies to increase monetary expansion and are motivated by financial compensation, however, busking serves as a form of social, political, and industry resistance that culminates in an anti-capitalist practice of busking. Furthermore, the emotional experience of the buskers through community and social interactions impact their motivations

and create a complex and layered relationship resulting in both capitalist goals while breaking capitalist practices.

This project aims to explore the lived experiences of buskers, giving voice to the marginalized and often overlooked actors within the busking community. The study involves interviews with buskers from both New York and Boston to look for differences between the two. Additionally, New York and Boston were both chosen because of their high costs of living. In 2023, New York was ranked the most expensive U.S. city and Boston was ranked 8th (Winter 2023). There are no estimates for how many buskers are in New York City or Boston because Boston does not have a permitting system and New York City has many buskers that do not have permits. However, there are projects such as The Busking Project which aim to collectivize busking for the audiences to hire as well as create an easy platform for buskers to receive cashless tips and book jobs. The Busking Project currently has over 13,000 buskers registered worldwide (The Busking Project). However, many buskers lack the resources, knowledge, and safety to join these collaborative efforts. For these reasons, the busking community is often hard to examine and study which is why interviewing buskers anonymously was such an important aspect of the project. I wanted to learn their reasons for busking, part-time and full-time, their motivations, and the interactions they have socially, economically, and politically. Therefore, when discussing their own experiences I will use limited academic jargon, to ensure that the paper maintains an element of accessibility for a wider audience.

Ultimately, this study seeks to contribute to broader conversations about the role of art in society, the commodification of cultural practices, and the possibilities for fostering more

equitable and inclusive forms of artistic expression within capitalist systems. By illuminating the multifaceted relationship between busking and capitalism, there is potential to address issues and learn more about this career path. Busking is a form of musical production that provides resistance in attempts to produce non commodified artwork. Analyzing symbolic interactionism, it is evident that human interactions give meaning to the experience of busking which supersedes the value of monetary compensation. Although the need for financial donations is necessary for the artist's lives, the artists value the interactions and production of their art above all else. Symbolic interactionism, contrastingly, also helps illuminate the artist's decisions concerning accruing more donations and tips through song choices and public perception. In addition, utilizing a Marxist framework this paper argues the resistance and purity of production serve as anti-capitalist despite reflecting the structure of a career in a capitalist society and the decision-making of increasing monetary compensation. The many nuances of this art deepen understanding of artists' interactions with society through the lives of these buskers.

The legal context of busking

In New York City, busking is regulated by various permitting laws and programs, with "Music Under New York" (MUNY) being one of the most prominent initiatives governing street performances. Music Under New York, established in 1985, is a program administered by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) that provides official permits for musicians and performers to entertain commuters and tourists in subway stations throughout the city. MUNY aims to enhance the transit experience for passengers while also providing exposure and income opportunities for local artists. To participate in Music Under New York, performers must go

through a rigorous audition process, demonstrating their talent and professionalism to a panel of judges. Those selected receive official permits that allow them to perform at designated locations within subway stations approved by the MTA. These spots are often chosen for their acoustics, foot traffic, and safety considerations. While Music Under New York provides a structured platform for busking in the subway system, street performers outside of the MUNY program are subject to various permitting laws and regulations enforced by local authorities. In New York City, the Department of Parks and Recreation oversees permits for performances in public parks, squares, and plazas, while the Department of Transportation regulates activities on sidewalks and pedestrian thoroughfares. Obtaining a permit for busking in New York City typically involves submitting an application, paying a fee, and complying with certain guidelines and restrictions. These may include rules regarding noise levels, location-specific regulations, and time limitations for performances. Additionally, performers must adhere to laws prohibiting obstruction of pedestrian traffic, solicitation, and other forms of disruptive behavior. While the permitting process provides a framework for legal busking in New York, enforcement of these regulations can vary depending on factors such as the location, time of day, and complaints from residents or businesses. While permits are not necessarily required, section 1050.6 in the Rules of Conduct and Fines under the transit use section states "(4) No activity is permitted which creates excessive noise or which emits noise that interferes with transit operations (Musician or Performer Permit 311). The emission of any sound in excess of 85 dBA on the A weighted scale measured at five feet from the source of the sound or 70 dBA measured at two feet from a station booth is excessive noise and is prohibited (Musician or Performer Permit 311). Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, the use on subway platforms of amplification devices of any

kind, electronic or otherwise, is prohibited” (Musician or Performer Permit 311). This allows for personal judgment in multiple sections regarding the use of media and filming in transit systems as well. Additionally, the same section states “Any person using the transit system for non transit activities permitted pursuant to this rule does so at their own risk, and the authority assumes no liability by the grant of this authorization” (Musician or Performer Permit 311). These rules are undefined and left up to the personal judgment of the officers enforcing these sanctions upon buskers. Furthermore, busking does not technically require a permit for streets or parks, however, it is required if you use speakers, megaphones, or stereos. This is the only description available online and allows for many nuances of what is deemed as speakers or megaphones. A permit is also required for performing in or next to a park, creating sanctions on public space (Musician or Performer Permit 311). Despite these established legalities, many New York buskers mentioned their frustrations with the nuances and constant changes that are not available online.

Boston, conversely, does not require permits for public street performance, however, they must adhere to the Boston Noise Compliance which states “anything louder than 50 decibels from 11pm to 7am, or anything louder than 70 decibels at any time, except for permitted construction“ is not permitted (Street Performers in Public Areas). The MBTA has designated performance across the different subway lines and a permit is required to be carried on the person. The Subway Performer Permit & MBTA Access Privilege Application is \$25 and requires legal identification, eliminating the eligibility for those without. This permit is significantly easier to obtain as there is no audition process (Subway Performers Program). Furthermore, despite the permitting system in the MBTA, the public spaces, parks, and streets

are free to use for performers in Boston. According to the city of Boston, “The City does not require or issue permits for street performers in public areas” (Subway Performers Program).

Literature Review

The majority of literature on street performance has focused on the history of the laws. There are also many new publications arising from a psychological perspective on the responses to busking (Anglada-Tort 2019). However, sociological theories can help illuminate the foundation of street performance’s history and its intersection with capitalism. Utilizing pre-existing research on ethnomusicology studies of busking that look into the value and meaning-making and a cross-field examination in this literature view can help examine busking through a sociological lens.

