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The Perfect Playlist Captures a Feeling

Spotify is a music sharing platform that allows users to access millions of songs, follow their friends, and create and share their own playlists. When creating playlists, users can add their own image, title, and description to make each playlist unique to the collection of songs they have produced. They can then enjoy and share a multitude of various playlists and songs, whether from their own collections, or from the collections that the Spotify platform itself and other users have curated. The main “norm” of the Spotify platform is the creation of these playlists as collections of similar-sounding songs or songs of the same genres. In “Personal Connections in the Digital Age,” Nancy Baym states that “shared practices entail norms for the appropriate use of communication” (78). Spotify functions as a social networking platform because its users create and share music in this way.

When putting together a playlist, a user can start by adding any number of songs, typically between ten and two-hundred, that are related by sound and/or genre. Then, the user can add a photo, title, and description to describe the feelings which the music in each playlist produces. Spotify has popular playlists such as “All the Feels,” “Happy Hits,” etc. The “All the Feels” playlist consists of slow, sad songs, while “Happy Hits” includes more upbeat and lighthearted music. My own account features similar playlists, entitled “night” and “day,” which include the slow and sad or happy and upbeat songs that I have hand-picked over the past few years. The cover image for “All the Feels” is a man sitting alone with his head in his hands,

while the “Happy Hits” playlist features a woman who is wearing bright red lipstick and sticking her tongue out. Each feature of these playlists contributes to what the listening experience is like. When exploring playlists made by Spotify or by other users, the photo, title, and collection of songs creates a certain mood and invokes certain feelings within each user, brought together by shared experiences that make people happy or sad, relayed by each collection of songs. Baym explains that “community norms of practice are displayed, reinforced, negotiated, and taught through members’ shared behaviors” (80). Based on the norms of music sharing on Spotify, users expect the songs within each playlist to relate in a certain way, the photo to indicate the feelings (to an extent) that the songs will produce, and the title to describe this feeling in some way.

The playlist that I created for this project is entitled “November” and features a photo of the sun shining through the yellow leaves. The songs in this playlist mostly feature peaceful guitar sounds and melancholy lyrics, all written about pain, loss, and unhappiness. Because November is often a cold and grey month here in New York, I put these songs together to capture the feelings that this weather produces for me (as well as many others) of walking outside in the cold or not wanting to leave the house to enter the grey outdoors. I even took the cover image a week ago in the Botanical Gardens, as I braved the cold weather to enjoy the changing leaves and listen to some of these songs. Spotify is definitely a platform that revolves around shared experiences; each playlist, no matter who the creator is, encaptures a small piece of the human existence, which is often something that a multitude of people can relate to and find solace in knowing that other people have the same feelings and are listening to the same

songs. Within this community, each user can take part in putting songs together to create collections of music that many others can relate to and enjoy.

Spotify is a community that is filled with various norms, which have come into practice over time as users interact with the platform. Playlists are made to capture every mood, feeling, or life experience that a multitude of users have experienced and, therefore, millions of people can relate directly to the music of each of these playlists. Sharing these experiences with the millions of other users on Spotify seems to lighten the daily hardships that we face while living our lives each day. Altogether, when a user experiences some sort of mood or emotion, he or she can create a collection of songs which embody that emotion. Then, others who also share in that same emotion can not only enjoy the songs that others have put together, but also find comfort in the fact that other users (even those he or she does not actually know) have the same feelings. Spotify is a platform that brings people together around shared music and feelings, and the backbone of this experience is the playlists that are created every day.

<https://open.spotify.com/user/cortney0/playlist/17NhFp88I3geOEmTYBVNbq?si=FOP9t3ruQiCeY2XzvmB1GA>