Judith Haines’s book entitled “9 Voices In The Park” chapter 9 focuses on a Reiki healing group’s practice of vocalization in park spaces and the significance of creating communal sociality within the Reiki group and wider community. Although this work is centered around the Adelaide group of environmentalists, it poses a deeper question of the use of public space. The connection between public and spiritual spaces creates a space that offsets “the economic and residential conditions of urban living” (Haines 2016). Similarly, busking can be seen as spiritual in the same sense despite the non-religious affiliations and the use of public space for vocalization as described by Haines illuminates the precedence of the First Amendment rights. “Industry Cannot Go On Without the Production of Some Noise” by Robert Hawkins focuses on the impact of Laguardia’s ban on street performance and quotes Laguardia himself stating “industry cannot go on without the production of some noise” (Hawkins 2012). While it is

debated what he was referring to, the urban soundscape of street performers is the underlying fabric of the music industry. Denying the rights of busking creates a standstill in all musical production. Legal analysis of busking in its totality argues for the right to public space and freedom of expression, which can lead to detrimental effects as seen throughout history. The current legal issues surrounding busking lead to buskers continuing activist practices solely by continuing street performance, as an expression of First Amendment rights and a denial of the music industry itself.

Marxist theory provides a foundational framework for understanding the dynamics of capitalism and its impact on social structures. In the context of busking, Marxist analysis focuses on the commodification of cultural expression. Buskers, as street performers, engage in labor that is subject to the market forces of supply and demand. Their performances are often commodified for profit, with the busker acting as both producer and seller of cultural goods. Marxist scholars argue that under capitalism, busking becomes a form of alienated labor, wherein the creative expression of the performer is subsumed by the imperatives of profit-making (Horowitz).

While there is little existing literature on the act of busking as a defiance of the music industry, there is a strong discourse on busking to break into the music industry, establishing the correlation as well as the hierarchy between the two. Marxist theory explains how artistic positions are often devalued in society. In capitalist societies, popular art is commodified and marketed as entertainment or a product to be consumed. Adam Krim, in his study “Hip-Hop Sublime as a Form of Commodification” argues through a Marxist lens, that even in its representation of ghetto life and underclass poverty, hip-hop has become a mass-produced commodity and therefore, serves to mystify the socio-economic conditions of urban life. This

leads to a commercialized mainstream musical style that is profitable and prioritized, which is detrimental to more diverse and experimental musical styles. Marxist theory also critiques the power and inequality manifested within musical communities. For example, Marxist theories argue that certain genres are valued higher in society because they more closely align with the preferences of a dominating cultural group. This can create inequity and lead to the marginalization and exclusion of musicians from minority cultural groups (Krim 2002).

Furthermore, despite the boundaries and limitations of the music industry, the musicians' desire to perform and positively interact with their audiences outweighs the limitations of capitalist structures such as permits and negative interactions with law enforcement. As it is still a method of income, capitalism always will interact with Busking, however, it is an intentional choice on behalf of the buskers to resist other mainstream or commercialized routes of music (Machin 2009).

Symbolic interactionism is a sociological theory that analyzes interactions through symbols of meaningful communication (Vannini 2006). This offers insights into the micro-level interactions and symbolic meanings embedded within busking practices. From this perspective, busking can be understood as a form of impression management, wherein performers strategically present themselves to elicit favorable responses from audiences. The capitalist structure influences these interactions by shaping the expectations and preferences of audiences. Performers may adapt their acts to conform to dominant cultural norms or consumer preferences to maximize their earnings. Moreover, the competition among buskers for limited space and attention reflects the competitive nature of capitalist markets. Pioneered by scholars such as

George Herbert Mead and Herbert Blumer, symbolic interactionism emphasizes the importance of symbols, meanings, and social interactions in shaping human behavior. At its core, symbolic interactionism posits that individuals construct their reality through ongoing interpretation and negotiation of symbols within social contexts. These symbols include gestures, language, and other forms of communication, which enable individuals to develop shared meanings and understandings. For example, the act of donating or tipping a busker is a form of symbolic interactionism as the money represents the audience's appreciation. This is due to the ways in which capitalism has affected our ideologies on how we show appreciation to those giving a service. While it is extremely important to their livelihoods, this paper explores the dynamics of the social interactions and uses symbolic interactionism to explain how audience interactions and acknowledgments that do not involve monetary compensation are also valued by the artists. Capitalism shapes the landscape of busking in multifaceted ways, influencing performers' motivations, strategies, and experiences. While busking offers a platform for artistic expression and autonomy, it is also subject to market forces and commercialization. Performers may navigate tensions between artistic integrity and financial sustainability, adapting their performances to appeal to consumer preferences and maximize earnings. Symbolic interactionism allows us to understand the complexities within the social interactions. While monetary compensation is a factor that is

Feminist theory offers critical insights into the gendered dimensions of busking and its relationship to capitalist structures. Female buskers, in particular, may experience unique forms of exploitation and discrimination within male-dominated public spaces. The commodification of

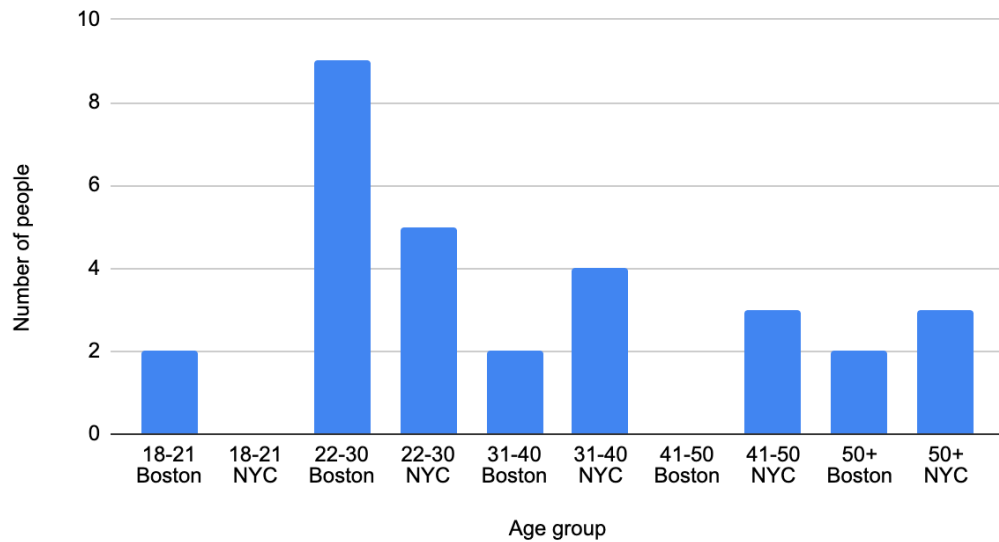
female bodies and sexuality can intersect with capitalist imperatives, leading to the objectification of women performers. Moreover, feminist scholars highlight the intersectionality of race, class, and gender in shaping the experiences of buskers, with marginalized groups facing compounded forms of oppression and economic precarity. Alice Phoebe Lou, an artist who started busking in Berlin states “Being harassed, having men grabbing you or screaming at you, or just having intense situations because you’re playing on the street often at night and there’s all sorts of people around” (Fox 2019). Understanding the intersectionality of artists and performers can influence their audience interactions and affect their monetary compensation. While this paper focuses on capitalist structures, feminist theory offers insight into the lived experiences of the female identifying buskers that were interviewed.

The literature reviewed demonstrates the multifaceted ways in which capitalist structures influence busking practices from various sociological perspectives. While capitalism provides opportunities for entrepreneurial activity and cultural expression, it also perpetuates inequalities and commodifies human creativity. Future research in this area should continue to explore the complexities of busking within capitalist societies, considering factors such as globalization, urbanization, and technological advancements that shape the contemporary landscape of street performance. Moreover, efforts to advocate for the rights of buskers should be informed by a critical understanding of the intersectional dynamics at play within capitalist systems.

Methodology

To investigate the question “How does capitalism interact with Busking?” I used qualitative methods. I conducted interviews with a non-random sample of 30 musicians: 15 buskers that are located/ busk in New York, and 15 in Boston. The interviewees are solely musical buskers, although some do engage in other types of busking, all the questions focused on the musical aspect. The recruitment method was mainly through online groups for Buskers on platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. An additional method of canvassing was utilized. I canvassed local busking hotspots in both Boston and New York, such as Washington Square Park and the 42nd Street subway station in New York and the Boston Commons or Faneuil Hall in Boston. However, as this was previously the primary method for finding interviewees it ultimately proved less successful than recruiting online. The interviews were conducted mainly in person, but some were virtual due to time constraints or personal preferences. They were estimated around 20-30 minutes but ranged from 30 minutes to 2 hours and comprised 20 questions, involving 5 demographic questions and 15 in-depth questions. There were roughly 95 interview requests online, and approximately 120 people were asked to participate in the study. All interviewees were audio-recorded for the interviews and consented to be recorded.

Age Group Demographics



The study is composed of 30 participants: 15 from New York and 15 from Boston. The minimum age of participation was 18, and the range of participants' ages was separated into five categories 18-21, 22-30, 31-40, 41-50, and 50+. 26 participants were from the United States, and many relocated to their respective cities due to college. Three participants are international from countries such as Austria, Czechoslovakia, and England. Only six of the participants are African American and twenty-four are white. The gender breakdown of the study is seventeen men, eleven women, and two non-binary identifications. The musical backgrounds ranged from self-taught to growing up taking lessons and learning their instruments. Fifteen of the buskers were self-taught and twenty-three took on additional instruments such as vocals or guitar to enhance their sets.

The musical styles were a range between grassroots folk music to modern popular songs. Approximately all buskers played covers of popular music and classic rock, depending on their ages. Typically, buskers over 30 played more classic rock covers and the younger ages would

play covers of the top charts to entice audiences. Twenty-three buskers, however, played their original songs in a variety of genres like jazz, blues, grassroots folk, and classical. Fourteen played guitar, and all sang for accompaniment. Two participants play the violin, five play the keyboard, three play the drums, five are vocalists, and one plays the musical saw. Each musician had their own way of describing their genres and their own distinct sounds despite being in similar genres. More experimental instruments, like the musical saw, were harder to engage with due to the skewed sample. Many musicians who agreed to be interviewed were contacted through social media, this leads to a younger demographic. Furthermore, those willing to participate in the study were generally more established musicians in the field, lowering the possibility of more diverse musical styles to discuss.

Findings

Busking Strategies

Seven out of thirty buskers mentioned that they were full-time buskers and capable of financially supporting themselves full-time. These performers were either permitted, hired buskers, or more well-established. The well-established musicians are those with higher Instagram followings that help to contribute to their ability to obtain permits or residencies for busking. Social media followings are a recent development in the busking world to estimate foot traction and popularity, many well-established buskers on social media platforms have an advantage because of the likelihood of support their following would bring. Furthermore, it allows those giving permits to determine the public's perception of their music. Many performers stated that the MTA "never even called back." Due to the over saturation of the field in New

York, one interviewee speculated that the MTA looked at social media now to determine which performers will get “better” spots.

There have been many changes due to COVID-19, with many buskers explaining the effects of not being able to busk for months and losing a source of income. In response, some of the younger buskers began utilizing social media by starting live streams on Instagram to grow an audience, hoping this would lead to more jobs, chances at permits, and possibly even an expanded audience. The use of social media is very clear with buskers utilizing QR codes with link trees to all their social media and even Venmo or Cash App. Another result of COVID-19 was the decline in cash tips, new technology like barcodes allows buskers to obtain tips in multiple ways. Social media has also made everything accessible in a multitude of ways. It also serves as a method of self-promotion for buskers. Nearly all buskers mentioned that they utilize new technologies such as barcodes to scan with links to all their social media. Furthermore, a consequence of COVID-19 was the development of these barcodes many artists utilize to accept tips through platforms such as Venmo or Cashapp, as the circulation of cash was limited. Older buskers, four out of fifteen mentioned that the busking culture has evolved, and their goals were more oriented towards self-promotion. Many offers for gigs were from people who heard them playing on the street. This makes New York a prime location for busking in terms of promotion. Interview 1, mentions that most of her big opportunities arose from her busking, such as her first Hollywood film soundtrack.

Twenty-two out of thirty buskers are part-time. The part-time buskers stated that they knew it was possible but also described it as more of an anomaly. There are many moving parts to being a full-time busker, and with recent developments in technology, social media has

become an integral part of busking. Furthermore, some did not have enough time because of additional jobs. One busker in particular who was unhoused had a part-time job and also busked, but the hours would vary as he would perform on the NYC subway whenever he could for tips. The subway platforms, popular streets, and public parks were all very popular spots for buskers in both Boston and New York. However, the legal restrictions of busking are a complex and layered issue of freedom of speech and defining public space.

Typical sets for full-time buskers and part-time buskers did not vary exponentially in length. Full-time buskers would typically busk for four to six hours a day with 1-2 breaks. Part-time buskers, mainly also stated that four to six hours with a few breaks was common, but would busk 2-3 times a week whereas full-time buskers would busk 4-6 days a week. Some buskers mentioned the flexibility of their schedules allowed them to busk for half an hour whenever they had extra time, or if weather unpredictability or other external factors played a role in changing their schedules, there was always another time or location. During their sets, all buskers mentioned they play covers, however, 20 buskers mentioned that they play their originals as well. However, playing covers is typically favoured because there is a higher monetary compensation. “You have to know your crowd, sometimes the drunk people at Fenway want to hear classic rock and the college kids want you to play something popular now.” Learning your audience and tailoring your set instantly can help you tremendously to gain tips, according to one busker. This full-time busker located in Boston travels around the country in his van busking at very popular sports games and events, in addition to local spots in Boston. Buskers who play their original music, often have to gauge when they can play. Typically, slower days with less foot traffic lead to more experimentation. When there is higher foot traffic sometimes there is a

desire to play originals as well to read the reception of the song. The flexibility in their sets is an important factor of busking and highlights how these interactions with monetary compensation do play a strong role in determining their song choices. This demonstrates how strongly busking interacts with capitalism because it is still a career or job that exists within the same framework as more traditional careers.

Many buskers described the use of promotional videos on social media as a way to increase foot traffic. One busker located at Faneuil Hall with a specific spot, as Faneuil Hall is a private space that auditions for buskers to attract tourists, stated that he films his music and posts it online as well as updates his followers on when he is performing to ensure tips that day. There were more strategic efforts to busk such as the first Boston interviewee who moved into a van during the warmer months to transport to Fenway and other sporting stadiums during the peak of different sports seasons. He stated that in Fenway after 11 pm, he would play popular songs that more college students would know and engage with and often begin singing along. He also described how he would play older rock music during Red Socks games outside the Fenway stadium, and this would lead to more social interactions as well as tips. Another interviewee stated, “They might sit and listen to you but they aren’t going to pay you.” Additionally, if you do want to make a full-time living you not only need to think about location, timing, season, and other promotional strategies but “You have to do it a lot, like a lot.” However, despite the limitations of this twenty-six out of thirty buskers mentioned that they would all still busk if they were not receiving monetary compensation. Only seven out of thirty were full-time buskers and twenty-two out of thirty stated that they could not or did not believe they could financially

support themselves solely from busking. Many had full-time occupations or were students. The freedom they had to perform their music and the passion is overwhelming.

Monetary compensation for busking, while not guaranteed or standardized, plays a crucial role in supporting the livelihoods of street performers and sustaining the practice of public art. Unlike traditional employment models where compensation is fixed or negotiated, busking relies on voluntary donations from audiences who appreciate the performance. It is the most direct way in which capitalism interacts with busking. The monetary compensation in busking can vary widely depending on factors such as location, time of day, weather conditions, audience size, and the skill and appeal of the performer. In bustling tourist areas or busy city centers, where foot traffic is high and audiences are more likely to be receptive, performers may receive more generous donations compared to quieter or less frequented locations. Additionally, the type of performance can influence the amount of monetary compensation, whether that is enjoying more popular songs or an original song that strikes an emotional chord. However, the success of a busking performance ultimately depends on the ability of the performer to captivate and engage the audience, regardless of the art form. While some buskers set specific donation amounts or use tip jars to suggest contributions, the majority rely on the goodwill and generosity of passersby. This voluntary nature of compensation in busking reflects the intrinsic value of artistic expression and fosters a reciprocal relationship between performer and audience. Audiences are free to choose whether and how much to donate based on their enjoyment of the performance, creating a sense of mutual appreciation and respect.

Catering their sets to specific audiences, promotional videos on social media platforms, and utilizing QR codes to adapt in uncertain circumstances shows the capitalist nature of busking. This demonstrates all the ways busking reacts in efforts to increase donations and tips. The resilience and adapting, use of new technologies and specific song choices all demonstrate marketing strategies embodied by larger corporations on an individual level. Symbolic interactionism attaches meaning to the non-verbal and verbal actions of human interactions. Analyzing the act of donating, we understand this to represent giving value to the service that is being provided. The music, being the service that the musicians bring, however, transcends the monetary compensation as the act represents the appreciation of the music. Whether it is a dollar or more, artists are very grateful for whatever tips they receive despite utilizing these strategies to increase their monetary compensation.

Emotional experience and social interactions

There is an element of call and response within the art of busking where the audience is the response and their response determines what the buskers play, their mood, and the overall experience. Call and response is a musical form and technique that is prevalent across many cultures and traditions worldwide, particularly in African, African-American, and Afro-Caribbean music. It involves a dynamic interaction between two or more performers or groups, where one participant (the "caller") initiates a musical phrase or idea, and another participant (the "responder") replies with a complementary or contrasting phrase (Sale 1992). This exchange creates a rhythmic and melodic dialogue between the performers, often resulting in a lively and engaging musical conversation. In my observation, I noticed the energy between the musician

and the audience, if the audience was engaged and enjoying the performance you could clearly see stronger engagement from the musician as well. In ethnomusicology, the study of call and response encompasses various aspects, including its historical roots, cultural significance, musical structures, and social functions within specific cultural contexts (Sale 1992). The call and response in ethnomusicology mimics the symbolic interactionism of the call in response within this context. The reactions and public reception outweighed the monetary compensation for nearly all the buskers. Although there is a possibility the respondents downplayed the role of money in the interviewees, money was clearly stated as a goal for the financially dependent buskers and full-time buskers and despite this, there were many instances beyond stating their favourite aspect of busking relating to audience interactions. Many used specific diction in multiple questions emphasizing their genuine passion for music and the audience interactions. One busker elaborated on his favorite audience interaction “there was this little kid, kids are always the best because they don’t lie, and he put a dollar in my case and that’s how I know he loved it because he had to ask his parents for the dollar.”

I did interview one person who was unhoused and would busk solely for the tip but also explained that they loved busking. They had been busking for nearly 5 years and had recently been living in the subways. Busking is not solely an act of solicitation, it possesses artistic and entertaining qualities that are integral to public spaces that form a reciprocal relationship between the audience and the performers. Despite the clear intention to make money, every busker mentioned their favourite part of busking is related to the audience interactions. One specified the interactions with children, and another loved collaborating with passerbys. Twenty-eight out of thirty stated that they would still busk with no monetary compensation and audience

participation is a large part of what makes busking unique and desirable. Placing audience interactions above all else when asked in the interviews, highlights the anti-capitalist focus on the environment being fostered through busking. Every busker stated that music “is their life” one busker stated “There are no words to describe my relationship with music, it is the reason I live and breathe. It is what drives me and I can not imagine my life without my music.” Every person emphasized how music is their passion. Another busker in NYC, who often busks in Washington Square Park explained that busking was not something he had considered as a career but towards the end of high school he began busking as a way to explore his passion for music and share it with others. Although he is only 24, he explained that he does not necessarily know if it will be his long-term career but had no plans to ever give up busking. Many others shared their reasons for beginning busking, either making extra money on the side during college or other jobs, while trying to build a musical career or simply for the love of performing. Three interviewees in NYC have all been busking for 25+ years and began busking to introduce themselves to the music industry. One woman discussed how she had been busking for 30 years and the scene in NYC for buskers was mainly those trying to get gigs or become established musicians. Getting jobs at coffee shops, and local venues, and even piquing the interest of talent agents in the major city were all possibilities and these all rang true for her. She began working on music scores and has garnered local media attention for her busking. Contrastingly, many other buskers began busking with different ranges of goals that have changed over the years. Many started with just wanting to play music and earn extra money, or with similar higher goals of book gigs and going into the music industry. However, six buskers mentioned that they used to want to book more performances but the rigidity of the industry was too confining and they

preferred to play for themselves. Others mentioned making a living busking or continuing to do so, and some also mentioned that they just wanted to play music in any capacity. Busking as a form of networking still requires audience interactions beyond monetary compensation.

Every single busker interviewed discussed the social interactions and the audience participation as the highlight of their sets. Every busker interviewed mentioned a story involving someone who impacted them through even the smallest social interaction. Every busker mentioned that one of their favorite aspects of busking is the social component with the audience; seeing someone's mood change, children enjoying their performance, and someone engaging in conversation with them. Only three out of thirty who were either solely financially dependent on busking or unhoused did not think it outweighed monetary compensation but did still discuss in great depth the effects interactions had on their moods and sets.

The emotional experience of buskers serves as a bridge between the motivations and strategies relating to monetary compensation and reshapes these motivations leading to busking as resistance. Motivations of monetary compensation are evident through the utilization of strategies implemented by buskers, however, the passion the musicians have for busking shows alternate motivations. These alternate motivations are influenced by the audience interactions and their love for music.

Political Resistance

Two forms of resistance emerged from the interviews. The first is political resistance to the permit rules. Despite the benefits of being a permitted busker, such as prominent locations to

increase foot traffic and the stability of maintaining your spot in altercations with the police, there were many concerns the buskers shared primarily in NYC because of the advanced permitting systems like MUNY (Music Under New York). Three out of fifteen buskers were active members of MUNY (Music Under New York), five out of fifteen buskers mentioned they attempted to get permits, and seven out of fifteen buskers discussed how they were discontent with the MUNY permit system and the difficulties of navigating the application process. For example, an unhoused busker did not have a residence address to apply for the permit, which many other buskers who are unhoused are familiar with. Furthermore, many pointed out that the system is inefficient mainly due to the influx of applications and inefficiencies of the offices. Each department has an appointed person or people to deal with applications for that specific area/ train stop. “I kept calling but no one was answering the phone and when they did they would say that they were overwhelmed with applications and I would hear back. I never did.” Another busker stated who has applied every year for five years with no acceptance or rejection. Another busker mentioned that they attempted to apply for a permit and were unsuccessful at auditioning because the wait time was too long and the department was ineffective. Furthermore, the permitting system itself raised concerns about freedom of speech amongst the buskers. One busker stated “It goes against our first amendment rights, we have the freedom of speech and it like goes against the purpose. Having to get a permit just to make music outside.” Another busker who was part of an all-girl punk rock band in the 60s would busk around the world, for example in front of the Eiffel Tower, to get arrested to protest the freedom of speech and the policing of music and street performance. “The first amendment” was a common phrase amongst all interviewees, however, because the laws in Boston are much more relaxed and it is legal to

busk without permits this political resistance theme was not as strong of a sentiment. However, interviewing the 6th participant who has been busking for over 50 years, he stated his involvement in musical activism and shared his experiences with his friends in 1982 on the legalization of busking. He voiced his experience on how his friends busked as a form of protest.

Policing and busking in New York City have been subject to a complex and sometimes contentious relationship, shaped by a combination of legal regulations, law enforcement practices, and cultural attitudes toward street performance. On one hand, busking is legally protected under the First Amendment's right to freedom of expression, and performers have the right to share their art in public spaces. All of the buskers mentioned freedom of expression to some extent but many buskers were explicitly mentioning the First Amendment. However, the reality is that buskers often face challenges and conflicts with law enforcement officials, particularly in highly regulated areas such as subway stations, parks, and commercial districts. One of the primary issues surrounding policing and busking in New York is the enforcement of permit requirements and noise ordinances. While busking itself is not illegal, performers may be subject to fines or citations if they fail to obtain the necessary permits or violate noise regulations. This has led to instances where buskers are harassed or even arrested by police officers for perceived infractions, sparking debates about the appropriate balance between artistic freedom and public order. For example, Mayor Eric Adam's increase in police presence on subways has led to more arrests. John Ajilo spoke to Quartz Magazine on his arrest for playing the saxophone on the subway platforms. He was charged with interfering with passenger movement (1050.6c(2)), using of sound production devices (Rule 1050.6(c)6), and disregarding a sign or notice (Rule 1050.6(d)2). Further speculation on harassment and police brutality

sparked, as Ajilo is African American, arose. The vagueness of the rules of conduct by the MTA led to Ajilo's holding overnight (Quito 2022). There have been concerns about selective enforcement and discrimination against certain types of buskers, particularly those from marginalized communities or performing non-traditional art forms. Critics argue that police officers may target buskers based on factors such as race, ethnicity, or appearance, leading to disparities in how regulations are applied and enforced (Quito 2022). Moreover, conflicts between buskers and other stakeholders, such as businesses or residents, can further complicate the policing of street performances. Some businesses may view busking as disruptive to their operations or detrimental to their commercial interests, leading them to pressure local authorities to crack down on street performers. This dynamic can create tensions between different groups vying for control over public space and resources. Buskers shared their relationships with local businesses, while many enjoyed the increase in foot traffic that busking can bring and would even reciprocate the benefits with free food occasionally, one busker discussed the "battle for attention sometimes, I've gotten noise complaints from store owners at like coffee shops in wealthy neighborhoods like on Newbury because they think it's distracting or like people are just watching me and not going in or something." In recent years, efforts have been made to address these issues and foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for busking in New York City. Organizations like the Busking Project and the Street Performers Advocacy Project advocate for the rights of street performers and work to promote dialogue between artists, policymakers, and law enforcement agencies (The Busking Project). New York buskers all engaged in police interactions where they were asked to move, and they all agreed to move to avoid confrontation even if they had the permit. One New Yorker highlighted how many of the

officers are not up-to-date with busking laws in New York and many buskers do not even know their own rights. Upon further research on platforms such as Facebook, many buskers learn their rights through word of mouth from other buskers. This can lead to misinformation which is why many buskers are often complicit with what the police ask of them. Although the buskers I interviewed go out of their way to avoid negative police interactions, “We have the right to assembly” stated a busker about police interactions. Three interviewees mentioned that if there were large crowds, primarily in parks and large open public spaces, multiple police officers would gather to break up the crowds. Contrastingly, as it is legal to perform on public property in Boston, police interactions are more along the lines of noise complaints, and there are some interactions similar to New York. However, I noticed that the buskers in Boston were more aware of their rights than the buskers. The New York information is very outdated and inaccessible to access which gives cops the free reign. There are many different websites and different rules regarding individual streets making it inaccessible to the average citizen.

Race, Class, and Disability

“Being white and young helps” stated one Boston busker. Race and ethnicity play a huge factor in police interactions as well. Throughout my interviews, I noted the non-white participants were more agreeable with the police than the white participants. Although they all wanted to avoid confrontation, one Black busker in New York stated “You just keep your head down and agree you don’t want to cause any more trouble, you never know what they could do.” The implied distrust of the police indicates the structural differences in policing between white and non-white participants. The police intervention was something I witnessed during my interviews as well, as I was interviewing one participant in Washington Square Park two bucket

drummers began busking on the North East side of the arch. They began busking during my interview and about 20 minutes into their performance they had gathered a crowd of around fifteen people. It began to grow to about thirty five. At its peak, the performance lasted for ten more minutes until a group of three police officers approached and began speaking to the drummers, and the crowd began dispersing. They immediately ceased their set and had to move. Washington Sq Park is a public park with no permit system, the drummers were not using any amplifiers or speakers to amplify their sounds. The police presence created a deterrent to disassembling the crowd in a perfectly legal setting. The camaraderie of buskers that is described by the buskers fosters a strong sense of community upholding values of freedom of speech. The police dispersing the crowd demonstrates a physical intervention between the people and governance.

The vagueness of the laws allow for the police to have agency in what decisions they make regarding the busking laws and their enforcement. In these interviews, we see this with the issues regarding disability and accessibility. One limitation of busking was accessibility. Physical accessibility can be difficult for performers who are unable to carry a lot of gear such as amplifiers and other heavy equipment. One busker I interviewed not only mentioned the limitations of commuting to New York from New Jersey and the cost outweighing the benefits but also mentioned that his disability hinders him from traveling far. He budgets the disability he collects to afford to travel to New York to busk, however, he is limited to where he can busk because of his disability and his inability to travel outside of the station with his equipment and set up. Physical and financial barriers to busking limit the access to the community many upcoming musicians desire. However, busking is the most accessible form of musical

performance for many as it avoids many barriers such as finding somewhere to hire the performer and finding an audience. Furthermore, he discussed how when asked to move by officers, this can create issues due to his equipment and hindered ability to leave certain locations that accommodate his physical limitations. However, he still travels the length to busk despite all limitations, purely because of his passion for his art. The mere act of continuing to busk and persistently try acts as a form of resistance against larger societal structures that hinder the First Amendment rights of the buskers.

Additionally, class intersects deeply with the policing of buskers. One busker stated that performing along the sides of Boston Commons near Arlington Street is where he had gotten the most noise complaints and directly linked it to class, “I get the most complaints from the richer neighborhoods, I think the rich people have more of an issue with it.” This investigation of class and busking relates to how capitalism affects the perception of buskers from the audience. While buskers preferred tourist spots, with one busker stating “tourists are the ones who give the best tips and are most likely to be carrying cash” this evades non-tourist residential neighborhoods, particularly richer neighborhoods. One busker explained that “sometimes I see those people who are all dressed up and they give me a weird look and walk away or they’ll give me a dollar but it feels like pity.” The relationship between class and the audience itself demonstrates the larger forces at play. The negative public perception of buskers can stem from a variety of factors, including stereotypes, misconceptions, and individual experiences. While many people appreciate the cultural vibrancy and entertainment value that buskers bring to public spaces, others may harbor biases or prejudices that shape their views of street performers. One common perception is that busking is synonymous with begging or panhandling (Kaur 2018). Some

people may view buskers as opportunistic individuals seeking handouts without offering anything of value in return. This perception is often fueled by encounters with aggressive or intrusive performers, as well as negative stereotypes perpetuated by media portrayals or personal anecdotes. Additionally, concerns about noise pollution and disruption to public order can contribute to negative perceptions of buskers, particularly in densely populated urban areas. Residents and businesses may view street performances as nuisances that disturb the peace and detract from the quality of life in their neighborhoods. This can lead to calls for stricter regulations or enforcement measures to control busking activity. Furthermore, there may be biases against certain types of buskers based on factors such as race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. Performers from marginalized communities or those engaging in non-traditional art forms may face heightened scrutiny or discrimination from members of the public, law enforcement officials, or local authorities. This can reinforce stereotypes and contribute to the marginalization of street performers. Additionally, perceptions of busking may be influenced by broader social and cultural attitudes toward creativity, art, and public space. In a society that often prioritizes productivity, consumerism, and commercialization, street performances may be viewed as frivolous or irrelevant, lacking the legitimacy or value accorded to more conventional forms of artistic expression.

It is important to recognize that negative perceptions of buskers are not universal and can vary depending on individual perspectives and experiences. While some people may have reservations about street performances, others may appreciate the cultural diversity, spontaneity, and sense of community that buskers bring to public spaces. Twelve out of fifteen buskers in New York mentioned that there was a culture of being looked down upon by the general public

and after asking why they think this is, they all responded with sentiments culminating in how they believe they associate busking with begging, rather than viewing it as a profession. In Boston, the perceived perception buskers in Boston had was greatly different as the five buskers mentioned because of Boston's laws, the city is much more tolerant. One interviewee stated, "People are friendlier and less skeptical of street people." Another believed it had "Something to do with the Irish roots..there is a desire for live music, and Ireland is a buskers paradise. It is very accepted, people want music and they want music so much they are willing to pay you for music." However, there are still noise complaints received and there is generally a pattern of these complaints occurring when the musicians are in richer neighborhoods. The perception of busking is highly intertwined with class as it seemed that less expensive neighborhoods or tourist destinations were more receptive to busking and less likely to receive complaints, in both Boston and New York. This is cohesive with the interviewees addressing their noise complaint rates being significantly higher in more expensive neighborhoods. In Boston, there was a similar sentiment but it was described with words to sugarcoat the meaning, like "some people just don't get it, they see it as street music and they don't think it's a real job or hard work." Personal ideologies of what is considered "work" are also reflexive of classism within busking. In Boston, there was a similar sentiment but it was described with words to sugarcoat the meaning, like "some people just don't get it, they see it as street music and they don't think it's a real job or hard work." Establishing this association of busking and panhandling demonstrates the upper class noise complaints as an extension of capitalist forces executing their power over the craft, and the continuation of busking serves as a resistance to classism and larger structures that help enforce these perceptions.

Resistance to The Music Industry

The second form of resistance that emerged was how busking acts as industry resistance by bypassing traditional distribution and promotion channels. In the music industry, for example, major record labels and streaming platforms often control access to audiences, favoring established artists or those who fit within commercially viable genres. This leaves many independent or niche artists marginalized or overlooked. Busking provides an alternative means for artists to reach audiences directly, without relying on intermediaries or conforming to industry standards. By performing in public spaces, artists can attract passersby who may not typically encounter their work through mainstream channels. This is evident with the rise of social media and buskers marketing themselves directly to larger audiences. One busker stated “I know so many people who got their big shot on the streets but I mostly land gigs now online. People see my live streams and they reach out. Or even if they walk on the street they can scan my QR code and see all my links so it’s super easy for me to get as many people as possible.” This democratization of access allows for a more diverse range of voices and styles to be heard, challenging the homogenization often perpetuated by the entertainment industry. Moreover, busking subverts the commodification of art inherent in the mainstream entertainment industry. In a culture where success is often measured by record sales, streaming numbers, or ticket revenue, buskers offer their performances freely or for voluntary donations, emphasizing the intrinsic value of artistic expression over monetary gain. This stands in contrast to an industry that often prioritizes profit margins over creative integrity, as Weber argues through the analytics of capitalist development in the West (Turley 2001). Busking also fosters a sense of community and connection between artists and audiences. Unlike formal concert venues or recording

studios, street performances invite interaction and spontaneity, blurring the boundaries between performer and spectator. This direct engagement can lead to deeper emotional connections and foster loyalty among audiences, creating a grassroots support network that transcends the confines of traditional industry structures.

Furthermore, busking serves as a form of protest against the exploitation and marginalization of artists within the entertainment industry. Many performers turn to busking out of necessity, facing barriers such as limited access to venues, unfair contracts, or unequal distribution of profits. By taking their art to the streets, these artists assert their autonomy and demand recognition for their contributions to culture and society. Many buskers started out or actively promoted themselves for gigs and such through busking as it is a great way to land jobs. However, fourteen out of fifteen buskers described busking in comparison to other types of performances as freeing and their preferred method of performing because it gave them the freedom to perform what they wanted. It was also seen as great for practicing, to see what songs drew in crowds and which did not. Many buskers, including the musical activist (6th interview from Boston), stated that the main difference between busking and other types of performances was that there was freedom. Freedom in choice of song and structure. Furthermore, monetary compensation was not as strong of a theme throughout these interviews. In essence, busking is a form of industry resistance that empowers artists to reclaim agency over their work, challenge dominant narratives, and build grassroots support networks outside of traditional industry structures. By circumventing barriers to access, subverting commodification, fostering community, and protesting exploitation, buskers demonstrate the transformative potential of art as a catalyst for social change.

Of the buskers in Boston that were interviewed, many did not have as strong goals on pursuing bigger gigs and were typically more picky about the types of gigs they accepted. Alternatively, a reason for this may be the recent discouragement of musicians being taught to not busk and avoid it as it is giving away your “product” for free. This is another example of the music industry’s involvement and the combination of capitalist ideologies commodifying art. Professor John Jeter at Converse University is someone who advocates for his students to avoid busking. Adam Krim’s “Hip-Hop Sublime” argues through a Marxist lens, the commodification of mainstream musical styles that are prioritized due to profits. This perpetuates inequality with more diverse musical styles and busking allows for all styles to have a platform. Therefore, the argument of “giving your product away for free” demonstrates an ideology that upholds capitalist thinking on art and music that, as Marx argues, is undervalued in society. Busking gives alternatives as well as resistance against the music industry’s capitalist framework that hinders creative expression.

The forms of resistance that emerged in the interviews are strongly connected to the camaraderie amongst the musicians. In the busking world, many buskers have relationships with other buskers, join Facebook groups, and respect other buskers sets. “If someone gets there first, you kinda just know to wait or move to the next (train) car.” Buskers highlighted the unwritten rules of being respectful, but other buskers mentioned the competition, such as “drummer buskers always trying to outdo you and play louder.” Overall, the camaraderie was emphasized as busking is a very strong community within each city. When asked about the busking community, a New York busker stated “Well, that’s how you found me. I created a Facebook group for newcomers like myself. It was hard starting out at first but I started to meet some

people and we would all help each other out with things like where to busk and when or let people know that a spot was taken and stuff like that.” He also added me to this group where I was able to find many more buskers who were open to speaking to me, from all different backgrounds in busking. In Boston, the sentiment was similar “I’d say camaraderie is stronger you know we all kind of help each other out and competition does exist but you get to know people and exchange ideas, and songs, I even collaborate sometimes with my friends who busk too.” The strong sense of community and examination of the interviews led to the emergence of busking as a form of resistance. These busking forums allow individuals to alert artists of police presence as well as promote their own music. One busker created an Instagram account to post updates when he sees buskers on the trains to expand to a larger audience, as well as inadvertently let other buskers in their network know that spot is taken. This camaraderie extends to the motivations, perseverance, and continuation of the craft as a whole. This is evident with my interviews because many buskers recommended someone else for the interviews and shared how this person helped them navigate the busking world. Therefore, camaraderie is an act of defiance as it establishes relationships and expands the network into a strong art form that will not blindly adhere to structures like going through proper channels of permits and allowing government officials to decide what music will be played and heard.

Discussion

This sociological study sheds light on the complex interplay between busking and capitalism. Through an examination of the practices, experiences, and motivations of buskers within capitalist societies, several key insights have emerged. Firstly, busking serves as a

multifaceted phenomenon within capitalist economies, offering both economic opportunities and cultural enrichment. It provides individuals with a platform for self-expression, artistic fulfillment, and community engagement, while also serving as a means of livelihood for many performers. However, the commodification of art within capitalist systems can also exert pressures on buskers to conform to market demands, potentially compromising artistic integrity and diversity. This is evident through the utilization of social media and song choices to get more tips. The commodification of art leading to pressures on buskers to conform is also evident with the permitting systems, especially the new development of them being considered as factors for applications like at Faneuil Hall. This influences the busker's motivations which leads to busking strategies. This leads to a clear connection to capitalism and the utilization of capitalism to enhance one's career.

Secondly, the motivation of the buskers, although monetary compensation is a motivator, transforms into the continuation of the art and enhances the camaraderie experienced by the buskers. Capitalist societal structures largely shape the art and define what is being played and where. This leads to a destruction of what busking means to the buskers, therefore busking itself becomes an act of resistance. The emotional experience of the buskers serves as a bridge between the capitalist and anti-capitalist intentions of busking. This emotional experience largely guides buskers to camaraderie, the continuation of the practice despite possible financial barriers, and their enhanced connection to their music. Audience interactions and reactions largely play a role in monetary compensation and their motivations, which are to increase their positive audience interactions while benefiting financially. This emotional experience, therefore, is a part

of what motivates the musicians to continue busking. Therefore, it guides the musicians in multiple directions to enhance their emotional experience and leads into resistance, in order to preserve their source of connection with the audience through their art.

Thirdly, the act of busking acts as a form of resistance. The mere continuation of busking, which is fueled by the emotional experience, allows buskers to protest against outside factors that impede on their rights. Political resistance against the legalities and law enforcement and resistance to the music industry by creating a platform for themselves, creates an anti-capitalist framework busking adheres to while existing in a capitalist environment.

This study highlights the complexities of busking within a Marxist framework, revealing tensions between artistic autonomy and economic necessity, cultural resistance, and capitalist co-optation. Furthermore, Marxist theory addresses that there is a capitalist intention with their interactions as accruing capital is a primary goal. However, symbolic interactionism allows for meaning-making within the audience interactions. The symbol of donating itself also serves as a symbolic interaction to show appreciation. Therefore, the sense of community, art production, and the human interactions stemming from this are ultimately the primary drives of busking and leads to an anti-capitalist sentiment despite stemming from a capitalist framework.

Conclusion

This study underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of the intersections between busking and capitalism, recognizing both the potential benefits and challenges inherent in this relationship. By addressing issues of economic inequality, cultural diversity, and regulatory

frameworks, policymakers and stakeholders can work towards fostering a more equitable and inclusive environment for buskers within capitalist societies. This exploration of Marxism and its implications for busking offers valuable insights into the dynamics of capitalist economies and their impact on cultural production and labor.

The findings reveal how busking can be seen as both a form of cultural resistance and a reflection of capitalist exploitation. As individuals engage in street performance, they assert their creative autonomy and challenge dominant economic structures, often operating outside traditional labour relations. However, buskers also navigate the constraints of capitalist commodification, facing pressures to conform to market demands and generate income from their artistic labor. Moreover, the study highlights the role of busking in shaping collective consciousness and class consciousness. Street performers, by occupying public spaces and engaging with diverse audiences, have the potential to raise awareness about social inequalities and foster solidarity among marginalized communities. Yet, they also confront the realities of economic precarity and class struggle, embodying the contradictions inherent in capitalist societies. Furthermore, the analysis underscores the importance of examining the material conditions underpinning busking practices. Marxist perspectives draw attention to the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities within capitalist economies, which influence the experiences and outcomes of buskers. Factors such as access to public spaces, regulatory policies, and economic support systems shape the landscape of street performance and contribute to broader patterns of social stratification.

There is an evident lack of understanding in the sociological field of busking that should be explored. New studies relating to the legal frameworks surrounding the limitations of the First Amendment and busking as well as the defiance of the music industry could be looked at more closely to help illuminate this industry. Furthermore, the perception of busking can be examined through many sociological lenses based on pre-existing psychological studies. Furthermore, I would suggest a cross-cultural analysis of busking. A cross-cultural analysis of busking in countries such as Prague with government-employed buskers through an economic lens into the foot traffic local business and tourist attractions receive from busking would be beneficial. Many buskers compared their busking experience in the US and abroad, expanding on the intricacies of globalization and busking could lead to potential insight on busking. For example, one busker mentioned her experience in Prague, learning more about government-employed buskers and the foot traffic it brings could lead to new systems and legal reforms. Additionally, more sociological studies can lead to legal reform that would enhance the lives of the busking community, particularly with the rising arrests in New York City, this has become more vital for the community. Lastly, more research into the music industry and busking would be significant as it would further the understanding of busking as panhandling. Analyzing how busking to enter the music industry and if this affects their marketability would create a deeper understanding for our societal views on art, commodification, and class.

Works Cited

Anglada-Tort, Manuel & Thueringer, Heather & Omigie, Diana. (2019). The Busking Experiment: A Field Study Measuring Behavioral Responses to Street Music

- Performances. *Psychomusicology: Music, Mind, and Brain*. 29. 46-55. 10.1037/pmu0000236.
- “Asher Horowitz: Department of Political Science: Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies: York University.” *Asher Horowitz | Department of Political Science | Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies | York University*, www.yorku.ca/horowitz/courses/lectures/35_marx_alienation.html. Accessed 25 Apr. 2024.
- Campbell, Patricia J., and Alice Belkin. *Passing the Hat: Street Performers in America*. Delacorte Press, 1981.
- “Discover Amazing Street Performers.” *The Busking Project*, busk.co/. Accessed 24 Apr. 2024.
- fox , emily. “Sound & Vision: Alice Phoebe Lou on How Busking & Feminism Influenced Her LP Paper Castles.” *KEXP*, 2019, kexp.org/read/2019/3/25/sound-vision-alice-phoebe-lou-how-busking-feminism-influenced-her-lp-paper-castles/.
- Haines, Judith. “Voices in the Park: The Composition of Sacred Space and Public Place.” *Emotions, Senses, Spaces: Ethnographic Engagements and Intersections*, edited by Susan R. Hemer and Alison Dundon, University of Adelaide Press, 2016, pp. 137–58. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.20851/j.ctt1sq5wpt.12>. Accessed 25 Apr. 2024.
- Hawkins, Robert. ““Industry Cannot Go On without the Production of Some Noise”: New York City's Street Music Ban and the Sound of Work in the New Deal Era.” *Journal of Social History*, vol. 46 no. 1, 2012, p. 106-123. Project MUSE muse.jhu.edu/article/485543.

Ho R, Au WT. Differentiating busking from begging: A psychological approach. *PLoS One*. 2021 Dec

2;16(12):e0260781. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0260781. PMID: 34855897; PMCID: PMC8638882.

Krims, Adam. "The Hip-Hop Sublime as a Form of Commodification." *Music and Marx*, 2002.

Machin, Matthew. *Ethnomusicology*, vol. 53, no. 3, 2009, pp. 519–22. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25653091>.

Accessed 22 Apr. 2024

"Musician or Performer Permit." *Musician or Performer Permit · NYC311*, portal.311.nyc.gov/article/?kanumber=KA-02069#:~:text=Street%20performers%20usually%20do%20not,or%20next%20to%20a%20park. Accessed 24 Apr. 2024.

Parveen, Kaur (2018) Taking Music To The Streets : Busking, The New Pop Culture. *Science International (Lahore)*, 30 (6). pp. 913-917. ISSN 1013-5316

Quito, Anne. "New York City Is Trying to Reduce Subway Crime by Harassing Beloved Station Musicians." *Quartz*, Quartz, 1 July 2022, qz.com/2183598/new-york-is-cracking-down-on-subway-performers-to-fight-crime.

Sale, Maggie. "Call and Response as Critical Method: African-American Oral Traditions and Beloved." *African American Review*, vol. 26, no. 1, 1992, pp. 41–50. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3042075>. Accessed 1 May 2024.

“Street Performers in Public Areas.” *Boston.Gov*, 9 July 2019, www.boston.gov/departments/entertainment-licensing/street-performers-public-areas.

“Subway Performers Program.” *MBTA Realty*, 28 Feb. 2023, mbtarealty.com/subway/.

Tanenbaum, Suan. “A Guide for Street Performers.” *http://City Lore*, 2012, <http://citylore.org/urbanculture/resources/street-performers/>.

Turley, Alan C. “Max Weber and the Sociology of Music.” *Sociological Forum*, vol. 16, no. 4, 2001, pp. 633–53. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/684827>. Accessed 25 Apr. 2024.

Vannini, Phillip, and Dennis Waskul. “Symbolic Interaction as Music: The Esthetic Constitution of Meaning, Self, and Society.” *Symbolic Interaction*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2006, pp. 5–18. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.1525/si.2006.29.1.5>. Accessed 22 Apr. 2024.

Winters, Mike. “The 15 U.S. Cities with the Highest Cost of Living-San Francisco Isn’t No. 1.” *CNBC*, CNBC, 22 Aug. 2023, www.cnbc.com/2023/08/22/us-cities-with-the-highest-cost-of-living.html.